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Malaysian Students’ Negotiation of Identity Through Spoken Academic Discourse

Zurina Khairuddin

A thesis submitted in August 2019 for PhD examination at the University of Sussex
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Identity is theorised as always changing, constructed, negotiated, partial, and conflicting (Norton, 2000) and is also influenced by the environment or culture individuals belong to (Ang, 2011). Identity is also not pre-existing to interaction but it is situated and co-constructed within an exchange. Ridwan (2017) observes how students assume multiple identities that could be conflicting during the identity negotiation process. This process occurs in academic settings with the members of the academic communities, both tutors and peer, when discussing academic topics. The study adopts the theory of Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998) to define the multilingual seminars in the UK and Malaysia and Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson’s (1974) Conversation Analysis approach to analyse talk-in-interaction and identify the communicative styles of the Malaysian students. This research highlights different interactional styles among Malaysian students in seminars in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysian students at a comparable international university in their home country (MSM); it explores their perceptions of their own interactions and interactions by other students; it investigates their identity construction in the two contexts; and the strategies they resort to in a group to negotiate their (dis)engagement. Nine MSUK and 11 MSM were chosen as participants. The data for this study was collected by observing these students interact in seminars, and then through interviewing and focus group discussions. The language data were analysed employing Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) identity-in-interaction framework. Adopting the principles of emergence and indexicality (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), the findings of this study suggest that MSUK and MSM constructed and negotiated flexible identities particularly agentive and accommodative when they were in seminars. MSUK also constructed and negotiated resistant identity while MSM did not. These identities were interpreted based on the students’ interactional behaviour and their own perceptions of their interactions. The study concludes that academic identity is flexible and students construct and negotiate their self based on the contexts they are in.
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not, and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another university for the award of any other degree.

Signature:

31st July 2019
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CHAPTER 1: PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preface

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country of various ethnicities such as Malay, Chinese, Indian, Orang Asli, Kadazan and Dusun. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country because of its history. Malaya (before independence) was colonised by the British in 1945. During this colonisation, the British brought immigrants from China and India to work in Malaya. The immigrants from China were placed in the town centre to do business and the immigrants from India were placed in rubber tree orchards to be rubber tappers. The Malays and Orang Asli (the people who claim to be the aborigines of the land) stayed in villages as farmers. Due to this, there was segregation between the three main ethnicities in Malaya. During the colonisation era, people residing in Malaya went to different schools. The Malay elites and Chinese who resided in the town centres would send their children to either elite or missionary schools which used the English language as the medium of instruction. Most Malays who resided in villages sent their children to schools where the medium of instruction was the Malay language. There were also Chinese and Indians who sent their children to vernacular schools where the mediums of instruction were Chinese and Tamil languages, with teachers brought in from China and India to teach the children.

Malaysia is also considered a multilingual country because a majority of Malaysians are either bilinguals or multilinguals. For instance, most Chinese are proficient in Mandarin, English, and Malay languages. Due to this, most Malaysians can also codeswitch and consequently it becomes natural for them
to mix more than two languages when they speak (Mohd Nazri 2013). Mohd Nazri also mentioned that codeswitching could support speakers’ academic performance and cognitive development (2013). According to Mohd Nazri (2013), multilingualism is the ability to use more than two languages. He added that multilingualism also refers to the possibility of having better proficiency in one of the languages. Ain Nadzimah, Rosli and Jariah (2012) suggest that multilingualism is valuable and beneficial for the country’s economy. Despite being multilinguals, most Malaysians prefer to use the English language when communicating because the English language is significant in ensuring that Malaysia becomes a developed country and is recognised internationally (Asmah 1994). Being able to use more than one language allows Malaysians to communicate with other Malaysians successfully. With these interactions, it is possible to integrate the different ethnic groups in Malaysia who may see themselves as Bangsa Malaysia (literal translation: Malaysian race) because language influences the community it is spoken in, and shapes and builds the community members’ identities (Ain Nadzimah, Rosli & Jariah 2012).

Identity is theorised as always changing, constructed, negotiated, inconsistent, partial, and conflicting (Norton 2000). It is no longer considered as fixed and stable (Hall 1996), thus acknowledging that identity is also influenced by the environment or culture individuals are in (Ang 2011). In other words, the more communities or environment individuals are involved in, the more changing their identity could be. This reflects Wenger’s (1998) argument that identity is a process individuals engage in negotiating themselves (Fearon 1999). Consequently, identity could be seen as complex (Hall & Gieben 1991 p.
23). Identity could be viewed as the sense of belonging (Ha 2008) where individuals make sense of who they are, what they experience, and what happens around them (McCarthy & Moje 2002 p. 228). This argument echoes the concept of bilingual identities which also describes identities as dynamic, contradictory, and flexible (Kramsch 1993; Norton 2000; Lee 2003a).

A number of studies on identities among Malaysians emphasise the national identities (Asmah 1991; Wolf 2016; Ain Nadzimah, Rosli & Jariah 2012; Faridah Noor & Thayalan 2012; Mehdi & Ain Nadzimah 2017; Hung 2013), ethnic identities (Tan 2000; Siti Rahimah, Raja Masittah & Normahdiah 2014), and political figures’ speeches (Zuraidah, Knowles & Choong 2010). Studies were also conducted on Malaysian students’ identity (Farhana & Azlan 2010; Mohd Nazri 2013; Faizah & Nas Idayu 2016; Ridwan & Zahariah 2017; Syarizan, Minah & Norhafezah 2017). These studies looked at Malaysian students’ cultural identities (Syarizan, Minah & Norhafezah 2017), personal identities (Rorlinda, Noriah, Azizah & Siti Noor Diana 2017; Mohd Nazri 2013; Farhana, Melissa & Azyyati 2013), ethnic identities (Pei, Fong & Ker 2017a; Pei, Fong & Ker 2017b; Su & Teck 2011), bilingual identities (Ridwan & Zahariah 2017; Rajadurai 2011), and collective identities (Faizah & Nas Idayu 2016). However, they did not look at students’ academic identities based on classroom interactions and investigating this is important because understanding how students act in the classrooms could give stakeholders such as teachers/educators the opportunity to provide the best learning environment for the students and maximise the students’ learning experiences and further develop their learning potentials.
As mentioned by Ridwan (2017), it is likely that students assume multiple identities that could be conflicting during the identity negotiation process. The identity formation process may occur in academic settings, such as within the school compounds or outside of the school with the members of the academic communities, discussing academic content. The education community can be related to the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) introduced by Wenger (1998, p. 4), which views a community as consisting of expert and novice members. Wenger sees learning as a community for tutors, who are expert members, and students, who are novice members, to actively participate socially and try to belong. CoP supersedes variable such as class, ethnicity and gender (Eckert & Wenger 2005). Expanding on this concept, Wenger et al. (2002) elaborated that CoP is seen as a medium where constant interactions occur among people who share the same conventions to achieve the same goals of knowledge and expertise, and to feel a sense of belonging. In the context of this study, seminar discussions are considered as one CoP, in which Malaysian students participate socially and academically, in order to construct belonging and membership. There are two different CoPs explored in this study, namely Malaysian seminar discussions and UK seminar discussions. Depending on the CoP and the context they are in, different students may interact differently, thus possibly resulting in the construction and negotiation of different identities among the students who are novice members. As identity is an element that is fluid and dynamic, it changes depending on the situations and contexts.
1.1 Motivation for the study

Because of my previous experiences, I became curious as to how other Malaysian students are coping, their English language usage, and what kind of identity they construct and negotiate when they interact during seminar discussions. As an international student whose second language is English, coming into an English-speaking country like the UK has made me somewhat nervous. I have always been a listener in seminar discussions and I only asked my friends when I did not understand certain matters. Although I may not have negative perceptions towards the use of the English language in classrooms, I cannot say that I did not experience friends mocking me or saying I was a show-off whenever I used the English language in classrooms or with my colleagues. Listening to other people giving opinions or asking questions straightforwardly and effortlessly made me wonder as to why I am not contributing my ideas too and why we are different in the way we interact, and the identities we construct and negotiate. These questions led me to conduct a pilot study by interviewing a few Malaysian students in the UK on what they thought of their experiences in the seminar discussions. One of the interviewees mentioned that she had some difficulties in understanding people and also in making people understand what she said or explained. Due to this, she prefers not to contribute ideas during the discussions and consciously identifies herself as passive.

The interviewees’ response during this pilot study shows that other Malaysian students in the UK possibly face similar difficulties when they are in an academic setting. This inference made me want to further explore Malaysian
undergraduate students’ identities and interactions during seminar discussions, particularly in terms of their use of language and how they see themselves. Nonetheless, I hypothesised that the Malaysian undergraduate students in the UK might have adopted and adapted to some of the UK academic culture. With this in mind, I was curious to investigate whether the Malaysian undergraduate students in the UK and Malaysia interact differently, perceive their interactions similarly, and whether they construct and negotiate similar identities; given that they are in different situational contexts. Malaysian students need to be able to discuss their respective discipline-specific content academically. As suggested by Ho (2011), small group discussions help students to socialise into their discipline-specific discourse and practices. Coming from different social and academic culture, where procedures might be different, miscommunications may occur. This is similar to what McEwan (2013) and Kingston and Forland (2008) argue: students may have problems adjusting academically when coming from different academic cultures due to the different expectations. According to Wierzbicka (1994), every society has its own cultural expectations which may be different from other society. This raises questions such as ‘Were the identities they construct during the discussion mismatch with what is accepted or expected in the academic community?’ and ‘How do Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia, who generally have the same native language, culture, and academic background as mine, engage in discussions?’

Previous research revealing that most Malaysian students do not contribute or contribute minimally in classrooms (Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; 2010b; Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Mohd. Yusof, Noor...
Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012) sparked the drive for carrying out this present study. These studies report the reality of how Malaysian students interact. Other research also reveals how Malaysian students position themselves when they use the English language within the social and academic community (Lee 2003a). I do not aim to provide solutions to the problem of undergraduate Malaysian students not contributing in seminars. Nor do I simply aim to recommend strategies for tutors to apply in seminars. The understanding of how these Malaysian students interact in both the UK and Malaysian seminars, the perceptions they have towards their own and others’ interactions, and the identities they construct and negotiate from these interactions and perceptions is crucial especially for future students coming into the UK and UK academic culture. As international students, they could be better prepared linguistically and pragmatically, thus ensuring that the students do not encounter the same experience as their predecessors. Understanding these Malaysian students could also be helpful for the stakeholders of the Malaysian education system as they may discover ways to improve the current system in order to successfully achieve their aspiration. I also believe that investigating Malaysian students’ interactions during seminars could create future research opportunities to further understand the language usage, probably with regards to the different elements of language use and identity construction and negotiation.

The general purpose of this thesis – which I will elaborate in detail below – is to investigate and understand the Malaysian students’ interactions during seminar discussions and their perceptions of their interactions and others’. A
broader understanding of these interactions and perceptions will be analysed based on Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) study on identity in interactions and further related to the work on identity. To do so, this study explores the interaction types of Malaysian undergraduate students in two different academic environments: the UK and Malaysia.

The next section discusses the history of the English language teaching in Malaysia and its current status, how Malaysians view the language and how it is related to the identity of Malaysians because it is important to establish where the English language stands in this context in order to understand the present study.

1.2 Background and context of the study

After independence in 1957, Malay language was considered the national language of Malaysia (Alis 2012) and English, the second national language of Malaysia. This was done to help in the construction of one Malaysian identity. After the British left, the first prime minister of Malaysia decided to keep the different types of schools with different mediums of instruction: national schools and national-type schools. Those who graduated from the English medium schools had good grasp of English while others who graduated from the other types of schools only learnt English as a subject and faced problems in using the language. After a while, the then minister of education reformed the education system and directed the Malay language to be the main medium of instruction in most schools (Alis 2012) until the year 2003 when the fourth Malaysian prime minister changed the medium of
instruction for two main subjects, Science and Mathematics, from Malay to English language (Lee 2003b).

This means that the students in Year 1 (7 years old) and Form 1 (13 years old) learnt Science and Mathematics in English. The change was decided because English is the main language of references in Science and Mathematics. It means that the students who are involved with this change learnt three subjects in English (English, Science, and Mathematics) while the previous and current cohorts learnt all subjects in Malay except for the English language classes. Indirectly, the students in this cohort had more exposure to the English language compared to the cohorts before them. All Science and Mathematics textbooks and workbooks were written in English. The Science and Mathematics teachers had to undergo short in-service training to teach in English. Some states in Malaysia had some extra training courses where they had English teachers in schools to train the Science and Mathematics teachers in using the English language confidently (Mohamad Fadhili, Mohd Asri, Ahmad Azman, Rafizah, Mahmod & Kamaruzaman 2009). The Science and Mathematics teachers were also provided with notes on Science and Mathematics consisting of bilingual notes on the content they were supposed to teach. Most teachers in the urban areas taught their students in English while at the same time, the teachers in the rural areas taught their students using the Malay language. The reasons given by teachers were that their students’ English competency was low, as was their own competency (Ong & May 2008; Dearden 2014). After nine years of having Science and Mathematics taught in English, the minister of education then reverted to using Malay as the medium
of instruction in public schools; which means all subjects were taught in Malay, except the English language, Mandarin, and Tamil. As a result of the mainly Malay-medium education, Malaysians’ English language proficiency declined gradually (Rajadurai 2010a). Consequently, many local graduates remained unemployed as they lack the English language proficiency (Rajadurai 2010a). The problem was more serious for the Malays and those who live in the rural areas (Rajadurai 2010a). This also gives academic and economic advantage to Malaysians who have a high level of competency in English (Rajadurai 2010b).

Other than that, employers reported that Malaysian graduates’ English proficiency has deteriorated, and have asked universities to increase the graduates’ English language proficiency level by conducting various English language activities (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015; Tengku Shahrani 2016; Isarji, Zainab, Ainol Madziah, Tunku Badariah & Mohammad Sahari 2013). In addition to that, Malaysian students who aspire to have successful careers need to enthusiastically learn and master English (Rajadurai 2010a) as recruiters in any academic and professional fields, especially science and technology, in Malaysia regard being competent in English as a bonus point for the graduates (Rajadurai 2010a). Currently, the medium of instruction in most Malaysian public schools is the Malay language and some public schools adopt both Malay and English languages as the medium of instruction under the Dual-Language programme (DLP) (Nadiah & Melor 2019).

The three national documents; National Education Philosophy (NEP), Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015), and School-Based Curriculum English Language (SBELC) (Kementerian
Pendidikan Malaysia 2016) mention the need to communicate and be proficient not only in the Malay language, but also in the English language. Thus, the students in Malaysia are required to speak in the classroom and have the proficiency and competence to use the English language inside and outside of the classroom. This indicates that the documents aim to produce students who are proficient and competent in the language and have positive perceptions towards interacting during classroom discussions, and towards the use of English in the classroom. This is consistent with the language ideology concept as suggested by Norton (2015): English language is given the privilege to be introduced and enforced by government policies. Although this is the mission statement of the three documents, the reality in Malaysia is different as research found that Malaysian students are not speaking or contributing to classroom discussions (Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; 2010b; Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012). Due to the findings of these studies, they are mostly considered as passive students. Unpleasant experiences, such as being mocked by friends or being called a show-off (Rajadurai 2010a; 2010b; Lee 2003a) encountered when using the English language in the classroom, may have influenced these students' lack of motivation to use the language.

The English language is placed as the second language in Malaysia in line with the education policy of the country (Gill 2002). Thirusanku and Melor (2012, p. 2) note that English language is a compulsory subject at all levels of education implying its existence 'side by side with strong indigenous languages, wide use in speaking, and international standing, sometimes official functions'
(Thirusanku & Melor 2012, p. 2), as the language of politics, the media, jurisdiction, and higher education. Research shows that the Malaysian community views English as an international language (Alis 2012). Most academic materials are in English and as for travelling internationally, having a good command of English is advantageous since most countries use English to communicate.

The British colonisation did not only influence the education system in Malaysia, it also influences how the Malaysian community perceive English as a language. Collins (1995) argued that the view of British colonisation influence may be untrue. However, the community also sees English as the language of the coloniser and those who speak it fluently are seen to use the coloniser’s language (Lee 2003b; Lee et al. 2010). Those who mainly speak in English are also perceived as betraying their cultural community and as too westernised (Lee 2003b; Lee et al. 2010). English is also perceived as a language of the elites and those who can speak fluent English are viewed as elites (Lee 2003b; Lee et al. 2010). Due to this, the community in general also sees individuals who mainly use English to communicate as individuals who like to show off (Lee 2003b; Lee et al. 2010). English is also viewed as the language of empowerment where those who can speak English well are seen as more knowledgeable or more superior (Lee et al. 2010). Some perceive English as the preferred language between different ethnic groups and because of this, most Malaysians consider the English language as their first language (Preshous 2001; Lee 2003b). Malaysian undergraduate students in Malaysia perceive the use of English in certain circumstances as creating hostility,
separation and segregation, especially among own ethnicities (Lee 2003b). In fact, these students’ experiences reveal that conformity and acceptance are improved when they do not use the English language (Lee 2003b). Another study reveals that Malaysian undergraduate students perceive English as a threat to their ethnic and national identities, with Malay students feeling this the strongest (Mardziah Hayati & Wong 2006). The Malay students were reported to claim that they might be teased by their friends and community if they use the English language. The Chinese and Indian students identify the English language as a language of prestige (Asmah 2000), in contrast to the Malay students.

1.3 Overview and aims of the study

As discussed in the previous section, science and mathematics were taught in English for some time and the Malaysian students in this study were from the cohort that was taught in the English language which means they learnt Science and Mathematics in English. I employed classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions with MSUK and MSM to understand the phenomenon of Malaysian students’ interactions and its relation to their identity.

The findings of this study are aimed at enlightening the ways Malaysian students interact in seminars. From the data collected, I employed the theory of Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998) to define the seminars in the UK and Malaysia as a CoP and adopted Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson’s (1974) notion of Conversation Analysis for talk-in-interaction as a tool for locating the types of interactions the Malaysian students engaged in seminars.
Simultaneously, I explored the students’ perceptions towards their interactions and others’; later linking these interactions and perceptions to the theory of identity in interaction by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) which views identity as an element that is dynamic and fluid and can be constructed through spoken discourse. A detailed discussion on the term Community of Practice and identity can be found in Chapter Two.

1.4 Research questions

This present study aims to answer one main research question which is: ‘Is there any difference between Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysia (MSM) in terms of their interactions and identity construction and negotiation?’ In order to answer this question, this study specifically aims to answer the three research questions below:

1. How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?

2. How do these students perceive their interactions and others’ in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?

3. How do these students construct and negotiate their identities through interactions and perceptions?

From these research questions, I attempt to identify Malaysian students’ interaction types in seminars in the UK and Malaysia; explore their perceptions towards their own interactions and others’ interactions; investigate their identity construction and negotiation from the interactions and perceptions; and determine if there is any difference between the MSUK and MSM.
1.5 **Significance of the study**

The motivation to conduct this research develops mainly from my personal experiences as an international student (in New Zealand and UK) where I was in a new community requiring me to adjust the way I interacted and how I constructed and negotiated my identity as an academic. Moreover, the communities I was in had English as the medium of instruction. This setting is similar to the setting of the present study which highlights the interaction types observed, perceptions towards their own interactions and others’ interactions and identities constructed by Malaysian undergraduate students in seminars in the UK and Malaysia. Therefore, it could contribute to research related to educational issues in cross-cultural and multilingual settings, particularly in terms of how Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK and Malaysia (Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; 2010b; Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011) and the identities they construct and negotiate. This suggests the need to change academic cultural expectations in academic settings especially with today’s internationalisation era/world, instead of expecting students to follow only certain approaches. Thus, I think choosing universities as the research site is ideal for this study because it provides the opportunity for me to examine Malaysian students in universities of different educational contexts such as UK and Malaysia. Different educational contexts such as styles of teaching or academic setting allow for the different experiences and interpretation of the Malaysian undergraduate students.

Experiencing different educational contexts could help to shape Malaysian students to be balanced, academically and morally, as aspired by the
Malaysia National Education Philosophy. These current Malaysian students are seen as the catalysts who will lead the country in the future. This study could also be used as a guideline on how educational practices should/could be in producing individuals as manifested in the NEP. Examining how students present themselves in a new or/and familiarised academic convention could provide additional perceptions towards their practices and others’ especially for those involved within the community such as the students themselves, lecturers, tutors, parents, and ministry. For example, understanding how students interact in the classroom would allow teachers to adapt their teaching styles if necessary, to suit students’ interaction preferences. This shows that the study is significant to teachers as the findings suggest teachers need to be flexible in their teaching styles.

1.6 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter introduces and outlines the present study and explains the motivation, background, aims, and significance of the study. It also draws on the research questions of this study. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature focusing on the main theories related to the research questions investigated in this study. The first section of Chapter Two focuses on the literature concerning language socialisation in the context of second language and academic setting while the second section emphasises the theory of identity. It outlines the broad theoretical frameworks that are later linked to the finding’s discussion in Chapter Six. Chapter Three frames the decisions made regarding methodology in carrying out this study. It looks at epistemology paradigm which guides the way forward for this study and discusses the strengths and weakness of the qualitative methods. It also
describes in detail the research designs adopted, data collection and analysis methods, tools and approach, and addresses the ethical issues related to this study. Chapters Four and Five describe the settings of the seminars in the UK and Malaysia and discuss Malaysian students’ academic identities based on their interactions and perceptions they shared during interviews and focus group discussions. Chapter Six discusses the findings by linking these findings to the broad theoretical frameworks. Finally, Chapter Seven concludes this study. It outlines the limitation of the methods chosen for this study. It also offers recommendations and outlines implications for future research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into two sections detailing the main themes of the present study, namely, academic discourse socialisation and identity. These two themes are discussed in the study’s context that investigates how ESL is used for communicating within seminars by Malaysian students in two geographical settings: UK and Malaysia. The first section deals with a discussion on academic discourse socialisation and how it is related to English as the medium of instruction (EMI). The second section of this chapter addresses the issues of identity and how it is constructed and negotiated within educational contexts. It begins by discussing the broad term, identity and its link to the concept of Social Constructivism. The discussion on identity focuses on students’ identity and how this is constructed within the academic community. As identities are constructed through socialisation, it is significant to highlight how identity is related to the way language is used when socialising. This relationship links the two main sections in this chapter.

2.1 Academic Discourse Socialisation

Language and culture are intricately interwoven which consequently form one’s language ideology. According to Soomro (2016), like language and culture, language ideology and language identity are also intricately interwoven. Ideology is not fixed or static, in fact it is complex (Norton & Darvin 2015). Language ideology refers to one’s “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and
use” (Silverstein 1979, p.193; Van Dijk 1998) while according to Woolard (1998, p.3), language ideology could be defined as “representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world”. De Fina and King (2011) assert the importance of language ideology to public discourse because it is linked to social acceptance into the target community. Norton (2015) argues that language ideology privileges the English language through policies introduced and enforced by governments. Language ideology mirrors the Malaysian government language policies require Malaysians to master and be proficient in two languages, the Malay and English languages (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015). This is done by encouraging educators and students to use the English language as the medium of instruction at all levels of education.

In relation to this, due to the effect of globalisation, individuals including students are mobile and consequently, their identities are dynamic and fluid. This takes into account how they see themselves in relation to other people they communicate. One of the personal factors that may also affect individuals’ communication and consequently their identity construction is investment. Norton (1995) introduced the term investment which is defined as how much individuals invest on a language they aim to master. For instance, English language learners investing in learning the language to increase their academic and social values. Investment also encompasses the elements of identity, ideology and capital (Darvin & Norton 2015). The concept of investment considers invested individuals as having complex and dynamic identity which is constructed during social interactions. In other words, investment demonstrates
that there is a relationship between identity and how much learners invest in language learning (Darvin & Norton 2015). Darvin and Norton (2015) and Norton (2015) argue that investment and motivation may be similar where investment complements the theory of motivation. Motivation, from the psychological construct, views language learners as having unitary and fixed personalities, while from the sociological construct, investment perceives language learners as having identities that are complex and dynamic which are negotiated during social interactions. This can be seen from students who may be motivated in learning a language, however they may not be invested in the learning because of social factors such as racist classroom practices (Darvin & Norton 2015).

Many studies have been conducted on investment of language learners and language teachers in the context of Asian, African, Australia and North America (Ollerhead 2012; Reeves 2009; Carrazzai 2013; Arkoudis & Davison 2008; Sanches Silva 2013; Gu 2008; Trent 2008; Gao, Cheng, & Kelly 2008; De Costa 2010).

Language is both a medium of communication and a carrier of culture (Solgi & Tafazoli 2018). This means language is a part of a culture as language is learned and communicated among the members of the society (Soomro 2016). Norton (2015) also suggests that language ideology shapes language identity. Language identity is defined as the identity individuals form based on how they learn a language, their use of language and who they communicate with (Sa’d 2017). Identity refers to what individuals find themselves similar to
and what they perceive as different and conflicting (Sa’d 2017). Different identities could be constructed within different societies which have different shared sets of subconscious cultural norms which can be stated explicitly. Culture is defined as shared elements and characteristics of a particular community such as language and religion (Solgi & Tafazoli 2018). Culture can be defined as not only shared set of beliefs, values, behavioural patterns, norms, customs, traditions, rituals, and a way of life that differentiates one group from another but also knowledge and abilities (Banks 1988, p. 261). According to Clifford (1986, p. 476), these elements are dynamic, and they may change or be different depending on social, generation or geographical factors (Lee 2003a). Lee (2003a) also claimed that it is important for members of a culture share the same culture to operate effectively. According to Britzman (1991), identities are constructed and negotiated within a culture.

Holliday (1999) categorises culture into two paradigms: small (individual) and large (cultural) cultures (Schwartz 2011) which comprise different values. Holliday (1999) uses the terms large and small to define two paradigms where large is defined as ‘ethnic’, ‘national’ or ‘international’ while ‘cohesive social grouping’ defines small. In other words, he defines large culture as the expected convention of certain ethnic, national and international cultures (e.g. British, Malaysian or Malay cultures) while behaviours of personals and small groupings which avoid stereotyping are considered as small culture (e.g. classroom or organisation cultures) (Holliday 1999).
Small culture focuses on the emerging behaviour of the culture rather than its norms and it does not indicate smaller in number but the difference is considered from the various contextual paradigms (Holliday 1999). For instance, intercultural differences within a classroom including linguistic and technology use are placed within the large culture paradigm. Wilson (2015) and Holliday (1999) argue that small culture allows for better understanding of people's behaviour and values which consequently may lead to overgeneralisation of the large culture's conventions. Holliday explains that because of the nature of small culture, it avoids culturism (2005). In fact, these two paradigms may interrelate as a small culture may exist within a large culture, depending on how the small culture is placed between and within the large culture (Holliday 1999). Schwartz describes individual values within small culture as what individuals aim to achieve as they participate in social interactions and the adaptation process they go through to realise the demands of the group they are in while cultural (2011). On the other hand, cultural values of the large culture are considered the aims which come from what is expected by the society (Schwartz 2011).

When interacting in different cultures, individuals needs to be communicatively competent. Chomsky (1965) defines competence as the ability to utilise a set of knowledge that is shared between speakers and listeners in a particular community. According to Canale and Swain (1980; 1981), communicative competence can be understood as a set of knowledge and skills required to communicative effectively. Savignon (1972; 1983) describes communicative competence as one’s ability to utilise knowledge and skills to
function effectively in a dynamic communicative setting. This requires adaptation in the utilisation of the appropriate knowledge and skills to suit the setting. It is argued that individuals require a sense of understanding of the targeted culture to communicate successfully and this includes understanding issues within the intercultural communication and strategies to facilitate effective communication; this can be termed as intercultural communicative competence (Fantini 2006). In other words, when there is a need for people of different cultures to communicate, intercultural communication will exist. Intercultural communicative competence also comprises knowledge, skills, attitudes and the motivation to successfully and appropriately communicative with members of different cultures (Wiseman 2001).

Byram (2002) highlights the skills required of individuals who are involved in intercultural communication including the competence of native speakers. He first (1997) acknowledges the connection between language and culture and suggests intercultural communication to comprise four competences: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and intercultural competence. He combines some dimensions, named savoirs, which make up intercultural communicative competence (2002):

1. savoir être: concerned with attitudes and values and consists in showing curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own,
2. savoirs: refers to the knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction,

3. savoir comprendre: related to the skills of interpreting and relating, that is to say, the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own,

4. savoir apprendre/faire: connected to the skills of discovery and interaction or the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction,

5. savoir s’engager: relation to critical cultural awareness and/or political education, which means having the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries.

Byram (2002) also states that this framework is designed for language classrooms, which is not the focus of this present study.

According to Wierzbicka (1994), cultural scripts can be referred to as “statements encapsulating, in a standardized form, things that people frequently say they think and do” (p. 14). This means that the scripts can be considered as statements about the tacit assumptions of how members of a society think and communicate based on observations (Wierzbicka 1994, p. 13). This means that every culture has its own standardised norms and expectations in every aspect
of its life. The tenets of cultural scripts as suggested by Wierzbicka (1994) are as follows:

1. Cultural scripts “constitute a behavioural manifestation of a tacit system of cultural rules” (p. 3);
2. Cultural scripts require a universal language which is related in a clear and comprehensible language. The use of clear and comprehensible language could help to clarify the differences of communicative styles between cultures;
3. Cultural scripts are assumptions that lie in a culture's keywords: “frequently used lexical items encapsulating core cultural concepts” (p. 18);
4. Cultural scripts are generated from open discourse in the form of different discourses such as proverbs, common sayings, popular wisdom and common socialization routines within the society

Cultural scripts allow for ways of communicating and the different ways of thinking in society to be explored thoroughly in order to understand the society’s convention of speaking and thinking (Wierzbicka 1994). They allow for the comparison of culture-specific attitudes and norms from neutral perspectives. The scripts can be discovered by analysing how people behave and communicate (Wierzbicka 1994). Cultural scripts provide students with guides to develop intercultural communicative competence by understanding the relationship between language and culture: why different societies communicate in different ways in different contexts. Similarly, different societies
have distinct academic seminar conventions indicating that it expects its members to behave and communicate in different ways. The present study looks at these differences for the UK and Malaysian academic discourses from the perspectives of cultural scripts which were introduced by Wierzbicka (1994).

Novices’ practical engagement with others could be better understood by looking at the social structuring and cultural interpretations of certain linguistic forms, practices, or ideologies (Duranti, Ochs & Schieffelin 2012). Within the academic setting, these practical engagements can be analysed by utilising academic discourse socialisation. Academic discourse socialisation is defined as the ability that members develop in order to take part in a new discourse community due to the interactions that occur between expert and novice members of the community and cognitive experiences (Duff 2007a). In other words, it is fundamental that newcomers develop this ability if they would like to be acknowledged or accepted. Similar to language socialisation, which is defined as a lifelong learning process that occurs in any communities within a range of activities (Ochs & Schieffelin 2008; Schieffelin & Ochs 1986), academic discourse socialisation occurs in co-constructed interactions in academic settings (Morita 2004). It is also considered to be a dynamic process which is socially positioned and involves contexts that are multimodal, in multiple languages and rich in different types of texts (Duff 2010b). The socialisation process is embedded in and transmitted through language thus, individuals need to master the language to gain full membership of the target community (Morita 2000). In short, novices are socialised into the practice of linguistic forms and culture of a particular group of interest or a Community of
Practice (CoP) (Wenger 1998). In academic discourse socialisation, the process of socialisation occurs in academic settings. As for this study, Malaysian students’ engagement in seminars is an example of academic discourse socialisation where the engagement occurred for academic purposes while they discuss academic content in academic setting.

Academic discourse socialisation is informed by Vygotsky’s (1978a) assertion that social context is fundamental in a learning development. This means academic discourse socialisation exemplifies one of the sociocultural theory principles; internalisation process where other people’s characteristics, beliefs, feelings, and attitudes are assimilated unconsciously by individuals (Vygotsky 1978a). Another sociocultural theory principle embedded in academic discourse socialisation is the concept of scaffolding that emphasises the role of expert members (e.g. teachers) in supporting the development of novices by providing structured support for the novices to reach the next stage of learning (Vygotsky 1978b). Scaffolding is crucial in academic discourse socialisation because the expert members of a community need to guide and support the novices in ensuring a successful socialisation in the academic setting. As the internalisation process results from interaction, providing individuals with interaction opportunities is necessary. Eventually, a person who has achieved successful academic socialisation enjoys increased and improved participation, is able to socially play different roles, and has developed expertise and gained the position of expert member in a community (Morita & Kobayashi 2008). This can be achieved by having novice members engage in a variety of language mediated activities (Duff 2002b). In the context of this study, the Malaysian
students’ learning experience in the UK and Malaysian academic context is a part of the socialisation process occurring within the academic context.

2.2 **Principles of academic discourse socialisation**

Academic discourse socialisation also involves the negotiation of power and identity (Duff 2010b). As students progress in their academic community with academic purposes, they are expected to develop their own voice and identity which are recognised by the academic community in their areas of study in particular cultural contexts (Duff 2007a; Morita 2004). They will also eventually gain the competence to write, speak, and master the content in an academic way. The principles of academic discourse socialisation (Duff 2010b) are similar to the principles of language socialisation: language, members of the community, and social interactions. For instance, how language is used within a society to interact among the members can be analysed by investigating these principles. These three principles are related to each other in the way that one influences the other directly or indirectly in academic contexts.

2.2.1 **Social interactions**

One of the main elements of academic discourse socialisation is the socialisation process that occurs in an academic context. In other words it is the social interactions which are pragmatically connected (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez 2002). Members of the community need to master the linguistic knowledge and internalise the functions and contexts of the language. It is important in cultivating not only first and additional language communicative competence but also knowledge of the target community’s values, practices, identities, and ideologies. For instance, certain skills such as joking are taken
for granted by experts, but they are challenging for novices. It is important for novices to learn and master these activities and skills (Schegloff 1986). Within the academic seminars observed, the Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysia (MSM) were considered as novices and were expected to have social interactions with others in the seminar: tutors and classmates. The MSUK were considered as novices as they were in their first year in UK higher education institutions coming from Malaysia education system. They were also not familiar with the convention of the modules they took. Similarly, the MSM were also novices because they experienced transition from the school system to the Malaysian higher education institutions. This also means that they could be considered as novices in the different modules they took as they were also first year students. Due to their repetitive nature, these activities and skills could be learnt and mastered by observation, imitation and practice (Duranti et al. 2012). The expert members of the community can assist by implicitly or explicitly guiding the novices in thinking, feeling, and acting according to the values, norms, practices, ideologies, and traditions of the target community. Novice members might also inform the expert members of their communication and social needs, and the state of their existing competency (Jacoby & Gonzalez 1991) as they may have different levels of competencies. The members’ interactions could be categorised into two forms: participation and non-participation (Lave & Wenger 1991). Non-participation is categorised into two possibilities: peripherality (e.g. taking notes and responding minimally) and marginality (e.g. keeping quiet and refusing to share answers).
2.2.2 Members of the community

Agents or members of the community in which the language is spoken, either the expert members or novices are central to the socialisation process (Duranti et al. 2012). The expert members are those who are more proficient in the language and have the desire to help novices to also become expert members of the community (Duranti et al. 2012). They are more knowledgeable in the values, ideologies, and practices associated with the community and its language. Typically, teachers, tutors, and peers are examples of expert members whose proficiency level may vary extensively (Duranti et al. 2012). Due to the prevailing focus on how experts help in the socialisation process of the novice members, He (2003) argues that in the process of socialisation, novice members who are passive are presumed to be the recipients of the socialisation. The expert members may guide the novices to become more knowledgeable but this depends on their wishing to become members of the community. Typically, examples of novices are learners, who are also members of the community, involved with the process of academic socialisation and have different levels of agency and some of them may experience personal changes.

It is recently proposed that the expert members may also learn from novices (Duff 2007b) despite the competent members being the ones who usually help to support and facilitate the socialisation process of the novices (Morita 2000; Zappa-Hollman 2007). The expert members could learn, restructure their norms, and be adapted into the beliefs, values, ideologies, and practices of the novices’ culture as interactions occur. This echoes what Pontecorvo et al. (2001) propose: language socialisation is an interactive
process where the members involved mutually guide each other. Similarly, Duff (2007b, p. 311) posits that language socialisation is “bi-directional”. For instance, parents and children in a family help each other to understand each other’s culture and generation with the role to initiate this process belonging to the parents or children interchangeably. With the rapid change in technology nowadays, community experts are not necessarily older people and novices are not necessarily younger people (Duranti et al. 2012).

Coming from various personal and academic backgrounds, each student may have different levels of understanding and experience regarding the academic content. Under this circumstance, the academic community may have students who are more expert and competent than others. This is also applicable to the tutors and lecturers. They could be considered as expert members who help to support the new students in growing accustomed to the new academic community. The experts explicitly display the values and practices of the academic community which are hidden and unspoken to the novice members (Duff 2007a; 2010a). The expert members are also encouraged to provide the new members with the necessary linguistic knowledge, skills, guidance, and occasions for these new members to take part in. By observing tutors or students who are more proficient in the classroom, novice students might gradually participate more actively in speech activities, such as class discussions, where they become more proficient in the linguistic conventions and cultural norms and practices (Duff 1996; Morita 2000). This echoes Duff’s (2010b) suggestion that it is common for the novice members to deliberately analyse, borrow, and imitate others’ interaction styles to
successfully participate in academic speech activities, provided that that is their academic goal. It is argued that with time, experience, and some explicit or implicit mentoring by the expert members, novices will eventually be able to participate and socialise like proficient members of the community (Duff 2002a). This however depends on whether their socialisation goal is to be acknowledged by the members of the target community.

In the present study, Malaysian students who had just started their bachelor’s degree were the novices while the tutors and the home students were the expert members. In academic institutions, academic discourse socialisation involves not only current students and academicians, but also new students due to the fact that it is a socialisation process the students have to undergo when they first enter any academic institution (Duff 2010b). These new students are socialised into a new academic community to become competent members when participating in both written and oral academic discourse (Duff 2010b). Even though these newcomers might have the same home language as that of the academic institution, they may come from different places with different personal and academic backgrounds, knowledge, and experience (Duff 2010b). Some new students even come with different ranges of linguistic knowledge and cultural backgrounds (Morita 2000). Some other factors might affect academic discourse socialisation such as the types of tasks given in the class, and the students’ personal and academic background namely, their linguistic background or their previous learning experiences (Ho 2011). As these factors vary from one student to another, the challenges faced are also individually distinctive (Morita 2000). This suggests that the students’ linguistic
and cultural backgrounds are two of the important characteristics to be identified and acknowledged when discussing academic discourse socialisation. Another important characteristic of the students involved in the academic socialisation process is the way these students and their background are viewed by themselves and other members of the community such as peers, tutors and lecturers (Duff 2010b). They may be perceived to be worthy, capable, and legitimate insiders and individuals who have the potential to gain full membership of the academic community or otherwise. The perceptions they have of themselves and the perceptions others have of them could affect their socialisation experience.

2.2.3 Language

Another important element of academic discourse socialisation is the language that is used in academic settings such as the classrooms and all the norms related to it (Duff 2010b). Language is a fundamental element of the language socialisation process as it helps in mediating the cultural and communicative knowledge between the experts and novices (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez 2002). This is originally mentioned by Mandelbaum (1958); language is perceived as the optimal means to socialise. Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) take a similar position and suggest that socialisation could be achieved through language use and socialisation is one of the means to use the language. Novices not only learn the language and the ability to correctly use the language when socialising in the new community but they also learn other information such as the culture practices, values, non-linguistic content, and ideologies practised by the target community (Ochs 1986). As a result of the observation and socialisation, novices become fluent in using the language and
eventually become the expert community members (Duranti et al. 2012). University students are socialised by their lecturers, tutors or peers in academic settings using the language (Kibler et al. 2014). This shows the importance of choosing a suitable medium of instruction, thus, any decision pertaining to it needs to be thoroughly deliberated by important stakeholders such as the relevant government ministry (See next section on EMI).

2.3 **Spoken academic discourse**

Due to the distinct features of spoken and written academic discourse, the ways students are socialised into practices, genres or events of these academic discourses are also different. Studies have been conducted to investigate the conventions and practices of different genres such as group discussions, group project, and oral presentations (Duff 1995; Morita 2000; Kobayashi 2003; Zappa-hollman 2007; Ho 2011). They suggest that students be encouraged to comment, constructively criticise, and contribute stimulating questions or opinions which could be used for later discussions (Duff 2009). It is thus important for students to be engaged in critical thinking and reasoned discussion by offering them critical constructive feedback (Ho 2011). However, the convention of spoken academic discourse is different based on different academic cultures. Thus, these intercultural differences and different language, cultures, and ideologies could cause affective issues and tensions (Duff 2010b). For students whose first language is different from the home language of the academic institution, some might not be recognised as competent and legitimate speakers of the language (Miller 2004). Their voices in the classroom may be lost and eventually self-confidence and the ability to speak too (Miller 2004). Students may therefore view the practice of academic socialisation as
potentially face-threatening and stressful (Duff 2010b; Jones 1999). This view may also be linked to pressures, struggles, difficulties, and dilemmas.

2.4 Academic Seminars as a Community of Practice

Academic seminars could be considered as community of practice because these seminars consist of novice members who aim to be experts of the seminars. This can be achieved as they interact with other members, both experts and novices within the seminars and consequently mastering the conventions and understanding the cultures of the targeted seminar (Wenger 1998). In fact, different seminars may have different cultures, similar to the concept of community of practice where different communities of practice may consist of different cultures. This mirrors the difference between the UK and Malaysian academic seminars.

According to Wierzbicka (1994), the cultural scripts of the UK society which is associated with Anglo-culture (Goddard 2000) state that all individuals have the right to express their opinions at the right time as they value free expression of opinions. The cultural scripts expect for its members to express open and honest feelings (Katriel & Philipsen 1981; Carbaugh 1988) which the society values. This means the members of the UK society is expected to think for themselves and voice their opinions critically. This behaviour is also expected in the UK academic settings as students are encouraged to voice their opinions critically in seminars (Kember 2001). The UK society also values personal autonomy which means that individuals should do a task because they wanted to and not forced to (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2004, p. 156). The Malay cultural scripts somewhat reflect the Malaysia cultural script as the Malay
language is the national language. In contrast to the UK, Malaysia cultural scripts also describe the Malaysian’s attitudes towards speaking which is ‘jaga hati orang’ (translation: looking after people’s feelings) or ‘jaga mulut’ (translation: mind your mouth) (Goddard 2000). This shows that the Malaysians are advised to think carefully before saying anything. Due to this expected culture, students do not contribute to the classroom discussion as they might think what they say would hurt others. As a result, Malaysian students were found to not contribute to the classroom or tutorials and they only contributed when they were summoned (Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; 2010b; Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012).

Malaysia cultural scripts also take into consideration hierarchy. This means hierarchical order is perceived to be very important and that individuals have their own place and order. Malaysians are expected to ‘menghormati’ (translation: show deference or respect) others especially the elderly (Goddard 2000). This means challenging someone of higher hierarchical order by subordinates is not accepted in Malaysia. Malaysia cultural scripts state that the society has the term ‘patut, sesuai’ which means appropriate. This means Malaysians value relationship and they would not be likely to perform a deviant act. In the Malaysian academic setting, students are expected to act appropriately. This preference could also be seen in Malaysian academic settings where students are not encouraged to speak during class, not to interrupt the teaching flow or challenge teachers (Idris & Rosniah 2006; Salmiza & Afik 2012; Jemaah Nazir Sekolah Persekutuan 1996; Salleh as cited in
The present study looks at how MSUK and MSM engaged in seminars particularly when they were in group discussions. Group discussions are one of the common practices in seminars in academic institutions that provide students with the opportunities and contexts to progressively socialise into the conventions of specific academic disciplines (Applebee 1996; Kubota 2001; Morgan et al. 2000; Jones 1999). Students are required to participate in the discussions by offering their opinions or questioning points they find incorrect or challenging. In explaining and clarifying their perspectives, students need to justify their opinions with the theories and concepts found in the textbooks and other academic materials or draw from their own learning experiences (Ho 2011). Kim (2006) and Han (2007) suggest that in order for the students to successfully associate the theories and concepts with the topic of discussion, they need to do comprehensive reading of the course content. Students are expected to also understand the culture and norms of the group discussions if they want to participate. In addition, they are required to analyse problems or predict possible solutions to the problems during group discussions (Ho 2011). By contributing to the group discussion, students are involved with the academic socialisation process which includes the relationships between multiple layers of academic texts, registers, and genres and contexts (Bloome & Bailey 1992). Students could then continuously develop their capability of and
perspectives on the course content. As they progress, the students will be able to master the course content and steadily become socialised into the conventions and practices of their field of study (Ho 2011).

This section shows how academic setting are different from one to another based on the norms and conventions of the different cultures.

2.5 English as Medium of Instruction in Malaysia

One of the main elements of academic discourse socialisation is the language used to communicate by members of the academic community. This is referred to as the medium of instruction which indicates the language used in educational institutions to implement the curriculum and impart knowledge (Dearden 2014). The choice of the medium of instruction is important as it strongly affects whether a language and culture could be maintained, preserved or revitalised (Fishman 2000; Goglia & Afonso 2012; Hajek & Goglia 2019). It would also affect the access to political and economic opportunities (Alis 2012). English as a medium of instruction (EMI) refers to the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries where the first language of the population is not English (Dearden 2014). There is an increase in the implementation of EMI due to globalisation or internationalisation (Trevaskes et al. 2003, p. 5). Fishman (1968) suggests that the use of western languages such as English could improve the social and economic development of some countries particularly in the fields of education, economy, and science and technology. He also proposes that indigenous languages such as the Malay language could be used to improve national unity and identity as all Malaysians need to learn the Malay language in public schools and it is one of the
languages used to communicate among different ethnicities. However, in Malaysia, the English language is also considered the language to facilitate national unity and identity because it is used as a communication tool among different ethnicities because they have different first languages and English is seen as a neutral language (Lee 2003b). Tan (2005, p. 48) supports this view as he refers to the English language as the ‘Malaysian language’.

Many countries such as Hong Kong, Vietnam, Taiwan, Japan, and Indonesia are in favour of implementing EMI. Despite not having full support from the community, some of them went ahead with the implementation (Dearden 2014). The implementation of EMI has generated much debate mainly because the directive comes ‘top-down’ from the policy makers instead of from consultation with the stakeholders (Dearden 2014), particularly the teachers and students, who are the implementers. One of the issues discussed is whether the implementation of EMI divides the different socio-economic groups because using English in education would limit access to knowledge and education for the lower socio-economic groups (Dearden 2014).

There is also the fear that the implementation of EMI would negatively affect the perceptions of citizens towards the first language or national identity or could result in language loss (Dearden 2014). This stems from the local community’s belief that EMI would impose English as a hegemonic language (Kirkpatrick 2014). Those who are directly affected by EMI such as teachers and students may also perceive EMI as a burden because of their own English language limitation (Kirkpatrick 2014). Countries implementing EMI often do it
without providing adequate and sufficient educational infrastructure. For instance, there are presently not enough linguistically qualified teachers to teach academic subjects in English (Nunan 2003; Dearden 2014).

Although there are countries that receive negative feedback from the public or key stakeholders, there are also countries whose stakeholders promote the implementation of EMI. Fifty-five countries were reported to be pressured in this way by other parents who thought that EMI could lead to a better education (Dearden 2014). As EMI is considered as a gateway into a global world (Dearden 2014), is able to internationalise education, and provides opportunities for their students to participate in an international business community and a global academic community (Dearden 2014). The internationalisation of universities, in particular, could lead to admitting more foreign students and employing more international academics.

EMI is also considered as a mechanism which may improve the students’ English language proficiency and enable them to compete in the global market because students are exposed to the English language while learning through it (Dearden 2014). As students get better at the language, they will be more prepared to compete in the global community (Dearden 2014). It is acknowledged that EMI has helped to broaden the minds of those involved, thus increasing their academic mobility among different domains (Kirkpatrick 2014). Academicians such as teachers consider EMI to be one of the means for them to develop their personal and professional skills that could result in their
career advancement. Thus, teachers and students can both benefit internationally from EMI (Dearden 2014).

2.5.1 Malaysia

Malaysia is one of the countries that implements EMI. As mentioned before, Malaysia is known as a multi-ethnic country as it comprises a variety of ethnicities, languages, religions, customs, and values (Alis 2012). Because of this, the language selected as the medium of instruction in the Malaysian education system raises many issues and concerns on, whether to use the national language, Malay, which seems to promote national unity, or the second language, English, which is considered to be the language everyone is encouraged to be proficient in due to its significant global use (Tollefson & Tsui 2004).

Despite the availability of the English language through pre-university and the various twinning programmes in Malaysia (Asmah 1996), Malaysia has used Malay as the medium of instruction for more than 20 years and has not faced any difficulties or complications (Alis 2012) particularly in imparting knowledge (Gill 2004). The use of Malay as the medium of instruction is judged to have had a positive outcome because of the developments of more than 1 million new Malay terms in 300 different fields such as medicine, science, and technology (Alis 2012). Within higher education institutions, the Malay language is used effectively in imparting knowledge, specifically in science and mathematics (Alis 2012). These terms were acknowledged and recognised by international bodies and as a result, it indirectly acknowledges the Malay language as the language of science in Malaysia (Alis 2012). The change of
medium of instruction to the English language is highly contested (Alis 2012), following the argument by Faizah and Marzilah (2008) that EMI does not benefit students who are not proficient in the English language. In the same vein, Rajendren (2004) asserts that if EMI is implemented, the focus will no longer be on ethnic harmony and hence national integration might be taken for granted.

The need to implement EMI is largely due to the low rate of Malaysian graduates’ employability especially in the private sector (Alis 2012; Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015). The graduates from public universities, in particular, are not proficient enough because public universities use Malay as the medium of instruction (Alis 2012). Hence, these graduates are unable to compete with those who graduated from private universities that implement EMI. The implementation of EMI is seen as a promise for future economic gain (Dearden 2014). It was also decided that EMI was to be implemented in order to turn the nation into an educational hub within the region (Alis 2012), specifically at the higher level of education such as universities and pre-university colleges. Tertiary level was included because it could help in the realisation of Vision 2020. The vision was introduced by Malaysia’s fourth Prime Minister in 1991 which states that Malaysia will become a developed country by 2020 addressing and overcoming nine (9) challenges (Nur Azura & Normi Azura 2014; Rafikul 2011). Despite the strong resistance especially from Malay scholars (Alis 2012), the medium of instruction for science and mathematics in national schools was reintroduced (English was used as one of the mediums of instruction in Malaysian schools between 1957-1970) from Malay to English in 2003, sparking controversies and debates. The change requires the use of
English in the teaching of Mathematics and Science (ETeMS). Science and mathematics were chosen because of its importance in industrial development. As suggested by Baker (1995), English is the language of science and technology. Hence, Malaysia needs a workforce that could access the information in science and technology available mostly in English. However, teachers in Malaysia claim they cannot teach science and technology in the English language due to their lack of English language proficiency (Alwis 2005; Ambigapathy & Revathi 2004).

Although Alis (2012) and Ong and May (2008) assert that using English as the medium of instruction does not help in the improvement and development of English language proficiency of students and teachers, studies have shown the opposite (Collier & Thomas 2007; Faizah & Marzilah 2008; Ong & May 2008; Dearden 2014). For instance, Faizah and Marzilah (2008) conducted a study on 44 secondary school students and 43 of them responded that their English had improved after the implementation of teaching science and mathematics in English. Ong and May (2008) found that mathematics and science teachers claim that EMI improves their English language linguistics proficiency. Nevertheless, due to the heated debates and resistance from a part of the Malaysian public who sees English as a threat to the national language, the education ministry reverted the decision and Malay is again used as the medium of instruction in 2009 (Hazita 2016). This was done to appease the Malay nationalists prior to the general election in 2009 (Dearden 2014).
Producing holistic individuals is the mission statement in the National Education Philosophy (NEP) and Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) (MEBHE). Recent research, however, has found that Malaysian students do not speak in classroom discussions (Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; 2010b; Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011) and that Malaysian graduates, especially the Malays lack the communication skills. This has resulted in the update of the recent Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) (MBEHE) which aspires to produce Malaysian graduates who are able to use at least two languages, Malay and English, proficiently and competently.

2.6 Identity

This study moves away from the approach that sees individuals as having one fixed and stable identity (Nias 1989), including in the field of psychology and education (Berkman, Livingston & Kahn 2017). It instead draws from the constructivism approach and perceives identity as discursively constructed and negotiated in talk by individuals. Identity is also how individuals see themselves and how they see themselves in relation to other people and the society (Lee 2003a; Norton 1997). It is dynamic and flexible, dependent on the contexts the students were in (Hawkins 2005; Lee 2003a; Côté & Levine 2002; Antaki 1998; Asmah 1998), and it is also always constructed and negotiated (Gee 2003). Gee (2001) and Brown, Reveles and Kelly (2005) argue that identities could be discursively constructed (Bamberg et al. 2011).

According to Jenkins (2014, p. 8), identity refers to the process of change where individuals either construct new identities, return to old identities or
transform from existing ones. Lee (2003a) expands this definition by adding that identity is how individuals interpret themselves and their social world. Thus, identity refers to who people are to each other (Benwell & Stokoe 2006, p. 6). Norton adds the concept of time to show that identity progresses and develops with time (1997, p.410). Gee also characterises identity as “kind of person one is recognized as being, at a given time and place” (2001, p.99). Building on this definition, Grad and Martin Rojo (2008, p.9) describe identity as dynamic, continuous, and changing as it is derived from the position individuals put themselves in and how these positions relate to the community they are in. In short, identity is constructed through the negotiation of one’s experiences (Wenger 1998, p. 149).

Gee further describes identity as dynamic because it “can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and of course, can be ambiguous or unstable” (2001, p.99). Antaki (1998) argues that identity is highly contextual. Similarly, Archer (2003, p.11) postulates that there is a relationship between identity and social environment. Lee (2003a) and Asmah (1998), in support of this argument, states that individuals construct their identity based on the context or interactions they are involved in. Wenger (1998) suggests that identity construction process is also dynamic because it continues as long as individuals interact with their community. Park also advocates that identity is fluid and highly negotiable (2007) as it depends on how people interact with each other and where they position themselves in relation to others.
2.6.1 Academic identity

The concept of identity is in keeping with the constructivism approach which views meaning or reality as constructed through social interactions (Park 2007). Constructivism sees individuals such as students as unique and complex where they seek and create meaning during their interactions with not only their own physical, historical, and sociocultural context, but others’ too (Rajadurai 2010a; 2010b). They can position themselves and construct new identities by interacting with other people (Rajadurai 2010a; 2010b). Giroir (2014) and Winchester (2013) suggest that students construct and negotiate their identity in relation to other people whom they are speaking to in the classrooms including lecturers or tutors and other students, and this is a continuous process (Rajadurai 2010a; 2010b). Ting-Toomey (1999) echoes this statement, suggesting that students attempt to negotiate their identities by asserting, defining, modifying, challenging and/or supporting how they see themselves and how they see others. This happens when students are engaged in their dialogic process in the Community of Practice they are in (Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001; Norton & Toohey 2001). Students indirectly construct and negotiate their identities by interacting with others, such as other students, when they are trying to gain a full participation of the targeted community, which is the classroom.

Winchester (2013) argues that during classroom interactions, teachers play a significant role in students’ identity construction and negotiation. She suggests that teachers, as expert members of the community, could facilitate students to participate in classroom discussions and outside the classroom
This is also discussed by Mandefro (2019) where he mentioned that tutors need to encourage students to participate in classroom discussions. Tutor's role is crucial in having students to be engaged with the content of the discussion (Fassinger 2000; Hyde & Ruth 2002; Rocca 2010). Tutors could encourage students by providing positive response such as acknowledging or nodding to their contribution (Mandefro 2019; Hyde & Ruth 2002; Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012). Teachers could also help students gaining cultural, communicative or linguistic competence. This can be done by providing students with appropriate communicative tools, and linguistic and cultural resources (Winchester 2013). This means that as students interact with teachers, they may gain competence and consequently, negotiate their identities. This suggests that interactions with the tutors in the classroom influence students’ identity construction and negotiation.

Similarly, students are also considered as the source of intellectuals and cultural resources (Winchester 2013). In other words, interactions with other students may help students to gain competence which would affect their identity negotiation. For instance, students’ language repertoire could also influence the students and other students’ participation in the classroom discussion. Susak (2016) and Zhao (2016) assert that students who do not have the appropriate language repertoire may not be able to interact in the classroom discussion and consequently influencing their and other students’ identity co-construction. This is also applicable to the repertoires of the different languages, varieties, accents and dialects. Other than that, Mandefro (2019) suggests that students’ personality may also affect their participation in the classroom, influencing their
peers’ participation too. Students who are shy or reserved may not interact with their peers which might indirectly affect their and their peers’ identity negotiation (Zhao 2016; Abebe & Deneke 2015).

Similarly, considering the present study, the students are seen as those who construct and negotiate their identities in reference to who they interact with and how they interact in seminars. The process that the novice members undergo is called legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger 1991). McKay and Wong (1996) and Norton (2000) argue that students may improve their chances to engage with other people by challenging what is expected of them and consequently increase their chances to construct and negotiate their identities.

Within a multicultural community, as is the case of this study, interactional process becomes more complex because second language learners position themselves in a multicultural academic environment. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), intercultural communication aims to produce meaning that is shared between different individuals across societies and cultures when interacting among each other. It is a social situation in which students need to be mindful of what they bring to the interactions and how they perceive the other speakers as this could influence their own identity and others’ identity. Due to the nature of the multicultural classroom, students bring complex identities into their classroom where they have their own personal identity, their cultural identity, group identity, and the identity that is expected of them. Considering that it is almost impossible for students to deny their history,
cultural beliefs, and values, Ting-Toomey (1999) argues that identity construction and negotiation is successful when the community members (tutors and students) understand, respect, and support each other within and outside of the community.

One of the elements to investigate when identifying one’s culture is one’s habitus. ‘Habitus’ is a dynamic process which develops as individuals progress in life. According to Bourdieu (1990, p.54), habitus is the structure that characterises the individuals’ existence which is based on the view and acknowledgement of what is experienced by the individuals. Habitus is based on what has happened in the past to a person in terms of family and educational background, cultural beliefs and values, and because of these experiences, individuals produce certain practices that affect their existence. Bourdieu (1991) also suggests that linguistic practices, which encourage habitus, influence identity construction. According to Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), agency is a part of habitus and this means students also bring their agency into the classroom. Agency is the ability to act as being mediated socially and culturally (Ahearn 2001, p. 118). It is also the individuals’ act of resistance, negotiation, change, and transformation (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004). Duranti (2004) views agency as the control individuals have over their behaviours and actions that might affect them and other individuals.

Within a classroom, students may mediate their acts socially and culturally towards or against the target community. Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) propose Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) which
occurs at different levels using a wide range of linguistic variations such as accents, speech rates and intonation. In other words, this theory suggests that individuals adjust the way they communicate based on who they talk to (West & Turner 2010; Gallois et al. 2005) and the ability of those they talk to (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991). For instance, native speakers may change how they speak when having conversation with foreigners (Rivers 1981; Kaur 2014).

CAT suggests two strategies individuals may use when communicating; that individuals may be categorised into two: convergent and divergent (Giles 1973; Giles & Ogay 2007). Convergent individuals communicate to integrate or identify with the target community (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991; Giles & Ogay 2007) as they/their behaviour become more similar to the members of the target community. Another strategy in CAT is divergence where individuals diverge and emphasise their linguistic differences to show distinctions among groups members. Consequently, it creates distance among themselves. Many studies have been done on CAT focusing on interactions between supervisors and their postgraduate students (Willemyns, Gallois & Callan 2006). In conclusion, convergence involves the reduction of linguistic dissimilarities among members of a community and divergence involves the opposite (Gallois et al. 2005).

One of the accommodation strategies is code-switching where individuals code-switch to accommodate themselves to certain situations such as when talking to foreigners. According to Hashim and Tan, (2012), code-switching is commonly found in different multilingual settings such as workplace
and classrooms. Code-switching is using two languages in conversations (Gardner-Chloros, 2009). It has many functions such as, Zentella (1985) suggested that code-switching is used to hide one’s lack of fluency or memory problems when using second languages. This is also in line with what was discussed by Gardner-Chloros (2009). Studies have also shown that allowing students to mix languages when constructing meaning help them to be better in the target languages (Siti Hamin & Abdul Hameed 2006; Razianna 2005). Code-switching also ‘functions to announce specific identities, create certain meanings, and facilitate particular interpersonal relationships’ (Johnson 2000, p. 184). Individuals also code-switch to show a shift between formal and informal settings where native language may be used during informal setting while second language such as the English language may be utilised during formal setting.

In classroom interactions, students use language to interact with the tutor or other classmates. They share their thoughts and perspectives by contributing ideas and opinions, and they have a sense of belonging as they hold on to the membership they have within the classroom. From these interactions, students might change their perspectives on certain matters where their language may improve. Consequently, they may be accepted in the classroom community as the members; either novice or experts. This means that as students interact, they constantly negotiate how they see themselves and want to be seen, how they see others and how they relate the interactions to the social world (Norton 2000). As they interact and reflect upon these interactions, they may construct new identity, or they may negotiate the new identity and adopt and adapt this
identity to suit their old identity because identity is suggested to be dynamic and fluid. This negotiation of identity is also informed by how they think they are being perceived during the interactions and how they position themselves while communicating with others.

One of the earliest studies on identity in Malaysia was Asmah’s (1991) investigation on the language preference of bilingual non-Malay academics at a Malaysian public university. The study revealed that although they mainly used English, these academics preferred to use their first language when communicating with their children. Asmah (1998, p.21) also investigated the relationship between language identity and ethnicity and she found that individuals’ linguistic identity is flexible as it depends on the individuals’ development, context, and use of language. Another study on national identity was conducted by David (1996) who found that language shift occurs among the Sindhis, mainly from Sindhi to English. In fact, the participants reported that they did not consider the Sindhi language as the cultural identity marker. These two studies show how language could affect identity construction differently.

The studies on identity in Malaysia mostly focused on national identity. Studies on Malaysian students in two different academic settings, UK and Malaysia, however, are scarce. Below is the reading matrix of the studies on Malaysian students’ interactions and identity conducted in Malaysia. This matrix shows the limited number of studies on Malaysian students’ identity and interactions in classrooms, thus the need to conduct the present study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Design/ Analysis</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Lee 2003b)</td>
<td>Investigate the relationship between language and the sociocultural identities of individuals learning English as a second language (ESL)</td>
<td>14 Malaysian postgraduate students (7 Malays, 3 Chinese, 2 Indians, 1 Iban, and 1 Kadazan)</td>
<td>Qualitative research/ interview, personal narrative, questionnaire</td>
<td>Resentment towards the use of English in localised context especially among the Malays and Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Lee et al. 2010)</td>
<td>Investigate the impact of English on the construction of the social and cultural identities of a group of Malaysian undergraduates</td>
<td>20 Malaysian undergraduate students (7 Malays, 8 Chinese, 4 Indians &amp; 1 Singhalese) from public and private universities</td>
<td>Qualitative method/ semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Three dominant themes discovered: ‘Multilingualism with English emerging as the dominant language’, ‘English viewed as a pragmatic language and a language of empowerment’, and ‘Varying degrees of ‘othering’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hamidah 2012)</td>
<td>Investigate how three young Malaysian children developed an identity while experiencing second language acquisition (SLA)</td>
<td>3 young Malaysian children</td>
<td>Interview: individual &amp; group Observation</td>
<td>The children experienced SLA as a socialisation process in which the target language was being used to get on with life in a mainstream classroom and at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Design/Analysis</td>
<td>Outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah &amp; Maizatul Haizan 2012)</td>
<td>Investigate the reasons for students to speak up in the class</td>
<td>36 students (Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University of Malaysia)</td>
<td>Focus group interviews</td>
<td>The size of a classroom, personalities of the instructor and students, and the perception of peers influenced the students to speak up in class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Siti Maziha &amp; Nik Suryani 2011)</td>
<td>Explore undergraduate students’ patterns of participation in Malaysian classrooms</td>
<td>• 85 undergraduate students from two communication classes were observed  • 24 students from the two classes were interviewed</td>
<td>Interviews and observations</td>
<td>Four basic patterns of participation emerged from the data: (1) active participation 17.9%, (2) selective participation 32.1%, (3) minimal participation 46.4%, and (4) passive participation 3.6%. Their participation patterns are flexible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani &amp; Melor 2010b)</td>
<td>Discover students’ perception of classroom participation and how their perceptions impact their actual participation</td>
<td>• 85 undergraduate students from two communication classes were observed  • 24 students from the two classes were interviewed</td>
<td>Interviews and observations</td>
<td>Classroom participation was construed by students in two ways: communicating with the lecturer and other students in class, and being fully involved in the class activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani &amp; Melor 2010a)</td>
<td>Investigate factors that shape undergraduate students’ participation in Malaysian classrooms</td>
<td>• 85 undergraduate students from two communication classes were observed  • 24 students from the two classes were interviewed</td>
<td>Interviews and observations</td>
<td>Lecturers’ and classmates’ traits play significant roles in promoting student participation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The studies above were conducted on Malaysian students in relation to their identity. For instance, in his investigation of Malaysian postgraduate students, Lee (2003b) found that they resent the use of English in a localised context, especially among the Malays and Chinese. The Malays perceived that by using English, the speakers intended to ‘show off’ and be boastful because English is seen as the language used by the elitists. They also perceived English as a colonial language and its use is considered as a betrayal to the Malay language and the Malay cultural identity. The Chinese students, however, reported that they were viewed as ‘too westernised’ since they speak proper English but could not speak proper Mandarin. Lee et al. (2010) then investigated Malaysian undergraduate students on how the use of English affects their identity construction. The findings revealed three dominant themes, namely, ‘Multilingualism with English emerging as the dominant language’, ‘English viewed as a pragmatic language and a language of empowerment’, and ‘Varying degrees of ‘othering’’. Lee et al. (2010) found that one of the examples of othering in this study was that some Malaysian students felt they were marginalised by their own community when they used the English language. They shared that not a lot of people wanted to communicate with them as they were seen as coming from an elite class.

There are also studies on how Malaysian students interact in the Malaysian classrooms. For example, Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) examined the participation patterns of undergraduate Malaysian students and found that most of the students participated minimally; which means they participated when they were asked by the lecturers. It was also found that the
students mostly kept a low profile and preferred to respond using non-verbal gestures or with short answers when no one responded. Siti Maziha et al. (2010b) explored how the undergraduate Malaysian students perceive their interactions and how these perceptions affect their participation. This study revealed that the students understand participation as communication with the lecturers and other students and being engaged during class activities. Additionally, Mohd. Yusof et al. (2012) and Siti Maziha et al. (2010a) investigated the reasons students interact in the classroom and they found that the main factors are the size of a classroom, personalities of the instructor and students, and the perception of peers.

2.7 Agency or resistance?

Members of the community have their own agency, which is their own capability to act according to the requirements of the society and culture which they inhabit. Duranti et al., (2012) indicate that the process of socialisation and novices’ agency are dynamic and interactional. Agency is defined as the features individuals possess to show they are in control of their behaviour where this behaviour might affect other entities’ behaviours (Duranti 2004). Agency can also be defined as “the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001, p. 112). It involves a relationship which is constantly renegotiated among individuals and the larger community (Lantolf & Pavlenko 2001). Agentive learners are seen as active participants in the learning process of either first or second language (Dewaele 2009), while demonstrating the capacity and ability to make measured choices (Duff 2012). Having a sense of agency gives individuals the confidence to accept, refuse or resist relating to the (target community’s) society and culture. This echoes Duranti et al.’s (2012)
proposition: a child’s agency includes their ability to accept, subvert or totally reject the expert members’ dominant discourses which is important in reproducing the community’s target discourse. Thus, it is possible that students may resist being a part of the academic community they are in. Similar to Malaysian students in this study, the students may be able to accept, refuse or resist being a part of the target community.

2.8 The present study

One of the goals of language socialisation research is to distinguish the roles of language in everyday interactions based on the practices, beliefs, values, and ideologies of the target culture (Duranti et al. 2012). Identifying these roles would help novices with the process of becoming competent users of the language and eventually members of the target community. The study of language socialisation has now evolved to include second language socialisation and socialisation across different communities (Duranti et al. 2012). Previous research on language socialisation has concentrated on socialisation into academic practices and investigated academic socialisation in general, the roles of members of the academic community, how students are perceived by their tutors and classmates, and the relationship among members of the community (Adamson 1990; Jacoby & Gonzalez 1991; Duff 1995, 2002a; 2007a; Morita 2000; Kobayashi 2003; Zappa-hollman 2007; Séror 2008).

Nevertheless, studies on how Malaysian students are being socialised into seminars in the UK and Malaysia are scarce.

To date, spoken academic discourse is still under-researched and work on the linguistic features of spoken academic corpora in higher education
institutions in Malaysia is limited. Most studies involving higher education institutions have focused generally on lecture delivery as well as specific courses like Engineering (Noor Mala & Ummul Khair 2009; Singh, Narasuman & Thambusamy 2012; Wu 2013). However, none of the research looked at Malaysian students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse, particularly their interactions and perceptions towards their engagement and others, and how this relates to their identity construction and negotiation.

The present study takes the position that identity is always changing and progressive. An understanding of whether identity is influenced by interactions, depending on the context and position, is relevant to this study because students presented their interactions during classroom observation and reported how their interactions and others’ interactions impact their identities during interviews and focus group discussions. It is also based on the cultural expectations Malaysian students had to experience by looking at how these expectations affect their interactions and identity constructions. This approach seems relevant to this study because it considers the different settings, contexts, and positions students are in when interacting and how these affect their identity construction and negotiation. The general questions answered in this study are ‘to what extent would settings, contexts and positions have an impact on students’ identity in relation to their interactions’ and ‘to what extent identities are different or similar given the settings, contexts and positions students are in?’. These questions were generally addressed by researchers such as Lee (2003b) and Lee et al. (2010) who investigated Malaysian students’ perceptions of how the English language use and different social
positions affect their identity, and Mohd. Yusof et al. (2012), Siti Maziha et al. (2010b), Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) and Siti Maziha et al. (2010a) who investigated the interaction patterns of Malaysian students in Malaysia.

Hence, an empirical research into Malaysian students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse is needed to fill a gap in the research within the area of interactions, identity, cross-cultural expectation and multilingualism. Therefore, this study investigating Malaysian students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse fills a gap in the existing research. It centres on how students interact in different educational contexts and how they perceive their interactions and others’ interactions. Hence, this present study on Malaysian students’ engagement understands and recognises the conventions of academic cultures the students are socialised into which are constructed discursively. It also looks at the different linguistic and non-linguistic forms that the students employ in order to successfully participate and interact in the new academic community which is in accordance with the norms and expectations of the community, provided it is their goal. It is hoped that the study would reveal how Malaysian students are socialised by their tutors and classmates, how they socialise themselves into the seminars, and the linguistic elements they use in socialising in seminars.

### 2.9 Summary

Chapter Two situates the present study within the concepts of academic discourse socialisation and identity through the review of the relevant literature. The literature reveals that there is a link between the concept of academic discourse socialisation and identity as the main principles of these two concepts.
are similar: language, members of the community, and social interactions. In this study, the English language is discussed as the medium of instruction in the context of Malaysia and issues raised are addressed in this chapter. As this study concerns Malaysian students in international universities as both home and international students, the chapter also discussed the relevant literature pertaining to the different conventions required of them as home and international students. It is due to this that an understanding of identity is significant to this study in order to comprehend the relationship between interactions and identity.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I explain the interpretive paradigm used in this study and how my understanding of it affected my choices of research approach and methodology. Section 3.2 justifies the research design and research methods employed for this study. I link the design objectives to the research questions in order to support my argument for the design and methods chosen. I then discuss the sampling procedure and introduce the participants of the study. The next section of this chapter deals with data collection and data analysis. I provide a detailed narrative of how I collected and analysed my data. This narrative begins with the pilot study I conducted prior to the data collection followed by the choice of setting in which this study was located, the methods and research instruments I employed, and the techniques and theoretical frameworks I chose to analyse my data. I will also try to reflect upon the research practices I have utilised during my data collection and data analysis, and the problems I encountered employing these procedures and strategies. In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the ethical considerations, reliability, and limitations of the methods used that may be associated with interpretive research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the whole discussion.

3.1 Research paradigms

A paradigm is a set of systems which specifies how individuals view the world in relation to their own views, others’ views, and the relationship between
these views (Guba & Lincoln 1994, p. 107). Trauth (2001) and Krauss (2005, p.759) agree that researchers’ beliefs about the world and research itself influence the choices they make for the studies they conduct. Further explained by Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.5), a paradigm is the system that individuals believe in, comprising three important elements: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) note that ontology is the elements concerning assumptions about reality; epistemology deals with the relationship between the researcher and the researched; and methodology is the process of research itself. These authors assert that the elements chosen by researchers are based on how they perceive the world and how they view themselves in it (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p. 5). It is important for researchers to understand the perspective from which they view the research itself because the understanding would assist them in clarifying any methodological issues such as data collection procedure and techniques when analysing and interpreting the data.

As suggested by Crotty (1998) and Denzin and Lincoln (2005), what researchers believe guides how the overall research will be conducted. From the epistemology element, there are three positions: positivism, constructivism, and subjectivism. Positivism’s view and meaning of reality are contrasted as compared to constructivism and subjectivism. Positivism views reality as separate from perception and researchers who hold this position work to discover it and these researchers believe that reality is made of patterns and regularities where a specific relationship can be studied using specific scientific methods.
This means that the present study is the opposite of what positivists believe, i.e. there is only one true reality separated from perceptions. When it comes to human beings, and reality and meaning, an important consideration is that humans do not share only one reality. Human beings also do not construct meaning in the same way because they have different background experiences that are unique to them. It is difficult to believe that all Malaysian students engage in seminars in a similar way because each will bring different experiences into the seminar, thus influencing their engagement. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be used to generalise on how all Malaysian students engage in seminars. Instead, it is hoped that the findings may reflect the broader situation of Malaysian students studying in the UK or Malaysian universities and that the study is the first step in understanding of the global academic scenario.

Subjectivism sees reality as constructed by the researcher and by the researched as it is constructed through their unconscious such as their religious beliefs (Crotty 1998, p. 9). Subjectivism also refers to experiences the researched go through, their perceptions, and how they interpret the world around them (Demirdirek 2010). Subjectivism also allows researchers to interpret the data obtained in relation to the participants (Demirdirek 2010). For instance, researchers would participate in the daily activities of their participants (Demirdirek 2010). However, for this study, I did not participate in the Malaysian students’ interactions when they were in seminars in order to give them space to be themselves and not feel pressured with my presence. Demirdirek (2010)
claimed that adopting the subjectivism paradigm would provide researchers with optimal findings in their investigation of social phenomenon.

Constructivism views reality as something that is dependent on one’s perception. In relation to this study, constructivists believe that reality does not pre-exist but is constructed when individuals interact with other people and the community. Thus, they believe that there is not only one reality; reality can be many and that this happens because individuals have the capability to construct their own reality or meaning of the real world. This study is based on the assumptions that knowledge is the reality that is constructed socially through the experiences of individuals within a community (Schwandt 1994, p. 125). These assumptions fit within the constructivism and interpretivism paradigms (Pritchard & Woollard 2010), two of the theoretical paradigms classified by Mackenzie and Knipe (2006).

According to Schwandt (1994, p.125), the principles encompassing the constructivism paradigm are similar to the principles that represent the interpretivism paradigm. It is asserted by Williamson (2006) that researchers who consider themselves interpretivists believe that people understand and interpret the world through the way they interact with the wider world. This relates to what defines constructivism. Fosnot (2005, p. ix) claims that constructivism deals with what has been learnt and how it is learnt. In other words, it is about knowledge and learning. This theory implies that teachers and lecturers should provide sufficient opportunity for students to learn and construct their own understanding of what is learnt so as to create a meaningful
learning. This idea was introduced by Vygotsky (1978b) with his theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and also evident in Bruner's (1966) scaffolding theory. These theories suggest that students construct their meaning and understanding of the knowledge by interacting in the classrooms where they question, respond to, interpret, and debate the knowledge.

Therefore, it is helpful for this study to hold on to the principles of interpretivism and constructivism because the participants of this study – Malaysian students – provide knowledge (in this case, the data) based on their experiences. The present study explored and understood the phenomenon studied (Grix 2010), mainly how Malaysian students engage in seminars in the UK and Malaysia. Within the paradigms of constructivism and interpretivism, I investigated if there is any difference in how the Malaysian students engage in spoken academic discourse in two different settings – UK and Malaysia – particularly to:

- identify Malaysian students’ interaction patterns in seminars in the UK and Malaysia,
- explore their perceptions towards their own interactions and others’ interactions, and
- investigate their identity construction and negotiation from the interactions and perceptions.
3.1.1 How constructivism epistemology and interpretivist paradigm affect the methodological decision making of this study

In this section, I elaborate on the epistemology of constructivism and interpretivist paradigm and their effects on the decision making of this study’s methodological choices. The task of researchers who belong in this paradigm is to discover the multiple realities found in the world. Instead of generating specific answers to the questions raised, researchers who work in this paradigm believe that research raises more inquiries that can be researched further (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Research in this paradigm is also capable of arriving at a better understanding of a specific phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Although the findings of interpretive research cannot be generalised to a wider context (Carr & Kemmis 1986), it is important to note that the purpose of interpretive research is not to generalise findings. Interpretive research is instead conducted to better understand a certain phenomenon because it acknowledges that individuals are different, and they have their unique personal experiences influencing their behaviour. In relation to the present study, interpretive research paradigm allows me to investigate how Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysia (MSM) interact in seminars and their perceptions towards their own interaction patterns and others’. Interpretive paradigm helps me to understand the phenomenon of Malaysian students’ interaction patterns and perceptions, hence allowing these patterns and perceptions to be interpreted based on Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) identity in interaction framework.
Due to the nature of constructivist epistemology and interpretivist research paradigm, there is no right or wrong reality or interpretations in interpretive and constructivist research. Within this approach, the Malaysian students construct and negotiate their identity in relation to themselves and other members of the community thus exemplifying the concept that identity is viewed as socially situated.

3.2 Research design

Research designs help researchers to specify a framework for data collection and analysis (Bryman 2016, p. 27). Yin (2013) suggests that research designs consist of five elements: (1) questions a study wishes to explore, (2) the recommendations that may come with it, (3) the sample, (4) the connection between the data and the recommendations, and (5) how the findings are interpreted and discussed. Research designs allow researchers to determine the relationships between different variables, understand behaviours and what they mean in a specific context, appreciate a specific phenomenon and its connections to the world, and to generalise or not generalise the findings to a wider world (Bryman 2016, p.27). Denzin and Lincoln (2008, p.34) add that research designs allow researchers to investigate a specific phenomenon relating them to a field of study. This means they interact with specific groups of people, settings, and institutions that are relevant to the study.

Research designs allow researchers to collect data which evidently answers the research questions. Research designs guide researchers to ensure that the direction of the study moves towards what the study aspires to achieve, whether to investigate a new phenomenon or to experiment with an existing
theory. Research designs also require researchers to determine appropriate methods to utilise in order to answer the research questions. This means the researcher needs to identify a plan of work which consists of data collection methods and ways to interpret the data which will lead to the research questions being answered.

The next section discusses qualitative research and linguistic ethnography as the approaches employed for the present study.

3.2.1 Qualitative research approach

This study employed qualitative research approach because it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon investigated. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.3) describe qualitative research as the use of a wide range of methods such as interviews and observations to investigate the human experiences and how these experiences connect to their lives and others’. Similarly, Dörnyei (2007) suggests that qualitative research approach focuses on the different aspects of human life. Qualitative research approach was employed for this study as it emphasises describing, understanding, and clarifying experiences faced by humans. This research approach is reflected in the nature of the present study because this study concentrated on the aspect of seminar engagement and interaction patterns by the Malaysian students in seminars and their perceptions.

The data for this study was collected using classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. These sets of data were triangulated. These methods were chosen because triangulation was the most suitable to
answer the main research questions: ‘How do Malaysian students engage in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?’ and the following supplementary questions:

1. How do undergraduate Malaysian students interact in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?
2. How do these students perceive their own and others' interactions in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?
3. How do these interactions and perceptions influence their identity construction and negotiation?

The above research questions and the respective relevant methods are summarised in Table 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>How do these students perceive their interactions and others' in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?</td>
<td>Interviews and focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>How do these interactions and perceptions influence their identity construction and negotiation?</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interviews and focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this section, I will justify employing triangulation and choosing qualitative approach for this study. Harklau (2005) suggests that a wide range of data collection methods is necessary. Firstly, I will provide the justification for employing three different methods (classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions) to collect the data so that each method confirms, cross-references, and verifies the findings within this specific study (Cresswell &
Piano-Clark 2017; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham 1989). To obtain the data, I initially observed the Malaysian students when they were in seminars to identify their engagement in that context, particularly how they interacted. Then, I interviewed them to gain insights into how they perceived their own and others’ interactions in seminars. After transcribing and analysing these sets of data, focus group discussions were carried out to determine the Malaysian students’ perceptions on their interactions and others’ interactions. These sets of data were transcribed, and they were analysed separately, hence, making triangulation of the data possible. I combined the findings of these sets of data during the interpretation stage. By having different sets of data and triangulating them, the findings and interpretations of the findings can be examined and validated thoroughly. The credibility and replicability of the findings are thus improved as different sets of data may have additional and different information for the phenomenon studied (Denscombe 2010). Secondly, this study employed qualitative approach because of its close relationship with the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms, which view reality as something that is socially constructed (Richards 2009, p. 148). The exploration of identity fits well within the qualitative research approach as identity is fluid and constructed through social events within a community (Giddens 2013; Lemke 1995; Lemke 2008; Norton 2000). A qualitative research method provides direct access to what happens in a community and what people do within this community (Silverman 2011).

The choice of qualitative research approach was also motivated by my belief that meanings can be interpreted through the study of linguistic
ethnography. This approach is utilised for the studies of “local and immediate actions” of the participants, examining them from their point of view (Copland & Creese 2015, p. 12). It also focuses on how interactions produced by the participants are located in certain contexts. Within this approach, the aspects of linguistics and ethnography are complementary to each other: linguistic aspects provide ethnography with various established methods to analyse linguistic structures while ethnography aspects complement linguistics studies with non-deterministic perspective towards the data (Rampton et al. 2004). According to Dörnyei (2007), the main purpose of ethnography is to provide a thick and thorough description and narrative of the targeted culture (Creswell 2013). An ethnographic approach allows researchers to observe events or phenomena that researchers may not otherwise be able to study (Heller 2008). For instance, it allows us to see how languages are connected to people and contexts, and the trajectory of this connection.

This present study also describes the cultural beliefs and ideologies which are attached to the Malaysian students’ behaviours and perceptions (Wierzbicka 1994; Goddard 2000; Goddard 1997). How the Malaysian students engage in seminars is described in great detail by employing linguistic ethnographic study. Employing this approach allows researchers to reflect upon their research practices in order to maximise the opportunities for them to obtain/collect richer sets of data (Pérez-Milans 2015; Nikolaidou & Hållsten 2018). Linguistic ethnographic is a combination of two approaches: ethnography and linguistics (Shaw, Copland & Snell 2015; Pérez-Milans 2015). According to Pérez-Milans (2015), the ethnographic angle influences the
linguistic ethnographic approach by exploring the “organisation of communicative practices within a given community” (p. 85). This perspective also requires researchers to pay attention to how individuals in a society live their daily lives in order to interpret their routine from the internal perspectives of the society members before connecting this interpretation to the external perspectives (Creese 2010). It also emphasises how this routine is connected to routines across space and time (Pérez-Milans 2015). Another part of the linguistic ethnographic approach is that the linguistic perspectives focusing on “the routine and patterned usage of a language” requiring researchers to collect and analyse audio or video-recordings or the recordings detailed transcripts (Pérez-Milans 2015, p. 86). These types of data would allow researchers to be very involved in the rich and detailed interaction data to follow the process of how the individuals construct meaning utilising the interactions.

In collecting the data for ethnographic study, Harklau (2005) proposes that participant observation in a natural setting is compulsory because natural setting exhibits participants’ actual behaviour and interactional practices. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 1) add that researchers who employ ethnography are required to extensively participate in the participants’ lives for a long period. By mingling with the Malaysian students inside and outside of the classroom, I gradually became a member of their academic community. It is also important to focus on the participants’ subjective interpretation of their own behaviours and beliefs as this helps to understand their culture (Morse & Richards 2002; Richards 2003). Despite Hornberger’s (1994, p. 688) claim that it might be difficult to maintain balance in the perceptions of the insider and
outsider, as a researcher, I managed to maintain the balance by giving the Malaysian students the space to interact naturally and ensuring that I know my limitation as a non-participant observer. In the context of the present study, Hornberger (1994) also proposes that ethnography study is ideal in generating initial hypotheses on research topics as it enables researchers to view the topic in a holistic way and focus on the bigger picture that reveals the interrelatedness of all aspects of the research.

This study also employed conversation analysis as an analytical tool in analysing its data. Conversation analysis (henceforth CA) is the study of language especially in its use in interactions. It emphasises what participants do when they interact with other people within the same community. CA emphasises that interactions demonstrate that there is always order (Sacks, Jefferson, & Schegloff 1992, p. 484). In other words, participants produce and maintain this order when interacting with others depending on the conventions and expectations of the community they are in. Within this principle, data for CA studies need to be actual interactions that are believed to occur among people in certain settings and are contextually situated (Heritage 1995). Actual interactions occurring within real contexts allow access to the information needed in exploring what actually occur during talks (Sidnell 2016). Based on this description, I believe that CA allows me to investigate interactions because the data obtained for this study is naturally occurring. This study also focused on the actual exchanges by the Malaysian students in academic settings. I also decided to adopt CA as the analytical tool for this study because the classroom
observation data of the present study was examined and analysed based on the principle that interactions tend to be in sequential order.

The figure below illustrates the main steps of data collection and data analysis in this study:

![Data collection and data analysis procedure](image)

Figure 1 Data collection and data analysis procedure

Before discussing the ethical considerations of this study, the participants and how they were recruited are introduced and described in the next section.

### 3.3 Sampling

Qualitative research approach applies to the description and understanding of human experiences and the clarification of these experiences (Dörnyei 2007). The present study adopts this approach because it investigates how MSUK and MSM experience spoken academic discourse of the university
life, particularly seminar discussions. To maintain the reliability of this study (see 3.10), I carefully decided to employ a sampling strategy to recruit the participants of this study, MSUK and MSM. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2013) assert that the quality of a study is measured not only by the methodology or instruments used but also how relevant the sampling procedure is. Thus, the reliability of the study could be improved by the researcher’s careful decision on sampling procedure. Although the principles of sampling procedures are normally related to quantitative research approach (Mason 2002), it is important to consider the sampling procedure no matter how small the qualitative studies are (Patton 2002; Silverman 2013; Strauss & Corbin 2015).

The qualitative research approach does not concern the quantity of the data (Merriam 2002), rather it explores a particular phenomenon by investigating the participants who produce it. This technique of carefully choosing a set of participants for a purpose is named ‘purposive sampling’. This sampling technique was employed to recruit the participants of this study in the UK and Malaysia (Dörnyei 2007). The criteria that I have applied in choosing the participants are listed below:

a. The participants have to be Malaysian students; they need to be registered in the UK and Malaysian universities.

b. These students need to be in their first year of bachelor’s degree.

c. They need to be enrolled in seminars which utilised the English language as the medium of instruction. Further details can be found in 3.4.
i. UK setting: MSUK were contacted about the module they were supposed to enrol in via WhatsApp application and confirmed via email by the respective convenors.

ii. Malaysia setting: the faculty was contacted to find out which module students have to enrol in.

Malaysian students' ethnic background was not taken into account when choosing the participants, because the present study did not focus on this factor. However, where they went to study was taken into consideration as this study aims to explore the difference on how Malaysian students interact when they were in seminars in two different settings: UK and Malaysia. This decision is applicable for participants in both settings. Furthermore, the sampling technique utilised for this study was purposive sampling and as long as the participants fit the purpose, they were potentially chosen and students' ethnicity was not one of the criteria used.

The set is able to provide rich information about and diverse insights into the phenomenon studied (Patton 2002, p. 230). The MSUK and MSM were my main source in investigating how they interact in seminars and how they perceive these interactions and others' interactions. They were also able to provide me with detailed data. As a result of adopting this sampling technique, I could conduct an in-depth analysis to identify common patterns of socialisation and language use in seminars, particularly their interactions, among the first-year Malaysian students from the rich dataset. Although generalisation cannot be done from the findings of this study, typical features of students' seminar
engagement experience could be identified, and in this study, Malaysian students’ interaction patterns in seminars. Silverman (2011) also suggested that a sample of six to ten participants would work well as this allows the researcher to complement the rich data which is needed to understand the research topics discussed.

3.4 Research participants

The Malaysian students chosen for this study went to Malaysian public schools which means they learnt the same curriculum. They were chosen due to my personal interests in investigating how they cope with the different academic cultures and different demands of the language in a new academic environment despite having an access to their first language. For instance, the Malaysian students were expected to follow the UK academic convention. Other than that, both groups are expected to be working in the Malaysian workplace community in which employers look for graduates who are proficient in communicating using the English language (Tengku Shahraniza 2016; Isarji, Zainab, Ainol Madziah, Tunku Badariah & Mohammad Sahari 2013). The MSUK were chosen because most of them would still go back to Malaysia to work and all of them mentioned this during my interview sessions with them. This is because most of them received scholarship from the Malaysian government which bounds them to a contract. In addition to this, the MSM were chosen to investigate how they were in seminars in reference to the expectations of the Ministry of Education Malaysia.
Both settings were comparable because both used the English language as the medium of instruction. The Malaysian university chosen utilised the English language because it has international students. Consequently, universities in both settings were multicultural. Malaysian students in both settings were required to pay fees. They were either self-sponsored, scholarship-recipients or student-loaners. In recruiting the participants for this study, a different procedure was taken for the two different settings: UK and Malaysia. This procedure is described below.

3.4.1 Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK)

Upon obtaining ethical clearance, Malaysian students who were going to be in the UK in Autumn Term 2015/2016 were recruited through different channels such as the scholarship sponsors, A-level colleges, and friend-contacts. Five students were finally identified via mutual friends who knew them, and they were approached through these friend-contacts. As they were still in Malaysia during this time, they were formally contacted via WhatsApp application. Then, they were briefed on the study and asked for their consent to have me observe and audio-record the seminars they were in, interview, and conduct focus group discussions with them. Some initial information was gathered such as the programme they were about to take. After identifying these programmes, the modules that the students were supposed to register for were identified via the school’s website and their course convenors and tutors were contacted to obtain permission to observe the students in the seminars. There were four modules which were all compulsory (Introduction to Business Management, Economic Foundation of Finance, Principle of Finance, and Architectural Humanities 1). Once permission was obtained, the preparations
for the data collection began and I printed and photocopied the relevant documents, such as information sheets and consent forms.

When the five Malaysian students arrived in the UK, I set up a meeting with them to explain the research and again asked for their consent. After explaining the study to the five Malaysian students, the information sheet and consent form were distributed to each (Appendix 1; Appendix 2). The students were given the time to read the information sheet, ask questions if they wanted to, and complete the consent form. After the one-hour meeting, the Malaysian students handed in the consent form and it was unanimously agreed that I could start the classroom observation. However, during this meeting, one student decided to only be interviewed. Before the first classroom observation commenced, another three Malaysian students were identified and recruited. The final student was recruited during a gathering of Malaysian students that gathered current and new Malaysian students. Similar procedure was taken in obtaining their consent to be involved in this study. During the first seminar of the modules, after introducing myself to the tutors, the tutors introduced me the whole class and briefly explained the reason I was there.

In total, nine Malaysian students studying in the UK were recruited for the present study: seven females and two males. Eight of them were recruited for classroom observation, interviews, and focus group discussions while one of the students from University A was involved in only interviews. Eight students were studying at University A and one student at University B. All of them were first year students in the Autumn Term 2015/2016 and had just started their
studies in the new academic community in the UK. New academic setting means they were unfamiliar with the system, conventions, and beliefs thus, they were expected to still be used to the secondary school academic culture in Malaysia. MSUK were exposed to a new and different academic environment as compared to the students in Malaysia. The MSUK not only had to adapt to the new teaching and learning culture at the tertiary level, but also the academic discourse in the UK.

Some information on these students is given in Table 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participants’ pseudonyms (Gender)</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Academic programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Fatin (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>English and Malay</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Semek (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Enot (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Izlin (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ming (M)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Amar (M)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Finance and Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Qaisara (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Puspa (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>BA (Hons) Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Teratai (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>BSc (Hons) Business and Management Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These students were involved in different data collection methods. Below is the summary of which students were involved with which methods:
Table 5 Summary of participants and data collection involvement (UK)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participants’ pseudonyms</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Fatin</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Semek</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Enot</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Izlin</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Amar</td>
<td>Interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Qaisara</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Puspa</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Teratai</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 shows that out of the nine MSUK, 7 of them provided full sets of data where they were observed, interviewed and they were involved with focus group discussion. Two of them provided partial data where one of the two was involved in interviews and focus group discussions while the other was only involved in interviews.

3.4.2 Malaysian students in Malaysia (MSM)

After the data collection in the UK was completed, I did preliminary analysis on the data obtained. The data analysis helped me to refine my hypothesis: Malaysian students are not necessarily passive, depending on the context they were in. I prepared for the data collection in Malaysia. For this second phase of the data collection, I firstly contacted the relevant authorities of the two faculties I intended to observe at via email. Once I gained permission to conduct my study (Appendix 3), the administration of the faculties helped me to identify modules that the first-year students were taking. They also contacted and disseminated the information to the tutors for me. Then, the tutors provided me with the schedule of their modules. I entered these seminars and approached the tutors. They explained to the students the reason I was there.
and asked for volunteers. Those who wanted to volunteer came to see me after
the seminar session. From this recruitment, four students volunteered from
‘Ekonomi Pengurusan 1’ (Economic Management 1) module, one student
volunteered from ‘Quantitative Research for Business’ module, and seven from
‘Architecture Studio Session’ module.

Malaysian students in Malaysia (MSM) also participated in this study.
Malaysian students studying in both countries come from the same education
system since kindergarten or primary school and were currently at the tertiary
level of education. Twelve MSM were recruited and involved in this present
study. There were four male students and eight female students. All of them
were first year students in the Spring Term 2015/2016 Academic Year, and this
means they were now in their second semester of the first year. The details of
these students are given in Table 6:

Table 6 Information of participants in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participants’ pseudonyms (Gender)</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>First language</th>
<th>Academic programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bahar (M)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ruhasni (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Yong (M)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Latifa (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Xuen (F)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Zikri (M)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Jamal (M)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Han (F)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Chia (F)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>KaiYin (F)</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Umaira (F)</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Business Administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These students were involved in different data collection methods. Below is the summary of which students were involved with which methods:

Table 7 Summary of participants and data collection involvement (Malaysia)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Participants’ pseudonyms</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bahar</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ruhasni</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Yong</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Latifa</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Xuen</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Zikri</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Jamal</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Han</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Chia</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>KaiYin</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Umaira</td>
<td>Classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Vanidah (F)</td>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twelve Malaysian students in Malaysia volunteered as participants of this study. Out of these 12 students, nine students participated in the classroom observation, interview and focus group discussions and an additional two students were only involved in classroom observation.

3.5 Ethical considerations

To ensure there was no problem with the ethical issues, ethical clearance was obtained before embarking on the data collection. This section discusses how ethical clearance was obtained.
3.5.1 Gaining access

Before I could start collecting my data, I had to apply for an ethical clearance from the University of A Ethics Committee. For the committee, I prepared a few documents such as information sheet, consent form, classroom observation instrument, and possible interview questions. Upon receiving clearance from the committee (Appendix 4), I worked on collecting the data for this study by following different procedures for UK and Malaysia settings.

3.5.2 Informed consent and anonymity

When I first met my participants in the UK and Malaysia, I presented the information sheet to the students. It described my study and their status in the study. I gave them ample time to read the sheet and also explained in more detail so as to ensure them of the anonymity of their identity. I also explained how the data collection would be conducted and that audio-recording would be utilised in the data collection. I explained that they could withdraw from the study any time they wish and inform me of the decision. As all of them agreed to participate, I presented them with the consent form for them to sign, giving their agreement.

3.5.3 Confidentiality

It is important that the participants know and understand that their confidentiality and privacy are secure and maintained. Cohen et al. (2013) suggest that it is the right of an individual or groups to decide for themselves how much is to be shared or withdrawn from the public. This suggests that research which has ethical clearance is required to care about and maintain this
right of the participants. This is to ensure that the participants do not suffer negatively from cooperating and participating in the study.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, I stored the identities of the participants separately from the data and each of them was provided with pseudonyms. These replacement names were chosen to closely reflect the participants’ associated cultural contexts. For instance, a Chinese name was given to a Chinese student. The gender remained the same. In preserving the essence of the data and findings for context familiarity for the readers, I retained these cultural contexts and real-life classification.

3.6 Preliminary interview and observation

Prior to the real data collection, preliminary interviews on students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse and observations of seminars and workshops were conducted with a few MSUK. These interviews revealed that the students noticed some differences in terms of the academic environment between the UK and Malaysia. They also mentioned that they had some struggles in getting engaged with the seminar discussion when they first came to the university in the UK, as they were not exposed to it in Malaysia. Nevertheless, a few of them managed to adapt to this new academic environment. The findings of these preliminary interviews and observations reaffirmed my motivation to investigate and explore the students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse and whether the differences in the academic environment affect the students.
Furthermore, the preliminary UK observations revealed that there were some in-class discussions between the tutors and Malaysian students, as well as between Malaysian students and other students. It is also interesting to note that in one of the classes, the few Malaysian students did give their opinions with regards to the topic of discussions. Thus, it is possible to claim that the MSUK were engaging with spoken academic discourse. Additionally, some feedback was also obtained from the respective tutors where one of them mentioned that certain programmes had discussions where these discussions involved solving problems given earlier relating to the topic of the week. These discussions did not involve the whole-class and according to the tutor, there were exchanges between the tutor and students or between two students. The tutor also mentioned that rather than providing the students with the correct solutions, they were engaged in discussions to obtain the correct solutions. The findings of these preliminary studies suggested that it would be beneficial to investigate the international students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse. It was decided that the data was to be collected in the UK first and after this data was analysed, the researcher travelled to Malaysia to collect and analyse the data there.

3.7 Pilot study

A pilot study can be defined as “a small-scale version of the planned study, trial runs of planned methods or miniature versions of the anticipated research” that is intended to “answer a methodological question(s) and to guide the development of the research plan” (Prescott & Soeken 1989, p. 60). Firstly, I conducted a pilot study to familiarise myself with the settings of seminars in the UK. This pilot study helped me to understand and plan where I should sit and
how I should introduce myself to the tutors during our first meeting. Secondly, I wanted to experience observing seminars and conducting interviews as this would be my first time. As I observed some seminars and interviewed a few Malaysian students, I was able to anticipate a number of otherwise overlooked details, such as bringing the audio-recorder and determining the sequence of the set of questions. Thirdly, I wanted to test whether the classroom observation protocol was appropriate and suitable to be used to gather my actual data and if it would reflect what I wanted to investigate and explore.

From this pilot study, I was also able to familiarise myself with the setting and modify my classroom observation protocol by adding and deleting certain items. It helped me to specifically identify what I needed to look at when I started to collect my actual data such as the types of interactions students made. From this experience, I learnt that researchers would not be able to anticipate the effectiveness of research instruments if they do not pilot them. For instance, a classroom observation protocol may seem perfect, but they may not answer what they intended to answer, or some information may be lacking. For example, my first classroom observation protocol did not have a space for the seating plans of the seminars. After the preliminary observation, however, I decided to provide a space for the plan because that would help me to take note of where Malaysian students were located in relation to the tutors, other students, and the facilities such as the white board.

3.8 Data Collection Methods

This section describes how I collected my data to achieve the research objectives. The primary data of this study comes from (a) classroom
observation, (b) interviews with the Malaysian students, and (c) focus group discussions. This procedure was designed to maximise the rich information gained from the participants' experiences and to ensure that I keep a close relationship with the participants. To analyse this rich data, the data analysis techniques of this study included thematic analysis using Atlas.ti software. It comprised three main data collection procedures:

1) seeking approval for working with participants from the University of A Ethical Committee,

2) the selection of a research site and participants, and

3) conducting classroom observation via field notes and audio-recording, interviews, and focus group discussions with the participants.

There were two phases of the data collection as there were two different settings: UK and Malaysia. The first phase of the data collection was conducted from September 2015 until December 2015 at two universities in the UK. The second phase was done at a university in Malaysia from March 2016 until May 2016. Figure 2 below illustrates the procedure starting from getting ethical clearance to the data collection itself.
Figure 2 Data Collection Procedure
Phase One and Phase Two have three main stages as outlined in Table 8:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection stage: Data collection method</th>
<th>Phase One: UK</th>
<th>Phase Two: Malaysia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1: Classroom observation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2: Interviews</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3: Focus group discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of participants</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of participants</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first phase of the data collection took almost between nine to 12 weeks. Nevertheless, observation could only be conducted starting from week 3 of the term. The second phase took two months because the phase only involved one university in Malaysia and the length of the term is 14 weeks. However, the data collection in Malaysia could only start in the fifth week because the faculty could only confirm the modules to be observed by then. Nine MSUK were involved in the first phase of data collection and there were 12 MSM in the second phase. Eight MSUK were observed and involved in the focus group discussions and nine were interviewed. Twelve MSM were observed, while ten students were interviewed and involved in the focus group discussions.

It is suggested that there are four main phases of observation for ethnographic study (Dörnyei 2007). The first phase involves the negotiation of entry with the gatekeepers, who in this particular study were the tutors of the modules. They held the key to me obtaining the required data. It is relatively important that both tutors and students acknowledge and are comfortable with
my presence as the researcher in the seminars. This was to ensure that the
Malaysian students in the seminar were comfortable having me on site and
could socialise comfortably. I kept my presence to a minimum and quietly
identified the Malaysian students, who they were sitting with, and the
socialisation that occurred in the seminars. Although it is a rather delicate
process, I thought I was able to make the tutors, Malaysian students and other
students comfortable with my presence in the classroom as they acknowledged
my presence but did not look at me.

Once it was established that the tutors, Malaysian students, other
students, and I were comfortable and familiar with the routine, the second stage
commenced. During this phase, I would start analysing the initial interview data
to develop some initial ideas. I also took some notes on the important aspects
that could be acquired and probed further during the later stage; focus group
discussion. This process was important as I used this initial data to come up
with prompts for the focus group discussions in order to elicit explanation from
the students regarding the behaviour that they exhibited during seminar
sessions. I also believe that any problems which occurred during this stage
could be identified and solved. For instance, it was unexpected that the
students would be divided into different groups and having only one audio-
recorder was not enough to record all students. To solve this, I equipped myself
with additional audio-recorders.

The third stage was the most productive where the Malaysian students
had accepted my presence during the seminars, and this allowed me to be
more focused on certain aspects that were not on the already-developed classroom observation protocol. As a result, the instrument was amended, and the data collected became richer. At this stage, preparation for the next data collection method, which was interview, was made. Meetings were set up with the Malaysian students. The final stage was the withdrawal stage where it was necessary that the researcher disengaged from the research site. I did this by thanking the tutor and other students for their cooperation. The focus during this stage was on transcribing the audio-recordings. Preparation for the next data collection, which was focus group discussion, was also made where meetings were set up with the Malaysian students.

3.8.1 Classroom observation

One of the methods used to collect the data of this study was through classroom observation. Cohen et al. (2013) assert that observation can be considered as one of the powerful tools in understanding and gaining knowledge on certain situations. According to Delamont (2009), observation requires researchers to spend ‘long periods watching people, coupled with talking to them about what they are doing, thinking and saying’ (p.51). She added that observation is conducted to ‘understand how the cultures the researcher is studying work’ (Delamont 2009, p.51). Classroom observation is the “non-judgemental description of classroom events that can be analysed and given interpretation” (Gebhard & Oprandy 1999, p.35). According to Harbon and Shen (2010), non-participant observation can be employed where researchers are present but are not included in the classroom activities. This is important for the present study, as I needed to be available to take note of what happened during the seminars. My role as a researcher is further explained in the next
section. Classroom observation allowed me to gather actual, credible, and authentic data from naturally occurring seminar discussions because it enabled me to observe the Malaysian students directly, instead of depending on secondary observation. I utilised the classroom observation protocol (See Appendix 5) in making the field notes to make it easier for me to obtain certain information such as the descriptions of people, places, and activities in detail. It was also vital for me to not disrupt the routine of the seminar in order to obtain valid and reliable data.

*My role as a researcher in the observation process*

For this study, I was a non-participant observer, which means the Malaysian students were aware of who I was and the reason for my presence, but I did not participate in the seminars. In other words, I took the outsider’s approach where the researchers stand away from a phenomenon to investigate it and relate it to other related phenomenon (Patton 2002, p.268). I acknowledge the limitations of employing this approach as the students were aware that they were being observed and as a result, they may have behaved differently. I took preventive measures to avoid this from happening by meeting the Malaysian students a few times before the first classroom observation was conducted. This was done to ensure that the students were mentally aware that they would be observed. I also wanted to ensure that they were comfortable around me and did not see me as a threat which could have influenced their natural habits. I believe that the Malaysian students behaved naturally in the seminars and this indicates that they were familiar with my presence as an outsider.
The recruited Malaysian students were observed in their respective seminars. A copy of the information sheet of this study was distributed to everyone in the seminars. The students were asked for their consent to be observed and audio-recorded with regards to their engagement with spoken academic discourse, mainly their interaction patterns during seminars. During the first observation for each module, I introduced myself to the tutors. The research information sheet was also given to the tutor and once an understanding was established, I took my seat in the seminar room. I received a very warm welcome from the tutors and students of all the modules and sometimes there were interactions between the tutors and I.

The MSUK and MSM observed for this study were cooperative and they helped by placing the audio-recorder near them. As certain modules in the UK required the students to sit in different groups, one audio-recorder was given to one student who sat in different groups. For the groups which had more than one Malaysian student, only one recorder was given to the representative. The audio-recorders were given before each seminar began and were collected after each seminar ended. After each seminar, the recordings of these classroom observations were transferred onto the PC. The field notes were also typed onto Microsoft Word, organised, and properly saved.

Classroom observations in the UK

During the nine weeks of observation, I observed eight MSUK in 42 undergraduate seminars from two universities. I made field notes during these observations, which were also audio-recorded. There were two to six observations each week. These seminars were a mixture of four modules (Introduction to Business Management, Economic Foundation of Finance,
Principles of Finance, and Architecture) and the students were taking different courses. Most of these seminars were observed for one hour while others were observed for three hours. 64 recordings were transcribed although there were only 42 observations because of some simultaneous recordings in the three modules throughout week three until week seven since the students were in different groups and different audio-recorders were placed on their tables. Seven undergraduate Malaysian students participated in the classroom observation and I observed, audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed 42 seminars of four modules from two universities in the UK.

Table 9 Summary of the number of audio-recordings for each method (UK setting)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
<th>Number of MSUK involved</th>
<th>Number of observation/ interview/ focus group conducted</th>
<th>Number of audio-recordings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42 (42 field notes)</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group discussion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom observation in Malaysia

The observation occurred in one Malaysian public university over six weeks and field notes were taken during these observations. There were three modules (Ekonomi Pengurusan 1 = Economic Management 1, Quantitative Research for Business, and Architecture Studio Session) with students participating from various academic courses. These seminars and studio sessions ran for an hour. Twelve undergraduate Malaysian students participated in the classroom observation, and 14 undergraduate seminars and
studio sessions from University C in Malaysia were observed, audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed.

Table 10 Summary of the number of audio-recordings for each method (Malaysia setting)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection methods</th>
<th>Number of MSUK involved</th>
<th>Number of observation/ interview/ focus group conducted</th>
<th>Number of audio-recordings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom observation</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14 (14 field notes)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group discussion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As I reflected upon the practices I conducted, I believe that I could have gotten richer data sets by asking the Malaysian students to reflect upon their interactions right after the observations. However, this could not be done because the students either had other classes after my observations or they rushed to go home as most of them stayed off-campus. In addition, the Malaysian students in Malaysia were a bit reserved with me as the researcher because they were likely to see me as someone of higher authority. Because of this gap, I decided to ask them for lunch or coffee. After having coffee with them, they became more comfortable with me and we got connected via Facebook. In fact, while having coffee, the students asked me questions about doing postgraduate studies and my experience as a lecturer. As a result, they were not conscious of the recorder on the table and my presence in the seminar. Their actions showed that they were comfortable with my presence. This is significant to how I collect my data because I was able to become a researcher whose participants were comfortable with and consequently, they provided me with honest responses despite short. My attempt to position myself
as the researcher and someone whom they were comfortable with assisted my
data interpretation. I ensured to position myself as an outsider and insider to my
participants.

3.8.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Interview is the most frequently utilised research method in qualitative
research (Dörnyei 2007). According to Bryman (2016), semi-structured
interviews are those in which the researcher has a set of potential questions to
refer to and it depends on the participants how they would like to respond.
Interviews are sometimes conducted to understand the language and culture of
the participants (Fontana & Frey 2000). In order to understand this, researchers
need to decide how they would present themselves during the interview,
whether as a fellow student or as researchers. Fontana and Frey (2000)
recommend that researchers also establish positive rapport with the
participants. This was done to gain and maintain trust with the participants when
they have to ask sensitive questions. I, however, believe that gaining and
maintaining trust are applicable when asking sensitive questions. This is
important because the participants would be more willing to share their views
with someone they are comfortable and familiar with. Byrne (2004) suggests
that researchers also ask open-ended questions that are flexible because it is
highly likely that the participants would provide more considered responses. As
a result, better access to the participants' perceptions, understandings,
experiences, and interpretations of activities or events is available (Kvale 1996).

It is also important for researchers to be active listeners during the
interview sessions because this grants more time and freedom for the
participants to think, reflect, and respond to the questions (Noaks & Wincup 2004). Due to the nature of two-way communication in interviews, researchers are able to probe into any emerging new issue for a richer data (Dörnyei 2007). Researchers are also able to confirm the answers given by the participants to ensure their understandings are the same as the participants’. Responding to the answers or information shared by the participants would also encourage them to share more. Interviews can be time consuming (Dörnyei 2007) because they require setting up and individual interviews also require researchers to spend more time on attending to each participant. However, obtaining information and managing it early could help to decrease the time spent on organising and conducting the interviews.

One of the reasons for utilising interviews to collect the data for the present study was that, unlike the use of surveys, the individual values and attitudes of the participants could be accessed (Byrne 2004, p.182) in depth and the ensuing complexity could be addressed. To explore the Malaysian students’ perceptions towards their engagement, particularly their interaction and others’ interaction, all the MSUK and MSM who participated in this study were interviewed. The Malaysian students were interviewed about their academic engagement in the spoken academic discourse. As the interviewer, I ensured that I distanced myself from the participants by only asking questions and responding minimally, and avoiding to prompt them for answers during the interviews. I also allowed them time to pause and reflect upon their answers. This is important to prevent me from imposing my own biasness as the researcher and obtain reliable and valid sets of data. Before conducting the
interviews, I explained to all participants that their response would be anonymous and the interviews conducted would not affect them in any way. Nine interviews in the UK and ten interviews in Malaysia were carried out at various venues and they were audio-recorded using digital voice recorders, transcribed, translated where necessary, and analysed. The cooperation from the Malaysian students who were willing to spend their free time being interviewed was much appreciated.

*Interviews in the UK*

Interviews with each student were conducted between the sixth week of observation for Fatin, Qaisara, Teratai, and Amar, and from the end of the seventh week for Izlin, Semek, Enot, Ming and Puspa because these students mentioned they were available during these weeks. After finding out when they were free and organising this information, different places, date, and time of meeting were set up with the students. The total amount of interview time varied considerably across the nine students because some students talked more than the others and the average duration of the interview sessions was 26 minutes and 30 seconds. Details of the interviews are presented in Table 11 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview (INT)</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Duration (minutes: seconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Qaisara</td>
<td>Prayer Room</td>
<td>27 m: 41 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Semek</td>
<td>Prayer Room</td>
<td>31 m: 11 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Enot</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>17 m: 06 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Izlin</td>
<td>Empty classroom</td>
<td>21 m: 07 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>Research Hive</td>
<td>22 m: 11 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Amar</td>
<td>Research Hive</td>
<td>28 m: 35 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Fatin</td>
<td>Research Hive</td>
<td>35 m: 47 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Puspa</td>
<td>Empty classroom</td>
<td>35 m: 49 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Teratai</td>
<td>Research Hive</td>
<td>18 m: 59 s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interviews with each student took place once. After organising this information, different places of meeting which were convenient to the students, date, and time were set up with the students. The total amount of interview time varied considerably across the 10 students, from 08 minutes 56 seconds to 17 minutes 30 seconds, as some students spoke more than others. Below is the detailed information of the interviews conducted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview (INT)</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Duration (minutes, m: seconds, s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bahar</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>16 m: 12 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Ruhasi</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>15 m: 30 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Yong</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>16 m: 03 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Latifa</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>17 m: 30 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Xuen</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>13 m: 43 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Zikri</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>14 m: 51 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Jamal</td>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>10 m: 06 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Umaira</td>
<td>Faculty Lobby</td>
<td>14 m: 27 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>KaiYin</td>
<td>Faculty Lobby</td>
<td>08 m: 56 s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Chia</td>
<td>Faculty Lobby</td>
<td>10 m: 17 s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflecting upon my interview sessions with the MSUK and MSM, the sessions could have been longer with more detailed responses by giving more prompts and not depending only on the questions I had prepared. To a certain extent, having a prepared list of questions for the interviews somewhat limited the responses I could elicit from the students. Furthermore, because the interview sessions were conducted during term, the Malaysian students involved had limited time to spend for the interview as they were busy with lectures, seminars and assessment. I believe I could have conducted the interview during mid-term break where students were likely to be less busy.
In the mentioning of interview excerpts in Chapters 4 and 5, the short form ‘INT’ will be used and followed by the number attached to each participant.

3.8.3 Focus group discussion

In order to further explore the Malaysian students’ perceptions of their and others’ engagement, the MSUK and MSM were invited to participate in focus group discussions. The four focus group discussions were audio-recorded, and the recordings were transcribed. Focus group methodology is considered a method where the data obtained is the supplement to the data produced by other research methods such as interviews and observations (Silverman 2011). In other words, it helps to validate or qualify the results obtained by other methods. Bloor et al. (2000) and Wilkinson (2011) suggest that the data gained from this method be analysed using techniques associated with qualitative data such as thematic analysis. Wilkinson (2011) recommends ways to conduct focus group discussions. Firstly, a small number of people who share the same experience or some characteristics, which are the focus of the study, is recruited. Informal group discussions are encouraged around topics of interest. These topics of discussions were presented to the participants in the form of statements or questions.

Finally, the moderator’s role was to facilitate the discussion by encouraging the participants to interact with each other. The moderator was chosen among the participants who were present during the discussion. Although he/she was the moderator, but he/she managed to play both roles well: moderator by ensuring everyone contributed to the discussion and not side-tracked and participant by contributing their perspectives to the discussion.
Other participants of the focus group discussion not only contributed by sharing their perspectives based on the prompts, but also asking questions to each other for clarification, stating agreement or disagreement and expanding points as they gave further details of the points. All of these contributions were taken into consideration during the data analysis stage as these contributions may also have a role in the participants' identity construction and negotiation. I was also present during the focus group discussions despite not being the moderator. Different from my role during the interview sessions, I did not ask questions, intervene or impose my perspectives during the discussion. I also did not share any of my own opinion. This is to allow me to obtain a set of data on Malaysian students’ own true perspectives of their interactions during seminars. This process is in line with the suggestions by Barlow (2010) to ensure having no bias and consistency in collecting the data and consequently the data analysis. According to Barlow (2010), not being bias would allow me to discover the truth.

Similar to the interviews, before the start of the focus group discussions, I also ensured that the participants understood that they would not be implicated in any way and that their contributions would be anonymous where pseudonyms would be used to replace their real names.

**Focus group discussions in the UK**

The eight MSUK were divided into two groups to elicit more in-depth data. These two groups were divided based on their availability. The first group consisted of Fatin, Puspa, Ming, and Amar, and the second group included
Izlin, Semek, Enot and Qaisara. Two venues were utilised for these focus group discussions. The duration of the focus group discussion ranged from 51 minutes 29 seconds to 51 minutes 47 seconds. During the focus group discussions, I facilitated the discussion while the participants were chosen as the moderators of the discussion for each round. The participants were chosen to be the moderator because I believe that they were more comfortable to share their experiences with someone they knew better and at times, these moderators could help to remind the others of particular events which could elucidate the points shared. During both sessions, the moderators took their role seriously and I believe that the data obtained from the sessions were rich and filled with information that could help to make the general findings of this study more representative. The roles of the moderator for this study were as follows:

1. Read the prompts.
2. Asked questions to confirm understanding of the answers given by participant.
3. Kept the participants focused.
4. Ensured all participants share their opinions or experiences regarding the prompts given to them (Basch 1987, p. 415).
5. Contributed their own opinions regarding the prompts they were in charge of.

There were 12 prompts (See Appendix 6) altogether and these prompts were produced based on the classroom observation field notes and findings.
from the interviews. They were chosen in order to explain the behaviour of the participants during seminars or responses made during interviews.

Below is the detailed information of the focus group discussions conducted in the UK:

Table 13 Information on focus group discussions conducted in the UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Duration (minutes, m: seconds, s)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Focus group discussion 1 (FGD1)</td>
<td>Research Hive</td>
<td>51 m: 47 s</td>
<td>Fatin, Amar, Ming, Puspa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Focus group discussion 2 (FGD2)</td>
<td>Library Group Study Room</td>
<td>51 m: 29 s</td>
<td>Semek, Enot, Qaisara, Izlin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus group discussions in Malaysia

In order to elicit more comprehensive data, the 10 MSM were divided into two groups based on their availability and faculty to which they belonged. The first group consisted of Bahar, Ruhasni, Yong, Latifa, Xuen, Zikri, and Jamal, and the second Umaira, Chia, and KaiYin. On average, each focus group discussion lasted between 51 minutes 29 seconds and 51 minutes 47 seconds. There were 10 prompts (See Appendix 7) altogether for focus group discussions in Malaysia. Detailed information of the focus group discussions conducted in Malaysia is as follows:

Table 14 Information on focus group discussions in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Duration (minutes, m: seconds, s)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite Malaysian students in Malaysia were being reserved with me in the beginning, they were more focused during the focus group discussions which resulted in them providing me with straightforward responses. They did not explain much, and this is different from the MSUK. As I reflected upon this pattern, I believe that the gap between the MSM and I could have been narrowed further if I approached them directly like I did with the MSUK. By narrowing the gap further, I would have liked it if they shared more like the MSUK. However, as I had no other way to approach them other than via the faculty, I was introduced to them as a researcher and lecturer by the tutors which widen the gap.

In the mentioning of focus group discussion excerpts in Chapters 4 and 5, the short form ‘FGD’ will be used and followed by the number attached to each focus group discussion. The research instruments used in the data collection process are elaborated in the following section.

3.8.4 Research instruments

This section describes the three research instruments utilised in the data collection process: classroom observation protocol, semi-structured interview questions, and focus group prompts.
Classroom observation protocol

Forty-two (42) classroom observations were conducted in the UK and 10 in Malaysia. A classroom observation protocol was developed and employed. Field notes were taken using this protocol during the classroom observations. The protocol was developed based on the general question of this study, which was ‘How do MSUK and MSM engage in seminars?’. The protocol consists of three sections: the seminars’ general information, seating arrangement map, interaction types (which I would like to look at particularly), and additional space for the field notes. The first section requires information such as the date, time, and venue of the seminar, the name of the module, and number of students, while the second section requires me to note the seating arrangement, particularly where Malaysian students sat in relation to the tutor, researcher, other students, and physical setting of the classroom such as the whiteboards. This also includes the movements of the tutors in the seminars. Specifically, the third section of the protocol consists of items to show the interactions that occurred such as ‘Students answered questions individually’ and ‘Students interacted with the tutor’, and the number of times they occurred. The final section requires more detailed information on the interactions, such as who the speaker is and how the interactions happened from the perspective of the researcher. The information required in the protocol was completed at all seminars (Refer to Appendix 5 for a sample of the observation protocol; Appendix 8 for sample of observation field notes).
Semi-structured interviews

Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted in the UK setting and 10 in the Malaysian setting. They were utilised as one of the methods to collect the data for this study and a list of questions was developed and employed. Interviewers are given the freedom to decide on the sequence of the questions depending on what happens during the interview (Patton 2002). Since semi-structured interviews allow interviewers to have an outline or a list of potential questions, I decided to utilise them as the depth of the data can be increased and its usage makes interviews more systematic (Patton 2002). I also believe that it gives me confidence as the interviewer. Semi-structured interviews allow for better flow and coherence thus helping the interviewers to keep the momentum between the interviewers and the interviewees. All potential questions were addressed and directed to the participants.

The set of potential questions consisted of two main sections; students’ background information and students’ academic experiences. The first section required students’ information such as the programme they were in and if they had undergone English preparatory classes, while the second section elicited information such as how much they thought they asked questions and how much they thought their classmates answered questions (Refer to Appendix 9 and Appendix 10 for the two sets of interview guides).

Focus group discussions

The focus group discussions in this study were conducted after all the classroom observations and interviews ended, considering that the prompts for the focus group discussions were derived from the classroom observations and
interviews data. The focus group discussions were conducted to generate a comprehensive data on how MSUK and MSM perceived their interactions and others’ as a group. These focus group discussions allowed the students to elaborate and discuss issues comprehensively. They were audio-recorded and I also took notes when necessary during the discussion. Three focus group discussions consisted of four students, one consisted of three students and one consisted of seven students, involving a total of 8 MSUK and 10 MSM. Each student was able to contribute their opinions and perceptions almost equally where everyone shared their opinions for each prompt. All of the discussions were transcribed.

There were two sets of prompts and each set consisted of 10-12 prompts for the focus group discussions in the UK and Malaysia. In these sessions, the students discussed the prompts. There was no problem in getting the students to discuss these prompts as the moderator selected was among them. However, there were instances where the moderators were too involved in the discussion and consequently, forgot their roles as moderators. Some examples of the prompts are ‘At the beginning of the term, it took time for me to understand what others are saying’ and ‘I believe the ideas that I contributed or questions I asked during tutorials/group discussion are appreciated by my tutor and classmates’ (Refer to Appendix 6 and Appendix 7 for a full list of focus group discussion prompts).

The students could respond either in the Malay language or the English language or a mixture of both. Out of the four focus group discussions, only one consisted of a mixture of both languages and the students in this group used
English and Malay language intermittently. None used only Malay. Although everyone shared their views and opinions during the discussion, some needed a little bit of a push and this was done subtly by the moderator or me as the facilitator. Although there were different opinions among the students during the focus group discussions, the students respectfully agreed to disagree, showing a great understanding of each other’s personal opinions.

3.9 Data analysis methods

This section describes the analysis process of classroom observation data (field notes and audio-recordings), and interview and focus group discussion (audio-recordings and their transcripts). The procedure for the data analysis comprised three stages:

1) transcribing the audio recordings of classroom observation, interviews, and focus group discussion,

2) coding the emergent themes from the analysis for different sets of data, and

3) selection of suitable framework or theories for interpretation of the data.

The rich and massive sets of data made it complicated and difficult to manage and analyse. To address this issue, I used qualitative software, Atlas.ti to manage and analyse these sets of data. The use of this software was made to ensure that I did not confuse the three different methods (classroom observation, interview, and focus group discussion) and two settings (UK and Malaysia).
3.9.1 The frameworks/theories used to analyse

To analyse the data of this study, I employed two analytical approaches: thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) and identity analysis framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005).

**Thematic Analysis**

The data analysis for this study employed thematic analysis as its main analytical approach. This approach was used to analyse classroom observation field notes, interview, and focus group transcripts. According to Grbich (2012), thematic analysis can be referred to as the segmentation process where data is segmented and categorised based on similar behaviours, responses or comments before the interpretation process. The term ‘theme’ in “thematic analysis” is considered as important details within the data based on the research questions and it should represent similar patterns of behaviours, responses or comments found within the data (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.82). Analysis for this study was not driven by the ‘prevalence’ of the themes (Braun & Clarke 2006), but it was determined by whether the themes capture the relevancy of the data in relation to what was being investigated. Thus, Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 16-23) suggested six main phases of data analysis:

1. Familiarising yourself with your data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

According to them, the first phase is when researchers immerse and engage themselves in the data. It is important for researchers to be familiar with their data in order to understand it comprehensively. Data familiarisation can be achieved by transcribing and listening to audio-recordings or reading and rereading transcripts. The next phase requires researchers to identify and generate preliminary codes by identifying meaningful elements from the data. Boyatzis (1998, p. 63) defines code as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon”. More details on how the codes are identified will be described in the next sections based on the data collection methods. After generating initial coding of data, researchers search for themes. During this phase, codes are grouped into relevant themes. This phase also indicates the start of the data interpretation process. Next, researcher review the themes and may combine, split, refine or discard the preliminary themes. The fifth phase begins after researchers produce a satisfactory list of themes (as stated in Chapter Four and Five). During this phase, researchers define and refine the themes by identifying the basics of what the themes are about. By utilising extracts from the data that relate to the themes and previous literature, researchers finally produce a report that details their analytical interpretation.

Identity Analysis Framework

Another framework employed to analyse the data of this study was Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) notion of identity. This framework was used to analyse data obtained from classroom observation. They suggested five
principles in analysing identity: emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness. The tenets of this framework are as follows:

1. Emergence:
   "Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistics and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (p. 588);

2. Positionality:
   "Identities encompass (a) macrolevel demographic categories; (b) local, ethno-graphically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles" (p. 592);

3. Indexicality:
   "Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one’s own or others’ identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups" (p. 594);
4. Relationality:

“Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy” (p. 598);

5. Partialness:

“Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others’ perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction. It is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts” (p. 606).

Within the first principle, emergence, identity is considered as an emerging product from linguistic interactions while the second principle, positionality, views identity as involving aspects such as demographic details, cultural influences, and roles. Indexicality principle considers identity as emerging from interaction via indexical process, such as labelling and implicatures. The fourth principle is the relationality principle and within this principle, identity is constructed via some complementary relationships such as adequation and distinction, authentication and denaturalisation, and authorisation and illegitimation. The final principle is partialness and within this principle, identity is viewed as partial and it is always shifting between any relevant elements in any identity construction as interactions occur.
Conversation Analysis

This study also utilised conversation analysis as an analytical tool in analysing its data. Conversation analysis (henceforth CA) is the study of language especially in its use in interactions. It is an approach that describes and analyses the naturally occurring interactions (Psathas 1995). It emphasises what participants do when they interact with other people within the same community. CA is a data-driven approach which emphasises these principles: Interactions demonstrate that there is always order (Sacks, Jefferson, & Schegloff 1992, p. 484; Heritage 1995). Participants produce and maintain this order when interacting with others depending on the conventions and expectations of the community they are in. Order of interactions may emerge from the data and this illustrates how the data obtained is oriented by the speakers themselves. Actual interactions occurring within real contexts allow access to the information needed in exploring what actually occur during talks (Sidnell 2016). In other words, it allows researchers to examine what participants do or say when they speak.

According to Hoey and Kendrick (2018), CA differs from other methodological approaches as:

1. it uses naturally occurring interactions as data,
2. it considers language as the resource for participants’ actions and behaviours, and
3. its data analysis focuses on participants’ own behaviour.
Based on this description, I believe that CA allows me to investigate interactions because the data obtained for this study is naturally occurring. This study also focused on the actual exchanges by the Malaysian students in academic settings. I also decided to adopt CA as the analytical tool for this study because the classroom observation data of the present study was examined and analysed based on the principle that interactions tend to be in sequential order.

To code and analyse the data, I employed an inductive approach, where the codes and themes identified during the analysis is strongly related to the data (Patton 2002). Due to this, the research questions and objectives of this study changed and were developed throughout the analysis process. For instance, I initially intended the present study to investigate how Malaysian students interact during seminars. After the inductive analysis of classroom observation data, it appeared that the academic identities of MSUK and MSM could be investigated and identified based on the notion that classroom interactions are naturally occurring data. This too justified the use of identity analysis framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005).

The coding and analysis processes of the present study are described below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Data collected</th>
<th>Analysis Framework/Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Classroom observation field notes</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis (Braun &amp; Clarke 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Classroom observation audio-recordings and their transcripts
   Conversational analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974); Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006); Identity Analysis Framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005)

3. Interview audio-recordings and its transcripts
   Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006); Identity Analysis Framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005)

4. Focus group discussion audio-recordings and their transcripts
   Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006); Identity Analysis Framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005)

The analysis of all these data was conducted in relation to my own interpretation and also the participants'.

3.9.2 Data familiarisation (Making sense of data)

In order to achieve the aims of this study, the resulting field notes and audio recordings of the classroom observation and audio-recordings of interview and focus group discussion were listened to and transcribed. Then, I organised the data systematically to ensure the analysis process could be done extensively. Since my data consists of the 52 classroom observations, which provided me with two sets of data, field notes, and audio-recordings transcripts, 19 interview transcripts and 4 focus group discussion transcripts, I decided to use Atlas.ti because the data was massive. I uploaded all the field notes, audio-recordings and their transcripts onto the software and group them according to settings (UK and Malaysia), weeks (weeks of observation), and data collection methods (classroom observation, interview and focus group discussion). This allowed me to filter and focus on the data based on the week it was obtained and how it was collected either in the UK or Malaysia. This also helped me not
to be overwhelmed with the data. These transcriptions were analysed accordingly.

As I collected my data in the UK first, I first looked at the UK field notes and searched for interactional patterns that occurred in the seminars and coded them accordingly. Then, I listened to the audio recordings of the classroom observations, looked at their transcripts, and classified them according to the codes I identified in the field notes. I also coded new and emerging themes from the audio-recordings and transcripts. Employing the identity in interaction framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), I coded any themes that were regularly visible based on the Malaysian students’ interactions. After that, I also looked at the interview and focus group discussion transcripts and coded them based on the emergent themes found earlier.

The findings of this analysis were inserted into tables in terms of themes/codes and further examples were extracted from the transcriptions. As the data were collected in the UK first, the analysis of the UK data was done first. Next, the data from Malaysia was collected and analysed. Then the findings of the UK and Malaysia data were compared and contrasted.

The next section describes the data analysis procedure for the three sets of data: classroom observation, interview, and focus group discussion.

3.9.3 Classroom observation

Forty-two (42) classroom observations were conducted over nine weeks in the UK setting and ten over six weeks in the Malaysian setting. From these classroom observations, two types of data were obtained: field notes and audio
recordings. 42 field notes and 64 audio-recordings were gathered from the UK setting and ten field notes and audio-recordings from the Malaysian setting. This section describes the analysis process for classroom observation data: field notes and audio-recordings.

*Classroom observation field notes*

There were 42 classroom observations’ sets of field notes for the nine weeks of classroom observation. The field notes were organised according to the weeks of the observation. It was important to ensure that the information provided using the classroom observation protocol was the same for every seminar observation to ensure the consistency of the information provided, as mentioned in the previous section. The protocol mainly requires information on the seminars, seating arrangement, interaction types, and additional space for the field notes.

Each classroom observation field note was coded based on the emergent themes; in this study, interactional patterns found in the sections in the report. Firstly, the seating arrangement maps were checked and analysed based on the seating of the Malaysian students in relation to the tutor, other students, and physical setting of the classroom. Then, taking into consideration Conversation Analysis as an analytical tool, as explained in Section 3.2.1, the interaction types were identified and coded. Finally, the final section in the field note was thoroughly checked to find additional interactional patterns and additional information on the patterns.

Below is an outline of the coding process employed to analyse classroom observation field notes:
The aim of the analysis was to find consistent and significant themes that emerged from the classroom observation audio recordings. A total of 64 audio-recordings obtained from the classroom observations in the UK and 14 from Malaysia were analysed. In an attempt to analyse the data, the analysis process strictly employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phased analytical tool for thematic analysis, as described in Section 3.9.1. The six phases are as follows. Firstly, I familiarised myself with the data by listening to the audio-recordings. The first set of data, consisting of 64 audio-recordings, was transcribed using NVivo 10 Windows version. The transcribing process took some time and after that, I translated into English the parts which were spoken in Malay but maintained the original Malay utterances in the transcription sheets. Then, initial analysis was made on the audio recordings where I
searched for the occurring interactions, employing Conversation Analysis as the analytical tool. As a result, 27 initial codes were found. This process employed thematic analysis where codes were decided upon the discovery of any significant content. For this study, interactions and quantitative content analysis for recurring instances in the data were examined and identified (Wilkinson 2011). I was able to develop preliminary coding system to be utilised throughout the subsequent analysis process and to generate initial findings. The general overview of the findings allowed me to look at the codes retrieved, how the codes could be reviewed and better defined, and how the analysis would be conducted afterwards. Once a systematic coding system was developed, it was applied across all the 42 transcripts. After this process was completed, the codes, themes, and utterances were generated and saved into the Microsoft Word in the form of a table. This is important because it helps to visualise the data for comparison.

Below is a visual outline of the data analysis procedure employed to analyse classroom observation audio-recording and their transcripts:
Arranged classroom observation audio-recordings and transcripts based on the weeks of observation

Listened to the audio-recordings

Transcribed the audio-recordings

Translated the transcription, Malay to English, where necessary

Re-listened to the audio-recordings

Coded based on the earlier codes found in the classroom observation field notes

Conducted an initial read through of the whole audio-recording transcripts

Identified and coded new codes from the audio-recordings, if any

Identified overlapping or redundant codes from earlier steps

Re-listened to the audio-recordings while rereading its transcripts

Identified and coded new codes from the audio-recording transcripts, if any

Generated the codes and the relevant excerpts into a single file

Figure 4 Summary of coding process for classroom observation audio-recording transcripts
3.9.4 Interview and Focus Group Discussion

Nineteen (19) interviews were conducted with the MSUK and MSM: nine interviews with the MSUK and ten in Malaysia. Four focus group discussions were carried out, two at each setting. This section describes the analysis process of interview and focus group discussion data – I employed similar procedures to analyse these sets of data. As Phase One (Stages Two and Three) was conducted in the UK, the analysis for UK data was done first and the analysis of the interviews and focus group discussions in Malaysia was done later.

The aim of the analysis was to find consistent and significant themes that emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions with the MSUK and MSM. In line with the qualitative research tradition, the data collected in this study was analysed inductively (Merriam 2009; Patton 2002). The themes emerged from the data obtained from the questions asked and prompts given, and these prompts were grounded in multiple instances of the data that I collected from classroom observation.

*Thematic coding of data source: interviews and focus group discussions*

In analysing the interview and focus group discussion data, I first transcribed the audio-recordings obtained from the interview and focus group discussions with the MSUK and MSM. To analyse these transcripts, I employed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) (Section 3.9.1). Firstly, I familiarised myself with the audio-recordings by listening to and coding them. After that, I listened to the audio-recordings again to transcribe them. Upon the completion
of the transcribing process, I translated the Malay parts in the transcripts into English. I conducted 19 interviews altogether; eight interviews were conducted in the English language while the rest in the Malay language. I also carried out four focus group discussions: one was conducted in the Malay language and three in the English language. Then, I tried to see some consistent patterns in participants’ responses based on the lists of questions asked and prompts given during the interviews and focus group discussions. If necessary, I created categories and organised participants’ comments accordingly, as this helped me to understand what they were trying to communicate. For example, Fatin produced more than 30 minutes of interview data. As I read her responses, I identified some patterns and grouped her comments into three main categories: (a) perceptions of her own interactions, (b) perceptions of others’ interactions, and (c) perceptions of Malaysian academic culture. Following the same steps, I analysed the other interviews and focus group discussions with the MSUK and MSM.

Below is an outline of the coding process employed to analyse the audio-recordings and transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions:
Figure 5 Summary of coding process for interview and focus group discussion data

After all the interview and focus group discussion audio-recordings and transcripts were analysed, a code list was developed and investigated further for meaning. This was done using the interpretive analysis which refers to the interpretation of the coded responses by questioning the meaning they gave
and their significance. Other than that, the interactions between the participants and I during interviews, and among the participants during focus group discussions were taken into consideration during the data analysis stage. For instance, how these participants position themselves during focus group discussions were taken into account when discussing the participants’ identity construction.

The table below presents examples of the themes coded when identifying significant themes and the categories they belong to from the interview and focus group discussion transcripts.

Table 16 Examples of themes coded from interview and focus group discussion transcripts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad category</th>
<th>Codes identified</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from interview transcripts</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from focus group discussion transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Malaysian academic culture</td>
<td>Malaysian students do not ask questions</td>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td>Different learning styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of own interactions</td>
<td>Malaysian students asking questions</td>
<td>Reasons for asking questions</td>
<td>Different learning styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of others’ interactions</td>
<td>International students’ interactions</td>
<td>Malaysian students speak more</td>
<td>Experience of being marginalised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of learning</td>
<td>Studying abroad</td>
<td>Opinions not listened to</td>
<td>Language barrier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To reiterate, the data of this study was collected based on how MSUK and MSM differ in terms of their engagement, specifically their interactions in seminars, without any pre-determined theoretical framework. These interviews and focus group discussions led me to employ Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005)
identity analysis framework as the theoretical construct underpinning this analysis which has been described in Section 3.9.1. This framework was utilised to identify Malaysian students' identity based on the interviews and focus group discussions with them. In analysing the interview and focus group discussion transcripts, I used Atlas.ti software. Using this software, I was able to search for words, code, and compare the codes based on the different interviews and focus group discussions with the Malaysian students. The word search function was used to supplement the data in exploring the themes and codes which emerged in the interview and focus group discussion transcripts (Ryan & Bernard 2003). These themes and codes were then interpreted using the principles in Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) identity analysis framework. For instance, ‘Malaysian students asking questions’ was coded from the interview transcripts and utilising the principle of emergent (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), this code could be interpreted as Malaysian students being agentive. These transcripts were used together with the ethnographic context of the study, which included classroom observation.

3.10 Establishing reliability in this study

Researchers who stand within the qualitative research paradigm investigate real people with real experiences. To establish the reliability of the present study, it is important to ensure the consistency and constant of the data collected. Reliability refers to how consistent, constant, and established an investigation is and whether the investigation can be replicated by other researchers on different sets of samples or in other settings. This section concerns the issue of reliability in this study as I address the internal validity,
external validity, reliability and objectivity of the data collected. Firstly, to ensure internal validity, I made sure the methods and instruments I used were appropriate and suitable to gather the data. In addition, I also triangulated these methods as limitations of a particular method could be compensated by the other methods. I provided explicit and relevant information about how the fieldwork was conducted with comprehensive and detailed data description so that readers are able to replicate it for their own studies. This addressed the issues of external validity and reliability.

I also ensured that my role as the researcher was not jeopardised which could have influenced how I looked at the data and interpreted them. Despite having a close relationship with the MSUK where they referred to me as ‘Kak Zue’ (directly translated as Sister Zue), I managed to differentiate my position as the researcher and my position as a fellow Malaysian and sister when analysing and interpreting the data I obtained from the UK. Because my relationship with the MSM was not as close, my role as another fellow Malaysian and lecturer to the students, did not influence how I interpreted the data. In fact, having two mutual languages: the Malay and English language, to communicate provided me with the opportunity to get richer data as we were able to communicate in the two languages. Being able to translanguage between the two languages allows me, as the researcher, to interpret meanings constructed by the students. Putting myself as only the researcher and not any other roles addressed the reliability issues. Finally, I address the issue of objectivity by confirming with the participants that the findings of this study were obtained and generated from the participants themselves and not how I
perceived them to be. Data triangulation could also assist me in reducing any biases I may have about the data.

3.11 Limitations of the methods used

In spite of the attempt to make the analysis reliable, there were limitations to the selected methods. Firstly, the size of this study’s sample was quite small, with only nine MSUK and ten MSM although the length of the observation was considerable. Nonetheless, due to the nature of qualitative research, which focuses on providing and analysing rich data in depth, having a relatively small sample is compensated by the detailed analysis. As mentioned by Merriam (2002), qualitative research does not concern ‘the how much’ or ‘how often’, rather it emphasises on the ‘how’ ‘what’ and possibly ‘why’ of phenomenon investigated. Secondly, I was at first concerned that a few students might dominate the focus group discussion thus denying the more silent ones a chance to contribute. Hence, I conducted the focus group discussion in small numbers to better facilitate it.

Another limitation of the methods used for this study is time because the data collection could only be done for a period of six to nine weeks. As there were time limitations, I could only observe, interview, and conduct focus group discussion with the MSUK and MSM. More time would have allowed me to observe Malaysian students in other universities in the UK and Malaysia. It is possible that with more time in observing the students and more students to observe, this study may have generated different findings, which would produce different results. However, I was only able to focus on verbal interactions
produced by the Malaysian students. If I were given more time, I would have been able to investigate Malaysian students’ non-verbal interactions to view the whole engagement and interaction in seminars by MSUK and MSM.

3.12 Summary

Chapter Three describes the research methods utilised in the present study involving nine Malaysian students at two universities in the UK and 12 Malaysian students at one university in Malaysia. The study adopted the qualitative approach namely linguistic ethnography focusing broadly on how Malaysian students engage in seminars in the UK and Malaysia. It utilises three complementary methods: classroom observations, interviews and focus group discussions, for triangulation purposes. Employing thematic analysis, identity in interaction framework and conversation analysis, the sets of interactional data were analysed. Based on this analysis, identities constructed by the Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia were identified from the interactional data. I also reflected upon my own research practices and how it impacted the data collection and analysis, in an attempt to discuss reflexivity. This chapter also briefly discussed the ethical issues considered, reliability and limitations of the study.
CHAPTER 4: MALAYSIAN STUDENTS IN THE UK

4.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights the interactions influencing identity constructed by Malaysian students in seminars in the UK. The first section of this chapter describes the physical setting of the seminars in the UK and includes the location of the university, the campus, size of the seminars, and seating arrangements while the second section explains the format of the seminars and considers ways in which the tutors managed the seminars. The physical setting and seminar format are important considerations because they describe the educational context the Malaysian students were in. The third section, ‘Academic Identity’, discusses how the Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) construct and negotiate their academic identities by looking at their interactions in seminars and how they perceived their interactions and others' interactions.

The present study was conducted to investigate how MSUK engage with spoken academic discourse, particularly their interactional behaviour and identity construction. The aim of this chapter is to answer the three research questions of the present study:

a. How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK?

b. How do these students perceive their interactions and others’ in seminars in the UK?
c. How do Malaysian students construct their identity through their interactions and perceptions in the UK?

The next section describes the physical setting of the seminars.

4.1 The physical setting of the seminar in the UK

The seven MSUK were observed in two universities, University A and University B. Six of these students took ‘Course A’ while one of them took ‘Course B’. The six ‘University A’ students were observed in seminars of three different modules: ‘Introduction to Business Management’, ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’, and ‘Principle of Finance’, while the one student from ‘University B’ was observed in ‘Architectural Humanities 1’ seminars. These modules were chosen because they were compulsory for the first-year students who registered for the programmes. All these observations were made in the Autumn term. There were 12 academic weeks in one term where the observation started in the fourth week of the term and ended on the twelfth.

During the first classroom observation, I entered the seminar and introduced myself to the tutor. Throughout the weeks, I mostly sat at the back of the class to ensure my presence did not disrupt the seminar. I would also ensure that I could see all the Malaysians students in the seminar from where I was sitting. This is crucial because I needed to take note of their non-verbal behaviours, which were not recorded on the audio-recorder. From the classroom observations, the MSUK were found to interact in socially discursive ways in the seminar. Some of them were seen to keep quiet from the beginning
while others were seen to interact more in the beginning of the term compared to the end of the term. There was also one Malaysian student who was seen to interact with the tutor and other students in the seminar throughout the term. These interactional behaviours reveal the Malaysian students’ academic identities.

4.1.1 University A

Seminars in University A were conducted in different buildings spread around the campus. The classroom sizes varied in accordance with the number of students expected in the seminars. Hence, some classrooms were big while others were small. Each classroom had at least one computer for the tutor, one projector, one white screen, one white board, and a number of colourful tables and chairs. The tables and chairs were light and easy to be moved; therefore, it was easy for the students and tutors to position them as they wanted in the seminar. The door of the classrooms was located in front of the class, near the white screen where tutors and other students could see students come in and leave.

The seating in the seminars in University A were not fixed and students could sit anywhere they wanted in the classroom, unless they were required to work in groups that the tutor had assigned them to and this occurred only once in a while. Due to this flexibility, the Malaysian students almost always sat next to each other, unless they were the only Malaysian students in the seminar or the tutor assigned them to groups. There was no fixed preference by the Malaysian students on where to sit. Sometimes they sat in the middle of the classroom; at other times they sat near the tutor or at the back of the classroom.
Below are two seating plan examples of where Malaysian students sat in the seminars in University A. In these seating plans, MSUK are identified by their names while other students are represented as M for male students and F for female students and by numbers. The tutor and researcher are identified as T and R.

Figure 6 Seating plan 1 (University A: Economic Foundation of Finance)
Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the seating plans of two of the modules observed. Ming, Qaisara, Enot, Fatin, Semek, and Izlin are identified as Malaysian students. This plan shows that most Malaysian students (Qaisara, Enot, Ming, Izlin, Semek) sat together during seminars. The size of the seminars ranged between 20-30 students per seminar and consisted of local and international students.

4.1.2 University B

The seminars in University B were conducted on one of the many campuses of the university. It was a studio-type classroom for all Course B undergraduate students from all years of study. All of the students would gather in a large studio-hall with shelves and cupboards as partitions. All seminars observed
were located at the end of this hall with a bookshelf and two tall cupboards dividing the area from other parts of the hall. With this arrangement, the noise from other students talking or hammering near the area would sometimes disrupt the flow of the seminar and the tutor had to remind the students in the other areas to keep the noise down. In fact, there was another seminar session in another area of this big hall. The area consisted of two huge tables pulled together and a number of chairs, just enough for all the students in the seminar to sit. There was also a soft board behind the two cupboards for students to affix their work on and present to the tutor during the seminar. The size of the seminars ranged between 15-20 students per session, and similar to University A, consisted of local and international students. The seating in the seminars in University B were also similar to those in University A, i.e. they were flexible and students could sit anywhere they wanted in the classroom. Due to this flexibility, the one Malaysian student, Puspa, sat next to her close friend, sometimes at the end of the long table, away from the tutor, and other times on the same side as the tutor, hence, it was difficult for the tutor to see her. Below is an example of the seating plan observed in the seminars in University B.
4.2 Format of the seminars in the UK

It is necessary to discuss the format of the seminars because these formats affected how the MSUK interacted. The format of the seminars will be described based on the different modules: ‘Introduction to Business Management’, ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’, ‘Principle of Finance’, and ‘Architectural Humanities 1’, with differing format for each module in relation to the content of the module and the tutor conducting the seminars. The Malaysian students were also in different sessions of the same modules where the content discussed was the same, but the time and day were different. All three modules had the same tutor for different sessions, except for two modules, ‘Introduction to Business Management’ and ‘Principle of Finance’, which had a number of different tutors.
4.2.1 ‘Introduction to Business Management’

This was a three-hour seminar comprising a combination of lecture and seminar. The tutor gave a presentation for an hour and then asked students to discuss in groups some questions based on the lecture given. After the discussion, the students presented their conclusions to the whole class. Both tutors of the different session were female, Dianne and Olivia. Dianne, a senior tutor, was energetic and was always asking students to participate in the seminar discussions while Olivia adopted a more traditional way of teaching, focusing more on delivering the content. For their course assignments, both tutors assigned the students to groups. The groups changed a few times before the final groups were set and this occurred in both sessions. Since students were assigned to groups, they had to sit with their group members. In this seminar, all the Malaysian students were in the same session, except for one student, Qaisara. Below is a table that shows the session and groups they were in.

Table 17 Malaysian students in ‘Introduction to Business Management’ by session and group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1 (Dianne, Monday, 11am-2pm)</th>
<th>Session 2 (Olivia, Thursday, 9am-12pm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group 1 Fatin, Semek, Enot</td>
<td>Qaisara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2 Izlin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3 Ming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 4 Ammar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2 ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’

This was a one-hour seminar and the tutor was female, Lizzie. Lizzie tutored both sessions and she gave the students online questions to work on before
each seminar. Lizzie was very engaging and was always asking for volunteers to explain the answers to the whole class or inviting them to ask questions. She followed the same procedure for other questions. During one of the academic weeks, the convenor of this module, Will, took over and conducted the seminar sessions. In this seminar, the students were free to sit wherever they wanted. Two seminar sessions were observed and below is the table that shows the sessions and the students in each session.

| Table 18 Malaysian students in ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’ by session |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| **Session 1** (Lizzie/Will, Wednesday, 12-1pm) | **Session 2** (Lizzie/Will, Thursday, 1-2pm) |
| Fatin                                | Izlin                                |
| Enot                                |                                      |
| Qaisara                             | Semek                                |
| Ming                                |                                      |

4.2.3 ‘Principle of Finance’

This was also a one-hour seminar. The tutor for session 1 was male, Charles and for session 2 was female, Jane. Although the tutors of this seminar were different, both sessions followed a similar format where tutors began by presenting the questions given to the students. Tutor then asked the students to share their answers with the whole class. The tutors followed the same procedure for the other questions. Though at times they invited students to ask questions or share their answers with the whole class, both tutors talked most of the time and students participated little during the seminar discussions. Interactions in the seminar mostly comprised the tutors explaining how to get the answers to the whole class and, at times, a few students asking for clarification of the explanation given by the tutors. Similar to other seminars, the
students were also free to sit wherever they wanted in this seminar. Two seminar sessions of this module were observed where both sessions occurred at the same time at different venues with different tutors. Below is the table that shows the sessions and the Malaysian students in each.

Table 19 Malaysian students in ‘Principle of Finance’ by session

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 1</th>
<th>Session 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Charles, 1-2pm, Friday)</td>
<td>(Jane, 1-2pm, Friday)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qaisara</td>
<td>Semek</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enot</td>
<td>Fatin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Izlin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.4 ‘Architectural Humanities 1’

In this three-hour seminar, students discussed articles given to them before each session. Hence, it is important for students to read the articles before the session for them to be able to participate in the seminar discussion. The tutor of this seminar was female, Victoria. In this seminar, Victoria started the session by referring to the article given to the students and she opened the discussion to the floor by asking for comments on what the students thought of the article. After the discussion about one article was over, Victoria followed the same process for the second article. After both articles were discussed, Victoria allowed the students to brainstorm their weekly assignments and consult her about them.

4.3 Academic Identities

Identities are understood as dynamic and flexible based on individuals and the contexts they are in (Gee 2003). Academic identities are the identities
constructed and negotiated within an academic community. In the context of this study, the academic community is the academic seminars Malaysian students were in. The members of this academic community bring their own personality, experiences, and shared repertoire; shared goals and shared practices, into the seminar to make one community of practice. This section answers the research questions of the present study where it discusses the academic identities constructed and negotiated, and the interactions that occurred in seminars in the UK by utilising the identity in interaction framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) together with the three out of its five principles: emergence, positionality and indexicality. The interaction data found in this study was considered as conversations that took place in natural settings (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974; Liddicoat 2007), as per the theory of conversation analysis. The data was collected by observing the MSUK (MSUK) for nine weeks during their first term of their first academic year and conducting interviews and focus group discussions. They had been in the UK for just three weeks and were in their second week of term when the observation started. This short period of time of exposure to the UK academic community meant they had minimal contact with the community.

After going through the sets of data, a list of codes and themes were identified utilising thematic analysis. These codes and themes were then analysed and interpreted by employing the identity in interaction framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). A summary of the codes and themes from the UK data can be seen in Table 20 below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad category</th>
<th>Codes identified</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from classroom observation transcripts</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from interview transcripts</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from focus group discussion transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| MSUK interactions | MSUK verbal interactions | - Translanguaging  
- Interactions with other Malaysian students, local and other international students  
- Interactions with the whole-class  
- Interactions within small group  
- Interaction with the tutor  
- Malaysian students asking questions  
- Malaysian students answering questions  
- Malaysian students refusing to answer  
- Malaysian students explain answers | - Interactions with the whole-class  
- Interactions within small group  
- Lazy to speak  
- Lazy to translate  
- Contributing opinions or ideas | - Better not speak  
- Good student identity  
- Opinion not appreciated |
| MSUK interactions | MSUK verbal interactions | - Nonverbal communication  
- Silence | NA | - Eye contact |
| Perceptions of Malaysian academic culture | Malaysian students do not ask questions | NA | - Peer pressure  
- Malaysian identity | Different learning styles |
| Perceptions of own interactions | Malaysian students asking questions | NA | - Reasons for asking questions  
- Reasons for not asking questions | Different learning styles |
| Perceptions of others' interactions | International students’ interactions | NA | Malaysian students speak more | Experience of being marginalised |
| Challenges of learning | Studying abroad | NA | - Opinions not listened to  
- Comfort in studying in the UK  
- Wearing hijab | Language barrier (non-Malaysian peers spoke too fast) |
The classroom observation data also demonstrated that the Malaysian students were both engaged and unengaged in seminars where they may be perceived to construct and negotiate the three main academic identities which are resistant, accommodative, and agentive. These three academic identities may be constructed by the MSUK and were identified from their interactional behaviour: not contributing, rejecting invitations to share answers, interacting with non-Malaysian peers, translanguaging, answering and asking questions, and explaining answers. These academic identities and interactional behaviour categories represent a wide range of speech events and show that these Malaysian students construct and negotiate multiple academic identities. Hence, individual Malaysian students were seen to interact quite differently from each other depending on the context they were in. This can be seen in some of the interactions and perceptions analysed.

4.3.1 Resistant identities

The nine weeks of the observation saw most MSUK entering seminar rooms together and choosing to sit at the same table or next to each other. During the first week of the observation, the behaviour of most Malaysian students became clear; they tended to keep to themselves and isolate themselves from the rest of the students. Most of them were observed to sit among themselves and consequently, interact frequently just among themselves. Some of them preferred to walk in pairs and others would walk in groups of four (Never in threes!). On top of choosing a seating arrangement that emphasised their distinctiveness from the others, most of them did not interact with other home and international students, inside and outside of the seminar room except for Fatin. The same was true even in the case where the Malaysian students sat in
the same group or she was the only Malaysian student in the seminar. Ming even resorted to rejecting invitations by the tutor who had always been encouraging when it came to contributions during seminar discussions. Most of them such as Enot, Ming, Qaisara and Amar also did not ask and answer questions during whole-class and small-group discussions, even with fellow Malaysians. They did not contribute ideas nor challenge the tutor.

As the term progressed, Enot, Ming, Qaisara, Semek, Izlin and Amar insisted on either keeping silent or only interacting with other Malaysian students. Semek, Izlin and Enot were also observed interacting with the tutor in the beginning of term, and yet by the end of the term, they did not speak to anyone during seminars. In fact, Enot was observed to not contribute to small-group discussion even when there were two other Malaysian students in the group. The distinctiveness and isolation of these Malaysian students were, at times, very apparent so as to be plausibly interpreted as lack of interest rather than their inability to intellectually engage in the classroom activities. This was the case, for instance, when Enot and Amar were caught playing with their mobile phones on or under their desk throughout the seminar or during small-group discussions. This behaviour was not only observed in MSUK, but also other students in the seminars. However, this disengagement behaviour was seen to be consistent in particularly Enot and Amar in all seminars and became particularly more apparent towards the end of the term. In fact, Enot, admitted to playing with her phone due to the topic having continued for too long and becoming uninteresting.
Like, like, for example, the chapter value of money, I did the exercise... I did it before going to the seminar right? I feel like I can focus a bit... but it only lasted a few weeks... after that, I played with the phone...

Other than playing with their mobile phones, the final two weeks of the semester saw Enot, Semek, Izlin, Qaisara and Amar not attending the seminars at all. Because of this, I could not observe them. In addition to the instance described above, Extract 4.1 implies that Ming was resistant.

Rejection of invitation to share answers

Extract 4.1 below demonstrates another interactional behaviour observed in MSUK: refusing to share answers with the whole class and this is the only example of the rejection. This extract is from the audio recording of ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’. The tutor of this session was Will, the convenor of the module. The Malaysian students in this seminar, Enot, Qaisara, and Ming sat in the same small group while Fatin sat with non-Malaysian peers. Below is the seating plan of the seminar that also illustrates the tutor’s movement between the front and the back of the class and towards the white board.
The tutor, Will, began the seminar by taking the attendance. He then referred to the questions on the concept of monopoly in finance and economy which were given to the students beforehand via their student portal and asked the whole class if they needed to discuss anything in particular. He continued to explain the answers to the students or invited them to share their answers with the class. Throughout the seminar, other students responded verbally after the tutor called out their names and proceeded to share their answers. Although some students were seen to be reluctant to respond, they still responded eventually. In the middle of the seminar, at the 27th minute, the interaction between the tutor, Will, and Ming can be seen in Extract 4.1 below where Ming behaved rather differently from the other students.

Figure 9 Seating plan: Extract 4.1 (Economic Foundation of Finance, 04/11/2015)
Extract 4.1
1. Will [to the whole class] Okay, er one last thing, maybe, could someone else could go to the board. One last thing, that I wanted to stress on in the case of the monopoly, is the fact that er the monopoly is going to be about to extract a profit. Normally, okay? Or it would do its job only if it's a type of profit. So, let's go back to this question of know, how do we determine the maximum profits? Do we have someone?

[between Will and Ming, during whole-class discussion]
2. Will What's your name, again? What's your name?
3. Ming Ming
4. Will Ming. No?
5. Ming Yeees? [while shaking his head]

[the whole class laughs]
6. Will Yes? Do you mind, going to the board? Would you like to speak to us?
7. Ming [shakes his head]
8. Will No, you don’t, okay. Not going to force you.

The above extract presents an example showing how one of the MSUK, Ming, rejected an invitation by the tutor. Prior to this extract, the tutor referred to the question to be discussed and explained the theory involved in answering the question [E4.1: L1]. This extract shows how Ming rejected the tutor’s invitation to share the answers by writing it on the board. Compared to other local and international students in the seminar, Ming was the only student who rejected the invitation by tutors throughout the observation [E4.1: L5, L7]. The other students had always responded, though they hesitated initially. Ming’s behaviour defied the common findings in previous studies of Malaysian students’ behaviour studies (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012). For example, Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) and Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor (2010b) found that Malaysian students may not voluntarily share and explain answers, but they would respond if chosen by the tutor. Malaysian students were also found to perceive classroom participation to be important
because they view it as a platform for them to improve their academic achievement and thinking skills, as well as to exchange ideas with their teachers and classmates (Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a).

Ming’s behaviour was not influenced by his lack of English language competence, as he admitted during the focus group discussion that he did not have problem studying in an English-speaking country because he considered the English language his first language where he used the language to communicate with his family members and friends. He also shared during the interview session that he did his foundation studies in one of the academic institutions in the UK. This means language does not affect his ability to contribute to the discussion. Ming also offered his insights into how his experience in a Chinese vernacular school may have affected his participation in seminars (INT5). Compared to other Malaysian students, he came from a stricter school culture where rote learning and one-way teacher-student communication were common (Ang 2017).

Excerpt 2
Ming: Chinese school system aaa…the Chinese aaa, Chinese teachers are kind of vicious one. You raise your hand, give wrong answer, you stand up, in a way it embarrasses, so everybody has a habit of not raising their hand lah.

Ming mentioned that he preferred to keep quiet and not contribute anything. His educational background influencing his participation in seminar discussion is similar to that described by Kolb and Kolb (2005), whose findings took into account students’ educational background when discussing factors affecting students’ classroom participation.
Based on the principles of emergence where identities emerge from interactions (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), a few MSUK display interactional behaviours such as disengagement, absence during seminars, and rejecting an invitation to share answers; all of which could be interpreted as resistance to seminar discussions. Resistance in the classroom context has been widely discussed and interpreted in a number of ways by academics (Giroux 1983; Alpert 1987; Alpert 1991; Giltrow & Calhoun 1992; Canagarajah 1993; Rampton 1995; Anfara 1995; Lin 1997; McFarland 2001). According to Alpert (1991), resistance in school refers to the strong “existence of tension and conflicts between school and the wider community students belong to” (p. 1). De Voss (1979) claims that students’ resistance in the classroom is legitimate where students can express their feelings because there may be a conflict between the students’ background and what is expected of them from the target community (Alpert 1991), especially so with students coming from different educational background where they may react to situations differently. A different interpretation is offered by Liu (2001), who posited that one example of students’ resistant behaviour is accepting what is discussed in the classroom without argument or questions. From this perspective, such silent resistance may therefore result in marginalisation and exclusion. Wenger (1998) identifies marginality as an act of non-participation that removes the opportunity for full participation, where marginality implies the lack of will or intention to become engaged in the discussion. Liu’s expression of silent observation also echoes participation category suggested by Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011): negatively passive. Being negatively passive is when students are observed to be in their own world as they may play with their mobile phones and look out
the window. Some examples of resistance acts are not attending lessons and being aloof and unengaged during lessons (Giltrow & Calhoun 1992), silence and mumbling (Alpert 1987), non-participation (Canagarajah 1993; Wenger 1998) and playing with mobile phones (Baron 2008).

In the context of this study, the definition of “resistant” encompasses Liu’s (2001) notion of silent observation and Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani’s (2011) participation category of negatively passive. In fact, the classroom observation data shows Malaysian students’ interactional behaviour can be interpreted as resistance, including (i) not engaging with peers, tutors, and seminar content, (ii) playing with mobile phones, and (iii) rejecting tutor’s invitation to share answers. Students’ personality, language incompetency, lack of topic relevance, and topical newsworthiness may justify the lack of connection with the surrounding academic environment, yet these are not reasons to discredit the interpretation of the behaviours as resistance.

In fact, interview and focus group discussion data show similar responses among the Malaysian students on their contribution to seminar discussions, rating their contribution between 1 to 2 out of 5. The analysis of these sets of data reveal several conditions that had possibly influenced MSUK’s resistance. Firstly, Enot and Qaisara, together with Izlin and Semek, agreed during the focus group discussions that they did not contribute much as they were not familiar with the module content and as a result, they did not know what to ask or the answers to the questions asked by the tutor (FGD2). Content familiarity was also discussed and agreed by Fatin, Ammar, Ming, and
Puspa in another focus group discussion (FGD1). What the Malaysian students shared also resonates with Robinson’s (2001) claim that students’ familiarity with the content increases their attention in the seminar discussion of the same content. This suggests that personal factors such as content familiarity may contribute to students’ interactional behaviour. Malaysian students become familiar with the content as they prepare for the lessons. Lack of preparation was linked to low confidence level which contributed to the the lack of contribution in classrooms. In their study, Abebe and Denke (2015) revealed that students who lack preparation of the content become nervous when they have to make contributions in the English language classroom. Consistent with this behaviour, Bouchard (2011) and Siti Mazira and Nik Suryani (2011) claim that students may be more comfortable participating in discussion with topics they are familiar with. Based on the indexicality principle, these students were interpreted to be resistant contributing to the seminar as the used the word familiar when talking about the interactions.

Other than content familiarity, Puspa and Qaisara mentioned language barrier to be a factor when they shared that other students’ fast pace in speaking hindered their understanding of the discussion content, and as a result, hindered their participation during seminar discussions. This suggests that personal factors such as second language proficiency does influence Puspa and Qaisara’s interactional behaviour, in line with what was found by Thi Mai (2019), Mandefro (2019), Zhao (2016) and Susak (2016): English language proficiency determines students’ interactional behaviour in classroom. Students whose English language is their second language may not have the proficiency to express their thoughts well, particularly when the medium of instruction is the
English language. Susak (2016) found that one of students’ traits influencing their participation was language barrier where half of the participants in his study mentioned that they were not comfortable sharing their opinions in the English language.

With reference to the principle of positionality, Puspa and Qaisara were interpreted to construct resistant identity from the position of an English as a Second Language (ESL) speaker as they mentioned the phrase ‘*mula-mula dorang cakap laju gila*’ (in the beginning, they talk very fast) many times during interviews and focus group discussions. According to them, this was particularly true only at the beginning of the term. On the other hand, Fatin, Semek, Enot, Izlin, Ming, Teratai and Amar shared otherwise during the interview and focus group discussion sessions where language is no longer a factor because they are comfortable with the language and some of them, such as Ming, even considered the English language to be their first language as they used it to speak to their family members and friends. Their perceptions on this matter resonate with Piscioneri, Citra and Wulan’s (2017) finding that English language competency is not the main problem when transitioning from the student’s home country to English-speaking countries like the UK. The different factors influencing these two groups of participants are personal and educational background. It is suggested to be personal for Ming and Fatin as they mentioned they used the English language at home and considered the language as their first language. Puspa and Qaisara went to schools where English language is not spoken and English language lessons were not taught in the language while it was otherwise for Fatin, Semek, Enot, Izlin, Teratai and
Amar and this suggest that educational background is also one of the factors that influences these students’ interactional behaviour.

Resistance was also observed in Enot and Ammar. Although they did not refuse to share their answers with the whole class like Ming did, Enot and Ammar were observed to not contribute to small-group discussion even when the group consisted of other Malaysian students. This behaviour may hinder full participation with the members of the seminars. The findings of the study echo previous studies on Malaysian students’ classroom participation (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Zainal Abidin 2007; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007). These studies revealed that most Malaysian students preferred to keep quiet despite knowing they should be engaged because engagement provided them with the platform to use the English language and improve their communication skills. Zainal Abidin (2007) revealed Malaysian students were bored with classroom activities and showed disinterest in the activities. This resulted in them not contributing to and participating in classroom discussions. Similar behaviour could be seen in Enot and Amar which could be interpreted as resistant.

The above description and extract of Enot, Ming and Amar’s disengagement behaviour demonstrates resistant behaviour to verbal interaction during seminar discussions; this is in direct contrast to the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education’s (MOHE) aim of producing Malaysian students and graduates who are proficient and able to fluently express themselves in the
English language (Malaysia Education Malaysia, 2015). This emphasis is due to the prospective employers’ reports that Malaysian graduates lack the ability to use the English language well (Malaysia Education Malaysia 2015), despite being motivated to verbally communicate and express their ideas in the workplace (Tengku Shahraniza 2016; Isarji, Zainab, Ainol Madziah, Tunku Badariah & Mohammad Safari 2013). The UK convention also expects international students including the MSUK to participate critically in seminar discussions (Kember 2001; Durkin 2008). In other words, the above descriptions illustrate that some MSUK such as Enot, Amar, Ming and Qaisara do not construct and negotiate the identity expected by MOHE and UK academic convention. Since this study focuses on studying students’ verbal interactional behaviour, these behavioural acts shown by these students suggest that they produce both forms of non-participation: peripherality (taking notes and responding minimally) and marginality (keeping quiet and refusing to share answers). In the context of this study, Enot, Amar, Ming and Qaisara may be interpreted as resistant to verbal participation in seminar discussions. Their resistance can be linked to personal factors such as language barrier.

4.3.2 Agentive identities

Enot, Amar, Ming and Qaisara’s disengagement behaviour could be interpreted differently using the parameters of a study conducted by Ewald and Wallace (1994, p. 347), where they suggest that student agency includes “having the ability to decide on tasks, choosing topics for discussion and making decisions regarding what contributions get counted as knowledge”. The disengagement behaviour shown by Enot, Amar, Ming and Qaisara through classroom observation, interview, and focus group discussions could therefore
be interpreted as manifestation of agency based on the emergence principle which views identity as an emerging product. Ahearn (2001, p. 118) defines agency as “socioculturally mediated capacity to act”. These MSUK could be seen to take control of their decision not to be engaged with the seminar discussion. In line with Pavlenko and Blackledge’s (2004, p. 20) statement that speakers performing this act may “resist, negotiate, change and transform themselves and others”, these Malaysian students were also seen to resist engaging and contributing to seminar discussions, as described in the previous section. They were thus seen as performing the act of agency and consequently, the identity of agentive emerged from their disengagement/interactional behaviours. Matthews’ (2014b) definition of agentive: “having or marking the semantic role of an agent”. Similarly, Duranti (2004) proposes that agency is a characteristic individuals possess. The first characteristic to be considered as agency is the control individuals may have over their actions while the second characteristic is the actions affecting themselves and highly likely other individuals. The final characteristic is the actions done by individuals to be the subject of evaluation. In other words, the agency characteristics that individuals possess allow them to have control over what they do that impact themselves or other people. He also asserts that as speakers use the language, they perform the act of agency. Having these features suggests that individuals are agentive.

Students’ agentive decisions, which were also influenced by language and content familiarity, affected their disengagement behaviour with seminar content and other members of the community/seminar. For instance, in
reference to the indexicality principle, the below sharing indexed students’ agentive behaviour. Semek shared her experience of being marginalised by other students during small group discussions as she used the sentence ‘foreigner or international student’s opinion not really matter or doesn’t really make sense’. It is highly likely that it caused her to believe it was not necessary for her to offer her opinions or ideas and consequently marginalised herself from the discussion.
Excerpt 3

Semek: kan kita main game spaghetti tak, how to ni kan… aku cakap buat based dia macam ni, dah cakap dah macam tu kan… but it’s hard tau.macam nak get… sebab macam I think maybe dia macam, oh foreigner or international student dia punya opinion not really matter or doesn’t really make sense or macam… oh we have better ideas than her… macam tu kan, something like that. Or, and then ada lagi, banyak kali rombak group business kan… there’s this one group, aa masa tu group Harry, masa tu kan aku dengan Ming kan. Ming like, every time dia cakap, dia come out with… kau tahu kan Micheal macam mana kan?

Izlin: Aku tau

Semek: dia macam cakap banyak sikit kan

Izlin: dia cakap banyak

Semek: tapi dia punya point is good point and make sense tau, macam what… dia taklah jawab mengikut silibus tapi dia jawab mengikut apa yang... But his points are good points and make sense, you know, like what… he didn’t actually answer based on the syllabus, but he answered based on...

Izlin: Logik?

Semek: evolve around him, macam tu semua semua… but people macam tak acknowledge pun apa yang dia cakap… so make me macam, ha betul, ha betullah tu… faham tak? Kira macam kena cakap… Macam tu lah, tapi macam I think there’s this mindset lah dalam kepala saya, macam… oh, it’s better to keep quiet kot. But I think it’s hard to make your point… kalau macam, ah biar je lah diorang menang. And diorang pun macam kadang-kadang macam tak acknowledge, unless you show from the start that your point memang lecturer know, oh dia ni memang cakap betul…

Translation

We played the spaghetti game, how to do it right… I said, let’s make the base like this, I’ve said it right… but it’s hard you know, to get… because like I think maybe they’re like, oh she’s a foreigner or international student, her opinion does not really matter or doesn’t really make sense or like… oh, we have better ideas than her… something like that, right? Or and then there’s more, groupings for business were reshuffled a few times, right? There’s this one group, when I was in Spark’s group, I was with Ming at the time, Ming was like, every time he speaks, he comes out with. You know how Ming is right?

I know

He speaks more, right?

He does speak a lot...

... But his points are good points and make sense, you know, like what… he didn’t actually answer based on the syllabus, but he answered based on...

Logic?

Evolves around him, something like that… but people seemed like don’t acknowledge what he said… so it makes me like, yes, that’s right, yes, that’s right… do you get me? It’s like I have to say it… Something like that, but like I think there’s this mind-set in my head, like… oh, it’s better to keep quiet I guess… but I think it’s hard to make your point… like, ah, let them win. And sometimes they don’t acknowledge, unless you show from the start that the lecturer knows your point, oh, she’s saying something right.
Being marginalised did not only happen to her, but also to another Malaysian student, Ming. Semek mentioned that when she and Ming tried to share their opinion about a topic during a small-group discussion, their group mates did not respond although she believed their idea was relevant to the topic. The above comments show quite a strong indication of Malaysian students’ experiences of being marginalised. This echoes the findings of previous studies where the participants felt that they were marginalised by teachers/tutors, other students, the school system or the wider academic community (Lin & Yi 1997; Freire 1998; Robertson et al 2000; Osman 2009; Naidoo 2009; Tian & Lowe 2009). The focus group discussion excerpt above suggests that Semek’s consequent actions after perceiving marginalisation shows her reflection upon what happened. The reaction indexed Semek as agentive and is parallel with Klemencic’s (2015) definition of students’ agency: “quality of students’ self-reflective and intentional action and interaction with their environment”. In other words, students are able to develop their own agency via their interaction with the classroom environment.

The interview sessions with the MSUK revealed that they mostly kept quiet because of how they position themselves and their personality: passive (Enot - INT3), not competitive (Ammar - INT6), and lacking confidence (Qaisara – INT1). This is in line with other studies that found one of the personal factors affecting Malaysian students’ participation in the classroom is their personality (Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2010a). Despite mentioning that she was passive (INT3) and thus did not contribute much during seminar discussion, Enot was described by other
Malaysian students as the go-to person. According to Semek and Qaisara, she would always go to Enot for help when she had trouble with the module content.

Excerpt 4
Semek : *Tak pernah tanya, kalau saya tak tahu saya tanya Enot.*
Translation I’ve never asked. If I don’t know something, I’d ask Enot.

Indeed, during my recent interactions with Enot, she told me that she graduated with a first-class honours degree. In other words, despite being resistant to the seminar discussions as described above, Enot performed well academically. This suggests that Enot took control of her learning and understood that even though she did not engage in seminar discussions, she would be able to understand the content well, which was proven by her first-class result. Enot’s behaviour is similar to one of White’s (2011) student-participants, Alex, who stated that he did not have to participate to get better marks or a better understanding of the module content as he knows he has good ideas, despite not knowing how to express them. Enot’s behaviour indexed agentive behaviour and is in line with Matthews’ (2014b) definition of agentive. Similarly, Enot demonstrates she has agency characteristics (Duranti 2004). Semek, Qaisara, Amar and Izlin, who were seen as disengaging with the academic content during seminar, were in fact playing an active role in their learning process by deciding not to engage in the seminar discussions. This also shows Ming’s absence of obligation to interact with others.

These Malaysian students’ experiences suggest that despite being disengaged during seminar discussions and read as resistant, their disengagement behaviours can also be interpreted as agentive. For instance,
Semek’s experience of being in the same group with Ming demonstrated how Ming could engage or attempted to engage in a small-group discussion, but he was somewhat ignored. Semek’s behaviour and Ming’s attempt to contribute to small-group discussion are the opposite of how Ming was as described in the early section: rejecting an invitation to share answers. However, referring to the indexicality principle, Ming’s statement during the focus group discussion indexed his agentive behaviour where he used the phrase ‘both way I keep quiet’. He knew and acknowledged that his learning style did not require him to ask questions or contribute to seminar discussion. He mentioned that he did not have to ask questions because he could search for the answer from books or on Google. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, he may feel that he did not need to interact with others.

Excerpt 5
Ming : whether I understand or not also, both way I keep quiet. If there’s something I don’t understand I google or I go back home and study with my book… or I ask somebody else if I really really need to understand… but either way, I keep quiet.

Indeed, he decided on his own learning experience and pace, and that he reacted to his learning environment the way he wanted to learn. In fact, in contrast with Enot who stated that they would contribute if she had eye contact with the tutor, Ming stated that he would still say nothing.

Excerpt 6
Ming : ... I usually paying attention, if they ask me or something, I usually just look at them in the eyes and say nothing…
Despite saying that she felt she was being marginalised by others in the small group and believed that she would marginalise herself, Extract 4.2 shows that Semek was seen to take the initiative to volunteer to explain answers to the whole class and was later chosen to explain by the tutor. The extract shows how Semek has a strong sense of autonomy towards her learning process as she independently decided that she wanted to volunteer and explain the answers.

*Explaining answers to the whole class*

Extract 4.2 came from the audio recording of ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’. The format of this seminar has been described in 4.2.2. Two Malaysian students attended this seminar session, Semek and Izlin, and they sat next to each other. Although these students sat next to other students, F3 and M15, the interactions mostly took place between themselves and they did not include other students in the discussion. This was because they translanguaged between English-Malay and Malay-English most of the time.

Below is the seating plan of the seminar.
The seating plan above also illustrates the tutor’s movement where in this seminar, she moved mostly towards the right of the plan. This could be because there is a white board on the right. This plan has additional information to show Semek’s movement (in red). From this plan, it could be seen that Semek moved from her seat to the white board to write her answers to share with the whole class. She referred to the answers on the board to explain.

Extract 4.2

1 Semek [to the whole class] Em. Okay, basically, err you take erm the question asks, if you want, whether he should stay in the university or he should go with this business consultancy... consultancy business... So, if he works as a consultancy business, he will earn
65000 a year, minus with the secretary is 20000, minus miscellaneous is £10000. Okay, so, erm when you want to calculate ermm...

2 Lizzie   The economic?
3 Semek   Aa... The economic, economically, you have to take the total revenue minus the total expenses minus the opportunity cost. This is the three opportunity costs in that question. First of all is the £12000, this is the rent which is it is stated that if he stays as a lecturer, he will earn £1000 every month because he has a house and he rent it to people.

4 Lizzie   Mhm...?
5 Semek   So, £10000 times 12, so we got this and then erm... this one is from the £10000, 10% per annum fixed rate. So, let's say if he stays as a lecturer, he will earn £1000 every year as a [unsure of the term]. So, er when he wanted to be a open a consultancy business, this is the opportunity cost, 1000 and last one is the 35000 comes from if he is a lecturer, 35000 is what he will earn for that year.

6 Lizzie   Yep.
7 Semek   So, this three is the opportunity cost if he wants to open a consultancy business. So, basically, after you calculate 65 minus all, wait, minus all of this, you will get this number which is £-13000 and this indicates that er he will meet a loss if he wants to open a business consultancy, consultancy business. So, it is better for him to stay at the university and become the economic lecturer.

8 Lizzie   Yes!

As the data extract above illustrates, Semek did not only volunteer to share the answers, but she also explained the answer successfully, as acknowledged by the tutor [E4.2: L8]. The extract is taken from the middle part of the seminar. Prior to the exchange in this extract, the tutor had asked the whole class if anyone would like to contribute their answers and Semek raised her hands to volunteer. After being chosen, she wrote her answers on the board. As she explained the answer to the whole class, the classroom observation field note shows that she made eye contact with the tutor a few times where she either asked for confirmation that her explanation was correct [E4.2: L3; L5; L7] or required help from the tutor with the correct term [E4.2: L1]. Based on the emergence principle, this analysis reveals that Semek exercised
her agency to change how she would normally behave in seminars. During most of the classroom observations, Semek was seen to only interact with other Malaysian students. In this seminar, however, she volunteered and explained her answer to the whole class. This change in behaviour suggests that Semek’s behaviour is in line with how Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p. 20) define the act of agency, where the agents may change and transform how they behave. This suggests that Semek was being agentive when she decided to change her habitual behaviour in the seminar, from contributing minimally to whole-class discussions to explaining answers to the whole seminar.

This extract also demonstrates that Semek was being agentive as she had the volition and will to explain the answer to the whole class. In other words, she was in control of her decision on whether she wanted to contribute to the whole-class seminar. Her behaviour of volunteering and explaining the answers is consistent with Van Lier’s (2008) definition of agency where he outlines three behaviours connected to volition: (i) volunteering to answer questions asked by the tutor, (ii) volunteering to help other students, and (iii) volunteering to enter into a debate with other students during the seminar. He also characterised the students in his study as participatory, autonomous, and committed, respectively. Van Lier (2008) also adds that students need to have additional initiatives, which Gao (2010) terms as the notion of will and Klemencic (2015) calls “agentic orientation”. This element requires stronger sense of autonomy (Van Lier 2008). Her interactional behaviour of explaining the answers to the whole seminar is in line with Ewald and Wallace’s (1994) interpretation of agency where they argue student agency to be students’
capability to construct meaning influencing their actions during classroom events, as classroom agents. Being agentive allows Semek to have control over her learning process and experience (Klemencic 2015; Elder 1994).

Extract 4.2 illustrates how Semek can take an agentic role during whole-class discussions, even after a short-term exposure to the UK academic environment. The UK academic convention encourages students to volunteer and share their answers when the tutor nominates them or to ask questions to the tutor anytime the students want to. In other words, the expert members of this academic community of practice, such as the tutor, aim for students to construct or portray themselves as students who are critical and active in academic discussions (Kember 2001; Durkin 2008). In line with this, all tutors were observed to always encourage participation of and contribution from the students. The above extract is important because previous research has shown that Malaysian students are passive and minimally contribute verbally in seminars (Siti Maziha et al. 2010b; Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Siti Maziha et al. 2010a; Mohd. Yusof et al. 2012). In reference to the principle of emergence and indexicality (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), Semek’s interactional behaviour could also be interpreted as agentive. As Semek mentioned during my interview session with her, it was not necessary for her to contribute ideas during seminars discussion as she felt that she did not seek for anyone’s recognition on whether she knows the answer.
Excerpt 7
Semek: oh kadang-kadang kita rasa macam ada language barrier… sebab kan macam kita macam ada poin kan, tapi kita macam refuse to bagi maca people acknowledge point kita tu sebab kita macam cakap banyak… kadang-kadang kita rasa macam it’s okay not to talk about that… macam, or… tak adalah most of the time, macam kadang-kadang je, macam tiba-tiba kita ada idea ke kan. yang kita kena elaborate banyak banyak kita macam it’s okay, it’s fine…

Translation
Oh, sometimes I think there’s the language barrier. Because if I have a point to make, but I refuse to give people time to acknowledge my point because I need to speak a lot. Sometimes, I think it’s okay not to talk about that. But not all the time, only sometimes… It depends actually on how much I want people to acknowledge that I, too, can do this. I think it’s okay, at least I know I can do it, so it’s like it’s fine.

Excerpt 8
Semek: I don’t need people to acknowledge that I know it, faham tak? Aaa, depend on how much I really want people to acknowledge me, macam, oh dia ni boleh jugak jawab, terer jugak Econ ke apa… tapi so far macam tak adalah. Kita macam tak adalah penat-penat… at least kalau kita faham, then fine

Translation
I don’t need people’s recognition that I know it, do you get it? Depends on how much I really want people to acknowledge me. Oh, it’s like, she can answer the question, she’s good at economics, but so far, I haven’t had that. I don’t have to work hard about it. At least, if I understand, then it’s fine.

Both interview excerpts above demonstrate that she did not feel that there was a need for her to contribute to the seminar. Nevertheless, Extract 4.2 reveals that she still decided to contribute to the seminar discussion by explaining the answers during the whole-class discussion. Semek’s behaviour in this extract could be affected by one of the interpersonal factors, tutor’s role: the tutor who consistently encouraged the students to participate in the seminar discussion (Fassinger 2000; Hyde & Ruth 2002; Rocca 2010; Mandefro 2019).

This extract was the only event where Semek was observed to enthusiastically volunteer and explain her answers. Semek’s behaviour is interesting because
based on what she said during her interview with me, it indicates that she would not contribute to the seminar discussion.

Excerpt 9
Semek: *macam tu lah, kadang-kadang kita rasa macam, berat mulut, sebab macam kalau nak kena explain semua tu in English*
Translation: So, it’s like that. Sometimes, I feel lazy to speak because I need to explain all those things in English.

Excerpt 10
Semek: *language barrier kot… sometime you just don’t speak out sebab you malas nak translate what you think in BM to English… sebab, nanti macam, oh apa benda ah, apa benda… macam tu lah… macam tu lah saya rasa*
Translation: Language barrier, I guess… sometimes, you just don’t speak out because you’re lazy to translate what you think in Malay into English. Because it’d be like, like what, like something like that… that what I think.

The extract and excerpts show that Semek decided on her own learning experience, as to whether or not she wanted to contribute to seminar discussion. Her decision reflects Klemencic’s (2015) claims that agency allows students to determine how they want their educational experience and their environment to be (Elder 1994). Klemencic (2015) also emphasises that student agency provides students with control over their learning process and experience. Semek’s behaviour, as shown in Extract 4.2, and her perceptions as shared during the interview and focus group discussion could be interpreted along the parameters of a study conducted by Ewald and Wallace (1994, p. 347), where they suggest students’ agency practice to include “having the ability to decide on tasks, choosing topics for discussion and making decisions regarding what contributions get counted as knowledge”. They categorise the participants in their study as agentive when they initiated discussion topics and responded to each other without the need for the tutor to nominate their turns.
(Ewald & Wallace 1994). In other words, agency is the students’ ability to interpret events and to influence themselves and the classroom within specific classroom events (Ewald & Wallace 1994) and Semek decided on how she would react, the experiences she could have, the level of effort she would like to invest her time in, and the choices she had to make from the events that occur in seminars. Hamidah (2012) conducted a study of six Malaysian children studying in UK primary schools in the context of second language acquisition. She found that one of the students, Azlan, was agentive in his usage of the English language with his parents at home and his school friends, and his acquiring the second language where he also received encouragement from his family members and his other friends at school. Her findings were, to a certain degree, similar with the present study as both found a small number of students who constructed and negotiated agentive identities.

Other than Semek, another MSUK, Izlin’s behaviour i.e. asking and answering questions during whole-class discussion, could also be interpreted as agentive in reference to emergence and indexicality principles (Bucholtz & Hall 2005).

**Asking and answering questions**

Extract 4.3 is the audio recording of the ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’. The Malaysian students in this seminar, Izlin and Semek, sat next to each other. Below is the seating plan of the seminar. This seating plan illustrates that the tutor’s movements were limited because of the way the tables and chairs were set up. It also demonstrates that Lizzie moved between the left
and right of the seminar room. She mostly moved to the right to use the whiteboard to write mathematic work and draw graphs.

Figure 11 Seating plan: Extract 4.3 (Economic Foundation of Finance, 08/10/2015)

As mentioned previously, the female tutor, Lizzie, encouraged students to share their answers and they are frequently invited to ask questions or to volunteer during this seminar. This extract occurred when the tutor was explaining the answers to the whole class and here, she nominated Izlin to share her answers.
Extract 4.3
[to the whole class]
1. Lizzie A new type of robot is invented that can pick apples. Fancy robot? Why does this happen?
[between Lizzie and Izlin during whole-class discussion]
2. Lizzie Emm... Izlin?
3. Izlin Err... Supply increases
4. Lizzie Supply increases, right? So supply curve shifts to the right. We get in... What happen to the prices and quantity?
5. Izlin The prices will be go down?
6. Lizzie Lower, yeah... And..?
7. Izlin The quantity will be higher
8. Lizzie Might be higher, right? So you've got it yeah...
[between Lizzie and Boy1 during whole-class discussion]
9. Boy1 What if er the erm... ermm... the supplier they raise the price because there are very big cost imply in using technology?
10. Lizzie You're getting complicated, aren't you? Could be that...
11. Lizzie talking But this is not written here, so keep it simple okay? As long as we don't talk about the cost, we can just assume that it stays the same, okay? On average.
[between Lizzie and Izlin during whole-class discussion]
12. Izlin Can we relate it to dynamic efficiency because it's technology? So dynamic efficiency so the cost will be reduced...
13. Lizzie Yeah, exactly as long as we don't say they charge err because of the higher fixed cost
14. Izlin [to herself] Mhmm...
15. Lizzie [to herself] Right?
16. Izlin [to herself] Oo, okay...
17. Lizzie You you're okay with saying efficiency is just improved and therefore we have the shifts to the right. So, don't make it more complicated that it meant to be.

The data extract above illustrates the presence of interaction between a Malaysian student, Izlin, and the tutor. Izlin verbally responded to the question asked by the tutor during whole-class discussion after being nominated by the tutor. Izlin’s behaviour was coherent to the data from the interview and focus group discussion where the MSUK did mention a similar point: they interacted only when they were chosen. In other words, Izlin and other Malaysian students mentioned during my interview sessions with them that they would participate or
share their answers during whole-class discussions if the tutor nominated them (Fatin, Ammar and Semek) or if there was eye contact (Enot).

Excerpt 11
Izlin : yelah biasanya kalau lecturer macam specifically macam panggil nama kita. ‘Anis, the person at the back’…macam oh, wah baru jawab…
Translation Usually, when the lecturer specifically called our names, “Izlin, the person at the back”, then I’ll answer the questions.

Excerpt 12
Semek : bila dia tanya saya jawab, kalau kena tembak soalan, macam dia tembak, ‘ha cuba jawab ni’…
Translation When I’m asked, I’ll answer… If I’m asked to suddenly answer, for example, the tutor suddenly asked, ‘answer this question’.

Excerpt 13
Enot : kalau lecturer point nama, ha, kita jawablah jugak. Kalau dia tak point nama, tak…tak angkat tangan. Cuma kalau buat eye-contact ke, rasa macam…aa kalau buat eye-contact time dia tanya tu aaa, macam try lah jawab.
Translation When the tutor called my name, I’d respond… If the lecturer doesn’t call my name, I don’t raise my hand. if there are eye-contacts, when there is eye-contact when the lecturer asked, (I’ll) try to answer.

Research also found that the Malaysian students perceive one of the reasons for them to participate during seminars is when the tutor calls their name or appoints them to share the answers to the questions (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a). In contrast, a study showed that students were nervous and afraid if teachers summon them and ask difficult questions or questions they did not understand (Wong 2009). This shows tutor’s role was one of the interpersonal factors affecting whether Izlin asked and answered questions during seminar discussions (Fassinger 2000; Mandefro 2019) and hence their agentive identity. Mandefro (2019) and Hyde and Ruth (2002) also mentioned that tutors who nod and give positive feedback
or response would get more students’ participation compared to those who do not. In other words, tutors who are approachable, supportive and not criticising students’ mistakes (Rocca 2010; Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Ghalley & Rai 2019) would allow students to be more inclined to contribute. In this extract, Izlin could be seen to ask a content-related question which could be categorised as low order questions. Tan and Arshad (2014) defined low order questions “direct questions on facts, concepts and calculation, as well as questions that clarify and verify which only involve simple cognitive processes” (p. 176). Although Izlin was observed to share her answers after being nominated by the tutor, she was observed asking the question without being nominated. Izlin’s interactional behaviour involves volition (Van Lier 2008) which indicates agency. It also involves will as Izlin was willing to ask the questions and also willing to answer the questions asked by the tutor. This reflects student agency as it exemplifies the “quality of students’ self-reflective and intentional action and interaction with their environment” (Klemencic 2015, p. 11). It also links to student agency as Izlin’s behaviour of asking questions reflects the concept of having alternatives, which is an element of student agency (Klemencic 2015).

Extract 4.3 demonstrates that Izlin asked a question and this behaviour is relatively uncommon for Malaysian students, more so when the question was asked during a whole-class discussion. Based upon the principles of emergence and indexicality, Izlin’s interactional behaviour of asking questions could be interpreted as agentive. This is because throughout the nine-week classroom observations, not many questions were posed by the Malaysian
students particularly during the whole-class seminar discussion. According to Thang and Azarina (2007), the Malaysian students in their study did not ask questions because they perceived asking the tutor as unnecessary considering that the tutor had already explained everything to them. Similarly, in the current research, one of the MSUK, Semek, shared with me during my interview session with her that ‘selalu lecturer dah bagi semua’ (if the lecturer has given everything) (INT2), there was no need for her to ask questions. This suggests that tutor’s role in providing the knowledge and encouraging Semek might have been one of the factors that influences her contribution during classroom discussion (Fassinger 2000; Mandefro 2019). The Malaysian students in Thang and Azarina’s study (2007) also mentioned that they could ask the tutor after the seminar or ask their friends. This is similar to what was shared by the MSUK during interviews and focus group discussion.

Excerpt 14
Teratai : Tasya jumpa hari tu like tutor tu after class, tanyalah dia apa yang tak faham, kan.
Translation at that time, we went to see the teacher personally and asked things that we did not understand.

Excerpt 15
Semek : kalau tak tanya, tanya kiri ke
Translation If I don’t ask in class, I’ll ask the people beside me.

The same point was also discussed during one of the focus group discussions.

Excerpt 16
Izlin : dak, kita tanya tapi lepas kelas lah
Semek : Ha
Izlin : yang tu ha lagi, lagi macam…lagi, selesa…
Translation No, we do ask, but after the class
Yes
It’s like, more comfortable
Semek, Enot, Izlin and Qaisara agreed they did not ask questions because it was not necessary (FGD2). While all the students in FGD2 agreed with each other that they did not ask questions during seminars, there was a mixed opinion regarding this during the Focus Group Discussion 1 because one student, Fatin, expressed it differently. Fatin shared that if students do not know or understand something, they should ask questions. She also added that tutors play an important role in encouraging students to ask questions during seminars. During the focus group discussion, Izlin also shared that being an international student, she was conscious when she was in a seminar and felt she needed to contribute something.

Excerpt 17
Izlin: international student and saya kena contribute something…
Translation: Being international students and I have to contribute something.

Her consciousness of being an international student suggests that this personal factor might be one of the reasons she asked and answered questions as shown in Extract 4.3. Izlin's interactional behaviour indexed agentive behaviour because she decided to take an agentic role (Van Lier 2008) to ask
questions during the whole-class discussion; a behaviour so rare among Malaysian students. Her action reflects Ewald and Wallace’s idea (1994, p. 347) that agency involves deciding upon own learning experience and could also be the result of reacting to the environment (Klemencic 2015, p. 11). In this case, Izlin could be seen to react to the discussion after answering the question asked by the tutor.

Within the parameters of the present study, agentive could be defined as the act of agency MSUK make in determining their own learning experience. This definition is in accordance with Ahearn’s (2001) definition of agency (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004, p. 20) and Duranti’s (2004) characteristics of agency. This study demonstrates Semek and Izlin’s interactional behaviour: asking questions, volunteering, and explaining answers to the whole class are interpreted as agentive. These interactional behaviours of Semek and Izlin could be attributed to tutor’s role: encouraging students to participate in seminar discussion (Fassinger 2000; Mohd. Yosof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Mandefro 2019) and their personal feelings: being an international student. Their interactional behaviour is also consistent with Klemencic’s (2015) and Ewald and Wallace’s (1994) characteristics and arguments on agency. Based upon the emergence and indexicality principles adopted from the identity framework suggested by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), this section has extensively discussed how the Semek and Izlin’s interactional behaviours and perceptions could be interpreted as agentive. The next section describes how some MSUK could be interpreted as accommodative.
4.3.3 Accommodative identities

As the term progressed, Fatin, Semek, Izlin and Puspa were seen to start interacting with their tutors while Amar and Qaisara were observed to have more interactions with other students during small-group discussions, and less with the tutor during the whole-class discussion. Enot, Semek, Izlin, Fatin, Qaisara and Puspa would immediately get ready at the opening of the seminar with their notebooks and started taking note of the answers explained by tutors or other students. They were also observed to respond to tutors’ questions nonverbally as they would either raise their hand, nod, shake their heads, smile, laugh or take notes. This shows their willingness to participate in the seminar discussion albeit minimally and nonverbally. While Enot, Qaisara, Ming, Amar and Puspa kept silent or responded nonverbally as mentioned previously, Fatin, Semek and Izlin would verbally respond to the tutor if the tutor specifically nominated them or if there was eye contact with the tutor. However, this only happened a few times. These interactional behaviours could be interpreted as accommodative to the UK academic convention. Extracts 4.4 and 4.5 are two examples from classroom observations showing these students’ interactional behaviours which may be deemed as accommodative, in relation to the UK academic convention and the expectations of the Malaysian education system.

The data illustrated that Fatin, Puspa and Qaisara accommodated to the new academic convention by interacting with non-Malaysian students. Fatin, Semek, Enot, Izlin, Amar and Qaisara would translanguage when interacting with other Malaysian students, instead of using only the Malay language. Classroom observations revealed that both interaction types occurred
consistently throughout the term with the same students. Below are three examples from the sets of data showing how Enot, Qaisara, Fatin, Semek and Izlin accommodate themselves to the new (UK and Malaysia academic conventions: universities) and old (Malaysia academic conventions: pre-university college and school) conventions.

Absence of interactions

Extract 4.4 below is from the audio recording of ‘Principle of Finance’. The male tutor, Charles, began the seminar by asking whether students had questions and from their responses, he proceeded to explain the answers. In this seminar, Charles was encouraging as he asked students to contribute to the seminar discussion. Above is the seating plan of the seminar. During this seminar, students were free to sit anywhere in the seminar room. The Malaysian students in this seminar, Enot and Qaisara, chose to sit next to each other at the back of the room. They were still visible to the tutor as he sometimes walked to the back to elicit answers or questions from the students. The movements of the tutor can also be seen in the plan.
Figure 12 Seating plan: Extract 4.4 (Principles of Finance, 09/10/2015)

Extract 4.4 below reports tutor-students’ interaction during the one-hour seminar. This seminar discussed how students could answer examination questions and how calculations are done.

Extract 4.4

1. *Charles talking*
2. Charles Em, have you come across mind maps?
3. Mumbling from the whole class
4. Charles Yes?
5. *Charles talking* Yes? Okay, well, use mind maps when you’re revising, when you’re learning, when you’re studying
6. Charles
7. *Enot [softly to herself]*
8. Charles There is another er where you could think about this and that is em there is a, a mnemonic er way mnemonic. Do you know what a mnemonic is? It begins with ‘m’ but we pronounced it ‘n’
9. **Enot [softly to herself]**
10. Charles Oo…
8. Charles because that’s a second letter. Mnemonic is something that helps you to remember something.

9. *Charles talking Interactions between Charles and other students

10. *Charles talking

11. Enot [to Qaisara] Pemadam [Eraser]

12. *Charles talking Interactions between Charles and other students

13. *Charles talking

14. Seminar ends

*Charles talking: This indicates the activity when only the tutor speaks as he explains the answers to the whole class and there was no student talk

The extract above shows the absence of any interaction between the tutor, Charles, and the two Malaysian students, Enot and Qaisara in a one-hour seminar. They were observed to only listen to the tutor talking, nonetheless, taking notes of what was written on the board by him. As the tutor did most of the talking [E4.4: L1; L5; L9; L10; L12; L13], only a few interactions occurred between the tutor and other students. The interactions involved other students responding to the tutor’s questions and statements, and other students asking the tutor questions during whole-class discussion. However, Enot and Qaisara did not engage verbally with the tutor or the whole class: they seem to keep to themselves and interact minimally with each other [E4.4: L11] for instrumental aims (the request for an eraser). Throughout the seminar, Enot and Qaisara only responded to the tutor collectively with the other students [E4.4: L3] or softly mumbled to themselves, as Enot did, in line 7. It is worth noting that these Malaysian students chose a choral response, as they probably felt less exposed and imagined that their face had (Brown & Levinson 1987) to be protected.

Enot, during her interview session with me, mentioned that she did not participate much during seminar discussions because of her personality: passive. Despite her passive personality, Enot showed her desire to participate
in the seminar discussion, although minimal and mostly non-verbal. This suggests that personal factors such as her personality influences her interactional behaviour and hence her identity in this context. This means the connection between her personality and interactional behaviour is relatively parallel with what was discussed by Mandefro (2019), Zhao (2016), Abebe and Deneke (2015). Mandefro (2019) accentuates that students’ personality affects how they participate in the classroom. In addition, Zhao (2016) and Abebe and Deneke (2015) found that the personalities students bring into the classroom, such as being shy, reflects their interactional behaviour.

As suggested by Brenner (1994), participation does not only mean oral contribution or responses, but also nonverbal responses such as postures, gesture and body language, which may not be immediately visible. One possible explanation for this subtle participation is that the Enot and Qaisara had just arrived in the UK and they were not familiar with the UK academic environment which encourages students to contribute questions or answers during whole-class discussion (Wu, Garza & Guzman 2015). In reference to the principles of emergence, the subtle engagement towards the seminar discussion could be interpreted as accommodative to the convention of UK academic seminars. The responses exhibited by Enot and Qaisara; raising their hands, taking notes, and whispering to themselves, hence indicate that they wanted to be a part of the seminar community as they attempted to fit in. Not only this engagement could be interpreted as accommodative towards the UK academic convention, it could also be interpreted as the students accommodating to the Malaysian academic culture. This accommodative
identity suggests that some students prefer to learn by listening and taking notes and tutors need to acknowledge these preferences (Ruslin, Zalizan & Saemah 2011; Lee 2018; Ramalingam 2014).

The second example below illustrates how Qaisara were interpreted as accommodative students.

*Interaction with non-Malaysian peers*

Extract 4.5 is from an audio recording of ‘Introduction to Business Management’. This particular seminar, it was conducted at a lecture hall and later all the subsequent seminars were conducted at the seminar rooms. Below is the seating plan of the seminar. There was only one Malaysian student in this seminar, Qaisara, and from this plan, she could be seen to sit next to another female student. From this plan, the tutor, Olivia, could be seen to move from the PC to the white screen. Due to the seating arrangements of this seminar, it was difficult for the students to hold small-group discussions. It was also difficult for the tutor to go around to listen to the students’ discussion. There was one instance where Olivia went up the stairs to go to one of the groups when students were asked to discuss management strategies.
In this seminar, Olivia began the seminar by giving a lecture to the students on the academic content: management strategies. The seminar handled by her consisted of more lecture input than group discussion. In between her points, she asked the students to work in pairs or groups and discuss the questions or topics. There were interactions between Olivia and other students where a few students asked her questions or answered questions posed by her. The extract below occurred after Olivia talked about an article the students were supposed to read. She elicited information from the students beforehand and later asked them to discuss certain points raised during the whole-class discussions. This was when Extract 4.5 occurred.
Extract 4.5
1. Carmen  What did you think?
2. Qaisara  Huh?
3. Carmen  What do you think?
4. Qaisara  I'm not sure… but err it stated that IKEA find low price materials. You can get it from the reading.
5. Carmen  I find…
6. Qaisara  Low price. is that
7. Carmen  yeah, but what [not clear]
8. Qaisara  Oh, sorry sorry. Oh, yeah, this is for management... mmmmm... for divisional structure? So, from what we've learnt err… geographic divisional structure so it it's only focus on what happen in every country. Is it?
9. Carmen  Which one is that?
10. Qaisara  Divisional
11. Carmen  focus only on divisions
12. Qaisara  No.
13. Carmen  I have no idea. Because it said like it's very informal everyone is just [not clear] and I'm just
14. Qaisara  Yeah... Okay...

Extract 4.5 illustrates that one Malaysian student in the UK, Qaisara, exhibited accommodative behaviour as she interacted with non-Malaysian peers during pair-work in seminars. She attempted to discuss the article with the other student by trying to make sense of what they had read, and the points made by the tutor. From the extract, Qaisara could be viewed as attempting to lead the discussion as she referred to the readings [E4.5: L4]. As she was the only Malaysian student in the seminar, she had no choice but to speak to non-Malaysian students. However, other than Carmen, she did not speak to anyone else throughout the seminar. In other ‘Introduction to Business Management’ seminars, Qaisara was recorded and observed talking to other non-Malaysian students and this only happened during the seminars of this module. Although she was observed interacting with other non-Malaysian students only in this module, her attempt to contribute to the discussion implied that she attempted to accommodate to the new academic convention, UK academic seminars.
Because this behaviour was not seen in other modules’ seminars, this suggests that Qaisara had diverted from her common observed behaviour where she was normally silent even with her Malaysian peers (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991). This divergent behaviour was seen as an attempt to fit into the situation where everyone in the seminar was doing as instructed by the tutor. Based on the principle of emergence, her interactional behaviour could be interpreted as accommodative as it is in line with the definition of accommodation as defined by Matthews (2014a): “general terms for ways in which the speech of individuals is adjusted in accordance with or in response to that of others with whom they are speaking”. In this instance, Qaisara adjusted her speech to respond to the need of the seminar activity. This behaviour was also seen as Qaisara’s attempt to adjust to the UK academic convention, a new academic environment for her (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991). Therefore, Qaisara’s behaviour in this extract demonstrates that she was accommodative.

Taking into account another principle, emergence, Qaisara’s attempt to interact with other students, both home and international is read as accommodative. This is because she only interacted with other students when she was the only Malaysian student and she might feel the need to contribute although she shared that she was somewhat unfamiliar with the English language and that she was conscious of being the only Malaysian student in the seminars. For instance, when asked about how she perceived her interactions in seminars, Qaisara shared that she did not contribute much during seminars. This could possibly be caused by the fact that Qaisara was from a rural area
where English is not spoken. She added that her English teacher in school did not use English when teaching the target language.

Excerpt 18
Qaisara: Oo… kita macam sebab kita from, yang kita cakap yang kita sekolah Felda kan… so like kalau Felda Felda ni kitorang tak pernah cakap BI… so kalau dalam kelas BI pun cikgu tu macam tak practice benda alah tu so kitorang macam kalau dalam kelas pun, kalau BI pun duduk dengar cikgu tu bercerita.

Translation: I’m like I’m from, like I said that I went to the rural school… so like the rural school we had never spoken in English… so when I was in an English class the teacher didn’t bother to use English…

From my interactions with her, Qaisara shared with me that it was difficult to understand what was said by the tutor and other students because they talked too fast. This was mentioned by other MSUK such as Izlin and Enot during interviews and focus group discussions too.

Excerpt 19
Qaisara: kita ada macam kelas yang, yang macam kita tak sama dengan korang kan, dah lah Malaysia sorang-sorang, macam huhhh, tak tau dengan siapa, macam tu… kita punya kawan pun macam, depends jugak, ada yang kita boleh faham, ada yang kita tak faham, kalau tak faham macam tu

Translation: I have some classes that I’m not with all of you right? I’m the only Malaysian, like huhhh, I don’t know who, something like that… with my friends, it depends, there were a few whom I understand, there were a few whom I don’t understand, if I don’t understand.

Izlin: cakap laju…
Qaisara: Haa
Enot: kalau orang British la. Kalau cakap dengan orang local, tu sangat
Izlin: American cakap laju gila.

Speak fast.
Yes.
If they’re British. If (I) speak with the locals, really fast.
Americans speak really fast
Qaisara also described herself as not outspoken. However, she mentioned the seminar where she was the only Malaysian student and admitted that she contributed ideas only during this seminar. She also mentioned that she had no choice but to speak to other non-Malaysian peers as this seminar required her to discuss a group project assigned to them. This shows that in contrast to Enot, who mentioned that her passive personality might have affected her interactional behaviour, Qaisara’s reserved personality might not affect hers. In other words, her inclination to participate in the seminar activities exceeds her personality. As mentioned previously, Enot’s context is in line with Mandefro (2019) who asserts that personality is one of the primary factors affecting students’ classroom participation. Abebe and Deneke (2015) found shyness to be one of the factors influencing students’ interactional behaviour in the classroom. Fassinger (1995) and Wade (1994) argue that students with introverted personalities do not participate much in classes. Similarly, Zhao (2016) emphasises students bring their personalities into the classroom and it is reflected in how they interact. This suggests that Qaisara’s context is contrasted to what was discussed by Mandefro (2019), Zhao (2016), Abebe and Deneke (2015), Wade (1994) and Fassinger (1995). In other words, personal factors such as personality did not affect Qaisara’s interactional behaviour and hence her accommodative identity. From the audio-recording of the particular class she mentioned, Qaisara contributed to the group discussion. This was done by informing the points needed to the group as she referred to the readings they used for the project.
Qaisara: *Kalau kita yang, kita bagi idea tu pun yang dalam business and management tu je lah. haa...tu je lah kalau kitorang kena, kan macam ada yang kitorang kena present present waktu tu kan, ha time tu je lah kitorang kena bagi idea*

Translation
I only give ideas in the ‘Introduction to Business Management’ class. That’s all... Haa...the times that I had to present, that’s the only time that I had to give ideas.

During this group project's discussion occurring over four weeks, the field notes of classroom observations demonstrated that Qaisara was in the same group with other six students, five home students and one international student. Throughout these four weeks, she was recorded to regularly nod, laugh, and take notes. In fact, she was seen to interact with her group mates during short breaks and group discussions. This behaviour shows her attempt to adjust her preference to fit into what she was required to do: discuss a group project.

Qaisara’s accommodating behaviour is also in line with communication accommodation theory which proposes that individuals who accommodate to the need of the new community do it to identify with other members of the community (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991). For instance, Qaisara, who mentioned that she did not contribute much in Malaysian classroom and the other module seminars in the UK, attempted to do what is expected of her: to contribute verbally during seminar discussion. As the UK academic seminar convention encourages and expects students to contribute verbally to seminar discussions (Kember 2001), her attempt to take the lead of the discussion shows that Qaisara demonstrated how she converged to adapt to the new UK academic community. This reflects the claim made by Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) that convergence is one of the strategies employed when individuals attempt to accommodate how they communicate depending on who
they talk to or the community they are in (Ward & Kennedy 1999). Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) suggest convergence to occur in terms of non-verbal features of communication such as eye contacts, speech rates, and pauses.

Extract 4.6 below illustrates how Semek and Izlin can be interpreted as accommodative students.

Translanguaging

Extract 4.6 was from the audio recording of ‘Economic Foundation of Finance’ and this was the same seminar described in Extract 4.2. Although Semek and Izlin sat next to other students, F3 and M15, the interactions mostly took place between the pair and they did not include the other students in the discussion. This was because they translanguaged between English-Malay and Malay-English most of the time.
Extract 4.6 occurred while Lizzie (the tutor) was explaining the answers to the whole class. The extract began with Semek asking Izlin a question in reference to the question/exercise discussed by Lizzie.

Extract 4.6

[while Lizzie talks, Semek and Izlin whisper to each other]

1. Semek  *Eh, tadi kenapa dia ade y (the letter) eh?*
2. Izlin  *Haah.*
3. Semek  *Sebab ko, import affected by income*
4. Izlin  *So, dia tak yah, tak yah*
5. Semek  *So, dia variable variable... tak, kalau ko tanya kenapa dia ada y (the letter) kat import.*
6. Izlin  *Oo...*  

Translation

1. Eh, why is there y (the letter) just now?
2. Yes.
3. Because you, import affected by income
4. So, it does not, does not
5. So, it’s variable variable... No, if you ask why there is y (the letter) in import
6. Oo...
The extract above illustrates the presence of translinguaging in the interactions between the two Malaysian students. Both students were observed to whisper to each other and the audio-recording showed that Semek naturally translinguaged when talking to Izlin. Joanna’s (2014) masters study found similar findings where Malaysian students were observed to engage in translinguaging practices and in this case, code switching, as they interacted with their peers during seminar discussions. García and Sylvan (2011, p. 389) view codeswitching and codemeshing as examples of translinguaging. Translinguaging is an approach that considers a combination of flexible language parts (Busch 2012; Wei 2011). Translinguaging is also defined as the “ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages that form their repertoire as an integrated system” (Canagarajah 2011, p. 401). Garcia, Flores and Chu (2011, p. 5) refer to translinguaging as the “forms of hybrid language use that are systematically engaged in sense-making”. The extract shows that Semek utilised what she had learnt, such as economic academic terms, with Izlin. This means Semek and Izlin’s situation shows they took into consideration each other’s knowledge on finance and linguistic repertoire of English and Malay languages within the academic seminar communities. These various repertoires are in line (or I can use: In line 3, we see evidence of) with Pennycook and Otsuji’s (2014, p. 166)
argument that translanguaging also links individuals’ different repertoires with linguistic resources of the community these individuals are in.

This suggests that the repertoire of their first and second languages is one of the personal factors affecting their translanguaging behaviour. This is in agreement with what was discussed by Susak (2016) who suggested that students take into consideration the repertoire of languages they master in interacting during seminar discussion. He found that half of his participants felt uncomfortable to contribute when they did not have the appropriate language repertoire. Zhao (2016) also emphasises the importance of language repertoire in classroom participation. Izlin and Semek’s translanguaging behaviour also takes into consideration that they were communicating with each other: having friends of similar language repertoire could also be one of the interpersonal factors affecting this behaviour.

This extract also revealed how Semek and Izlin drew upon translanguaging practice to be engaged in meaning-making process as they were figuring out the explanation given by the tutor. In other words, Extract 4.6 exhibits Semek and Izlin’s interaction as a response to the tutor’s explanation and reference to the calculations on the white board [E4.6: L1; L5]. These interactions revealed that both of them were trying to comprehend the explanation given and the reasons behind the answers, thus exemplifying García and Wei’s (2014, p. 3) proposal that translanguaging allows students to be actively engaged with the academic content as it allows students to be engaged in meaning-making process.
Similarly, Myers and Bryant (2002) argue that students’ engagement in the academic content and materials is correlated with students’ interactions, which means as students interacted more, their engagement in academic content and materials is higher. From this extract, it can be seen that Semek translanguaged when she used academic terms, such as in line 6 and line 8 where she used English words like ‘variable’, ‘import’, and ‘decrease’ in Malay sentence structures. She also translanguaged in line 4 and line 8 by combining English sentence structure and Malay sentence structure in one sentence. For instance, in line 8 she used the English sentence structure, ‘income base, decrease’ in between Malay sentence structure, ‘sebab kalau dia’ (because if it) and ‘dia akan berubah kan?’ (it will change right?). The below table illustrates that the Malay word of ‘base’ is ‘asas’ and ‘income’ is ‘pendapatan’. The Malay translation of the term ‘base income’ is ‘pendapatan asas’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Malay sentence structure</th>
<th>Malay sentence structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td><em>Sebab</em> <em>kalau</em> <em>dia</em> asas pendapatan, menurun, <em>dia</em> <em>akan</em> <em>berubah</em>, <em>kan</em>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>because if it is <em>base income</em>, <em>decrease</em>, it will change, right?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 Translation from Malay to English and English to Malay of line 8
In this case, Semek and Izlin’s attempt to get engaged with the content means they were accommodating to the seminar discussion conventions in discussing academic matters. This attempt also means that they were accommodating to using English academic terms during discussions. For instance, instead of using ‘pendapatan asas’, Table 21 shows they used ‘base income’, an English language structure. Translanguaging is viewed as the process of accommodation students go through when in a new community (Wei 2018; Garcia & Kano 2014, p. 260-261). In other words, students adapted to the communicative situation they were in by practicing translanguaging. The word ‘trans’ in translanguaging means that there are ‘fluid practices’ (García & Wei, 2014, p. 3) which allows for accommodation to different contexts. This finding is also in line with Wei’s (2018) suggestion that students may adapt their bodies and brains to the activities surrounding them.

Although this suggestion is within the context of language learning, it is also applicable to the learning of academic content (Thibault 2017, p. 76). For instance, the MSUK, especially Semek and Izlin, went through the process of fitting in with the expectation of being in UK academic seminars as they translanguaged. This means that their translanguage practice is interpreted as accommodative in reference to the emergence principle suggested by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) where the term accommodating is defined by Giles, Coupland and Coupland (1991) as to mean to express convergent or divergent behaviours towards other people. They assert that accommodation can be viewed as a set of strategies individuals may employ to communicate with others depending on their communication goals. They also introduce
accommodation theory discussing how individuals accommodate themselves to new situations or community they are in. Accommodation functions as indexing and attaining commonality with or disconnection from the community and its members. Hence, accommodative could be termed as the “willingness to adjust to differences in order to obtain agreement”.

In the context of this study, the definition of the term accommodative is not only the accommodating process to accommodate to the conventions of an academic community, UK academic seminars, but also the interactional behaviour Enot, Qaisara, Izlin and Semek showed in the UK academic seminars. In other words, accommodative could be seen as the attempts by these students: of how they try to verbally contribute to the seminar discussions to become as expected of them by the UK academic convention (Kember 2001). This definition corresponds with Giles, Coupland and Coupland’s (1991) accommodation theory. One of the features of being accommodative is to make changes and in this case, Malaysian students particularly Semek were seen to change from not wanting to say anything during whole-class discussion to explaining answers to the whole-class.

4.4 Summary

This chapter aimed to answer the three research questions of this study:

a. How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK?
b. How do these students perceive their interactions and others’ in seminars in the UK?

c. How do Malaysian students in the UK construct their identity through their interactions and verbalised perceptions?

The aims of this study are to explore how MSUK interact in seminars, their perceptions towards their interactions and others’, and how these interactions and perceptions influence their identity construction in this academic community of practice.

This chapter describes the physical setting of the two UK universities and the format of the seminars where the Malaysian students were observed. It also discusses the academic identity constructed by the Malaysian students based on their interactions in seminars and what they shared during the interview and focus group discussions. Triangulating the sets of data collected allowed me to interpret them and identify the different identities constructed by the Malaysian students. This chapter reveals that the Malaysian students constructed mainly three academic identities: resistant, accommodative, and agentive, based on the principles of emergence, positionality and indexicality (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). These identities are apparent through their interactional behaviours: not contributing to the seminar discussions, rejecting invitations to share answers, interacting with non-Malaysian peers, using translanguaging, answering and asking questions, and explaining answers. Therefore, this chapter suggests that these do not have one fixed academic identity. This study suggests that Malaysian students’ academic identities are flexible, and identities constructed
are dependent on the situation they were in. This study identifies that the Malaysian students could be resistant, accommodative or agentive, all at the same time. This could be seen from their interactional behaviour during seminars and perceptions shared during the interview and focus group discussions.

The next chapter illustrates how Malaysian students in Malaysia in relation to their interactional behaviour in seminars and perceptions towards their own interactions and others'.
CHAPTER 5: MALAYSIAN STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections to highlight the interactions in which the Malaysian students engage and the identities they seem to construct and negotiate in seminars in Malaysia. The first section describes the physical setting of the seminars in Malaysia including the location of the university, the campus, size of the seminars, and seating arrangements. The second section explains the format of the seminars. The physical setting and format of seminars are important because they reflect the context of the seminars the students were in, which may affect the way they interact and possibly their identity construction. The final section discusses the identities these students may construct and negotiate in seminars and how they interact in these seminars.

The data for this study was collected first by observing the Malaysian students in Malaysia for five weeks during the second term of their first academic year, followed by interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of the data analysis are presented and discussed below.

5.1 The Malaysian academic context

Malaysian classrooms are typically quiet. In his study, Koo (2006) concluded that Malaysian students preferred not to speak or contribute during classroom discussion. Most of the time they kept to themselves, did not ask or answer questions, did not challenge the tutors, and preferred to personally ask
questions after the class session. According to Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011), most undergraduate Malaysian students participated minimally which means they contributed to the discussions only when they were directly asked by their tutors. They responded to these invitations with minimal verbal responses or only nonverbal responses. These studies demonstrate that Malaysian students’ interaction patterns contradict that of the Malaysian government educational policy (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015), where Malaysian students are expected to be fluent and competent in the English language. The Malaysian Ministry of Education focuses on students’ verbal interactions in education documents, such as the Standard-based English Language Curriculum (SBELC), primarily because some employers in Malaysia reported that Malaysian graduates lack communication skills especially in the English language (Tengku Shahraniza 2016; Isarji, Zainab, Ainol Madziah, Tunku Badariah & Mohammad Sahari 2013).

The connection between verbal interactions in the classrooms and Malaysian graduates lacking communication skills has been discussed in detail in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015). In fact, this blueprint repeatedly emphasised the need for Malaysian graduates to be proficient in the English language thus, highlighting the significance of focusing on Malaysian students’ verbal contribution during academic seminars. Studies conducted by Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) and Zainal Abidin (2007) concluded that in academic seminars, most Malaysian students did not contribute verbally and even when they did, it was done minimally.
Acknowledging these findings, the Malaysia Ministry of Education accentuates the need for students to be proficient in the English language.

In this study, the five Malaysian students in Malaysia were observed in University C and four of them enrolled in the ‘Business Administration’ degree programme while the other seven registered for Architecture degree programme. Three of them were observed in ‘Economic Management 1’ while one of them was observed in one seminar, ‘Quantitative Research for Business’. These observations were conducted over a period of one term, the Spring term.

5.1.1 University C

Malaysian universities, including University C, are generally multicultural with not only Malaysian students who come from different cultural and educational backgrounds, but also international students. Due to the multicultural environment, the interactions occurring in academic seminars are likely to be complex, including the ones at University C. The medium of instruction of University C is English, which means tutors and students are expected to use English on the campus especially in formal settings such as academic seminars and the studio sessions described below.

The classroom sizes in University C varied according to the number of students expected at the seminars. Hence, some classrooms were big while others were small. One of the classrooms had one PC for the tutor, one projector, one white screen, one white board, and was filled with a number of tables and chairs while the other classroom did not have a PC, which means
the tutor used only the white board. There were round tables with four to five wheeled-chairs for each table, and these tables were made of heavy wood not allowing students to move them around the room. The walls have windows but the windows were closed most of the time to prevent the heat from outside and also because these classrooms were equipped with air-conditioning units. The classrooms had two doors, with one in front of the classroom near the white screen where tutors and students could see other students come in and out. The other door was located at the back of the classroom. According to one of the tutors, the back door in one of the classrooms was locked to avoid late students from entering.

The seating arrangements in the seminars at this university were fixed and the students were asked to sit and work in groups of four or five. As the weeks progressed, all of them still sat in their assigned groups. Due to this seating rigidity, the Malaysian students in Malaysia almost always sat next to students of the same ethnicity. For instance, the Malays would be in the same group with other Malays and this is the same with the Chinese and Indian students. Below is an example of where Malaysian students sat in the seminars at University C. In the seating plans illustrated in this chapter, due to the focus of the study, only Malaysian students who were the participants of this study are named and these names are coloured while other students are referred to based on their gender and by number. Tutors and researchers are identified as T and R.
There were between 20-30 students per seminar session and they were mainly Malays, Chinese, Indians, and international students who are Thais and Bangladeshis. The tutors and module lecturers are Malaysians. Two of them are Malays and one is Chinese. One of them is a male tutor and the other two are female. These tutors were all English second language speakers. They were all fluent and used Standard and Malaysian English in the seminars. The tutors invited students to contribute, ask or answer questions to a lesser degree when compared to the tutors in the UK. The seminars were mostly held in the afternoon.
5.2 Format of seminars in Malaysia

Similar to the previous chapter, this section also discusses the format of the seminars as these formats might affect how the Malaysian students in Malaysia interacted in seminars. The format of the seminars in Malaysia depended on the tutors who conducted the seminars and the content of the module. Explanation of the format will be based on the different modules: ‘Economic Management 1’, ‘Quantitative Research for Business’ and ‘Architecture Studio Session (M)’.

5.2.1 ‘Economic Management 1’

This is a one-hour seminar where students were given questions online to work on before each seminar. The questions were based on the lecture content. A male tutor, Wan, handled the seminar in the first week of observation and a female tutor, Jin took over for the rest of the academic weeks. Both tutors were also the lecturers of the module, which means they took turns to give lectures. Wan conducted the seminar differently from Jin. In his seminar, Wan asked the students to group themselves into four to five per group. The students had to sit together in a group every week during the seminar. Each group was assigned academic weeks where they needed to write the answers of the weekly questions on the whiteboard, present and explain them to the whole class. After the presentation, Wan would ask the other students if they would like him to explain further. If there were questions, he would spend time to explain and reconfirm with the students if they understood the explanation.
After the first observation, the tutor for this module was replaced. Because of the replacement, the way the seminar was handled changed while the seating arrangement remained the same. In contrast to the first observed seminar, Jin began the seminar by writing her answers on the whiteboard, normally taking up about 15-20 minutes of the one-hour seminar. She then provided some time for the students to check their answers with the ones she wrote on the board. She then asked the students if they have questions and whether they wanted her to explain further. Jin would explain step by step the calculation work for each question as requested by the students. Because of this, the tutor would normally talk between 30 to 40 minutes out of the one-hour seminar. There would always be students who would shout out the questions to be explained by the tutor.

Seminars conducted by the tutors were observed and below is the table that shows the academic weeks and tutors conducting the seminars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Tutor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Wan (Male)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Jin (Female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Jin (Female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Jin (Female)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Jin (Female)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.2 ‘Quantitative Research for Business’

This is also a one-hour seminar and it discussed questions related to the content of previous lectures. The seminar and lecture module tutor was a woman, Gazlina. The students were given questions online to work on before
each seminar. Gazlina would ask for volunteers to share their answers with the whole class by writing them on the board. She rewarded the volunteers by giving them one mark each for their participation up to a maximum of five. After these volunteers wrote their answers, the tutor would explain them. The classroom of this seminar was next to a noisy and coffee-smelling café, which, as I noticed in my observation, became the favourite topic of students’ conversations in the seminar.

5.2.3 ‘Architecture Studio Session (M)’

This is a three-hour studio session in which students were given the time to discuss their term project with their group members. Each group had between seven to ten students and the main tutor assigned the students to the group. He also assigned one tutor for each group. The presence of the tutor was optional, depending on whether the students required assistance or guidance from the tutor. The studio session encouraged students to be autonomous as tutors may not be present for each session. There were also sessions where the students had to be in the workshop to build their furniture.

There was only one group observed during this studio session, Group A. Group A consisted of eight students where five were Malays, two were Chinese, and one was an international student. There was an equal number of female and male students in the group. They were required to design a unit of practical furniture using equipment and machines at the workshop, and present this built furniture at the end of the term. During the different sessions, the students discussed the design of the furniture, and between them, delegated the tasks of
buying the equipment, preparing the budget, building the furniture, and finally presenting the furniture.

5.3 Academic Identity

As discussed, identity is dynamic and flexible, depending on the contexts students were in (Hawkins 2005; Lee 2003a; Côté & Levine 2002; Antaki 1998; Asmah 1998), and it is also always constructed and negotiated (Gee 2003). Identity is also how individuals see themselves and how they see themselves in relation to other people and the society (Lee 2003a; Norton 1997).

The Malaysian students in Malaysia were observed for five weeks throughout the second term of their first year. As they had completed the first term of their first year in September 2015, they were familiar with the convention of the Malaysian university environment. In fact, they were in the seventh week of the term when the observation started. In the seminars, they participated in the discussions to a certain extent whether it is whole class discussions or small group discussions. Similar to the MSUK, this study only focuses on the verbal interactions students produced because Malaysian students are expected by the education system to produce verbal interactions to develop and improve their proficiency and confidence levels (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015). One of the main reasons the Malaysia Ministry of Education focuses on students’ verbal interactions in education documents, such as Standard-based English Language Curriculum (SBELC), is because some employers in Malaysia reported that Malaysian graduates lack communication skills especially in the English language (Tengku Shahraniza 2016; Isarji, Zainab,
Ainol Madziah, Tunku Badariah & Mohammad Sahari 2013). As previously mentioned, the connection between verbal interactions in classrooms and Malaysian graduates lacking communication skills has been discussed in detail in one of the main education documents, e.g. the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015).

Similar approach in analysing the UK data was used to identify a list of codes and themes, and identity for the data obtained from Malaysia. Table 23 presents a summary of the codes and themes from the Malaysian data:

Table 23 Summary of codes and themes identified from the sets of data in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad category</th>
<th>Codes identified</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from classroom observation transcripts</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from interview transcripts</th>
<th>Selected themes identified from focus group discussion transcripts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MSM interactions</td>
<td>MSM verbal interaction s</td>
<td>- Not asking questions in seminars - Translanguaging - Malaysian English - Answering collectively - Negotiating with tutor - Challenging the tutor</td>
<td>- Asking questions in seminars - Contributing opinions or ideas in tutorials - Internationa l students in Malaysia</td>
<td>Contributing opinions or ideas in tutorials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perception s of Malaysian academic culture</td>
<td>Malaysian students do not ask questions</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Comfort in studying in English</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Difficult to study in English</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similar to the previous chapter, this section answers the research questions of this study by discussing the academic identities of Malaysian students in Malaysia. Their identity construction may be influenced by the contexts the Malaysian students in Malaysia were in with reference to the three principles of emergence, positionality and indexicality (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). Data indicated that Malaysian students in Malaysia could be interpreted as constructing and negotiating two main academic identities: *accommodative* and *agentive*. These identities differ from the Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) who constructed and negotiated three main identities: *resistant*, *accommodative* and *agentive*. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the MSUK constructed and negotiated the three identities by not contributing, rejecting invitations to share answers, interacting with non-Malaysian peers, translanguaging, answering and asking questions, and explaining answers to the whole class. In contrast, the MSM seemed to construct the two academic identities by minimally responding, answering collectively, translanguaging, using Malaysian English, negotiating with tutors, and challenging the tutor as discussed in detail below. The Malaysian students in Malaysia were found to interact more in small groups and not many instances were observed where they interacted during the whole-class discussions. Most of the time, the students were seen to take notes, nod and shake their heads, and laugh. Similar to MSUK, Malaysian students in Malaysia demonstrated a repertoire of different academic identities and interactional behaviours.

### 5.3.1 Accommodative identities

Unlike the MSUK, Malaysian students in Malaysia were found not to be resistant to seminar discussions. Nonetheless, similar to MSUK, the data
analysed as per the principle of emergence (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), demonstrate how the interactional behaviour of some Malaysian students in Malaysia such as Umaira, Han, Chia, KaiYin, Zikri and Vanidah could also be interpreted as accommodative. Umaira, Chia, KaiYin, Vanidah and Han were observed to engage in the seminar discussions and Zikri and Umaira also minimally contributed to the discussion. As the Malaysian Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015) envisioned for the Malaysian students to be proficient in the English language, Umaira, Han, Chia, KaiYin and Vanidah were interpreted to be accommodative by engaging in the seminar discussion, particularly answering collectively, using Malaysian English, and translanguaging. This could be seen from the way they non-verbally responded to or minimally contributed to the discussion. As previously mentioned in Chapter Four, these students’ interactional behaviour or classroom participation are consistent with Giles, Coupland and Coupland’s (1991) accommodation theory. In other words, Malaysian students who adjusted their behaviour to align with the aims and expectations of the Malaysia Ministry of Education can be interpreted as accommodative students.

Malaysian education ministry aims for Malaysian graduates and citizens to be proficient and fluent in the English language. This is to assist the graduates to function well in the workplace as many employers reported that graduates lack communication skills especially when communicating using the English language. Therefore, accommodative in the present study demonstrates how Malaysian students in Malaysia attempted to accommodate to the expectations set by the Ministry of Education Malaysia, which is
verbally interact during seminar discussions, consciously or unconsciously. They might also be interpreted to accommodate to the current conventions of the Malaysian academic community resulting in Malaysian students not interacting verbally in seminars. In other words, not only accommodating to the ministry’s expectations, the Malaysian students in Malaysia could be interpreted as accommodative students as they attempted to fit into the commonly-found interactional behaviours in the Malaysian academic seminars. This study presents how most of the observed Malaysian students in Malaysia demonstrated their attempt to consciously or unconsciously adjust their interactional behaviour to what they were expected to do or their attempt to fit in with the common interactional behaviours found in the Malaysian academic seminars. Some of the interactional behaviours observed were responding non-verbally, answering collectively, using Malaysian English and translanguaging.

In reference to the principles of emergence, positionality and indexicality (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), the data of this study (classroom observation, interview, focus group discussion) illustrate how Umaira, Han, Chia, KaiYin and Vanidah could be interpreted as accommodative and this is seen in the following excerpts.

*Minimally contributing*

Table 24 is from the audio recording of ‘Quantitative Research for Business’ module. It shows how Umaira may be interpreted as accommodative during seminars. The Malaysian student in this seminar, Umaira, sat with other Malaysian students who were not the participants of the study. Below is the seating plan of the seminar and from this plan, it could be seen that the tutor’s
movement is limited due to the packed seminar room. The tutor is also seen to move between the two whiteboards as she mostly explained the answers to the students. This seating plan shows how close the students sat next to each other. It also illustrates that most Malaysian students in Malaysia sits with friends who are of the same ethnicity. For instance, Malay students would sit with the Malays and the Chinese sat with the Chinese. However, because of the small number of Indian students, the Indian students sat in the same group as the Malay students.

![Seating Plan](image)

Figure 16 Seating plan (Quantitative Research for Business, 07/04/2016)

In this seminar, the tutor began by asking students to volunteer to share their answers by only writing them on the whiteboard. One point was rewarded for each participation, with the maximum point capped at five. The tutor then
elaborated the students’ answers previously written on the board. As the tutor explained the answers, there was an attempt to include the students to participate by asking questions or getting confirmation. There were minimal interactions between the tutor and the students where one or two students asked the tutor questions.

Table 24 illustrates that Umaira's interactional behaviour, could also be interpreted as accommodative, in reference to the emergence principle, as she verbally participated during whole-class discussion because she either gave minimal response or non-verbally responded when she was in seminars. There was no interaction between the tutor and Umaira. In the context where the tutor did most of the talking and was addressing the whole class, there were some interactions between the tutor and other students.

Out of the 60-minute seminar, there was only over one minute of interaction between Gazlina and other students. However, the extract shows that Umaira did not interact with the tutor, the whole class or other students who sat in the same group as hers. She spoke to herself when she calculated the answers based on the explanation given by the tutor and whispered the answers to herself in response to the tutor’s questions instead of sharing them with the class. There were also instances where there was total silence, and this occurred when the tutor was looking at the answers written on the white board and writing to correct the wrong answers. During this instance, the students were also quiet as they were checking the answers on the board with their own answers. This situational depiction shows that the Malaysian students
in Malaysia were observed to engage in the seminar content, despite not verbally contributing to the whole-class discussion.

Table 24 Summary of seminar interactions and the duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seminar interactions</th>
<th>Total duration (minutes: seconds. milliseconds)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutor talk</td>
<td>44: 02. 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class silence</td>
<td>05: 28. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutor – Student talk</td>
<td>01: 03. 97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant talk (to herself)</td>
<td>00: 42. 91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other students talk as a whole class</td>
<td>00: 00. 03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table is a summary of the duration of interaction that occurred in this seminar. As illustrated in Table 24, the dominant type of interaction was tutor talk where tutor almost always explained all the answers. In this seminar, the tutor did most of the talking thus suggesting that the communication was mostly one-way. Teacher-dominated talk did not occur only in this lesson but it was observed in almost all of the Malaysian seminars I observed. This type of talk has been found to be a common practice in Malaysian classrooms (Idris & Rosniah 2006; Salmiza & Afik 2012; Jemaah Nazir Sekolah Persekutuan 1996; Salleh as cited in Tengku Zawawi et al. 2009; Fahainis & Haslina 2014; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2016; Yusmarwati, Rohayu & Halizah 2015). These studies found that Malaysian teachers prefer to employ traditional methods where they are considered as the main source of information because of time-constraint in “delivering content and preparing students for examinations” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2016, p. 17). Fahainis and Haslina (2014) found that most of the class time consists of teachers’ questions and elicitation. Idris and Rosniah (2006) recommended for teachers to provide opportunities to
students to verbally interact in classrooms. This is because teachers or tutors need to acknowledge that students have different learning styles (Ruslin, Zalizan & Saemah 2011; Lee 2018; Ramalingam 2014), which do not necessarily mean they are disengaged with the academic content.

As this seminar awarded students a maximum of five marks (one mark for each sharing) for sharing answers with the whole class, most tutor-student talk revolved around the tutor getting volunteers. According to White (2011), grading students based on their participation would increase students’ participation. In this particular seminar’s case, however, students who already obtained the five marks would stop participating in classroom discussion. Although the students shared their answers with the class, this sharing did not happen verbally because the students shared their answers by writing the answers on the board. Because the tutor did most of the talking, there was a lack of participation from the students as they only listened to the tutor’s explanation and took notes. Plus, the tutor always addressed the whole class instead of individual students. Due to this, the students in the class mostly responded to the tutor in chorus. Amidst the tutor talk and other students’ talk, there were instances where students interacted among themselves in the seminar. Although Umaira did not participate in the whole-class discussion, she was still engaged in the content as she talked to herself in response to what the tutor explained and also in response to the interaction between the tutor and other students despite not interacting with them at all. In other words, Umaira mostly interacted with herself when she was in the seminar. Her minimal verbal contribution could be caused by interpersonal factor: the tutor who took the
traditional role of a tutor, rather than encouraging students to contribute. This tutor in Umaira’s seminar would be in control of the seminar discussion and took the role of a knowledge giver. Due to this, this seminar mostly consisted of tutor-talk where students were not given much opportunity to participate. This suggests that tutor’s role is crucial in determining how students participate in the discussion. The tutor in this seminar was different from what was emphasised by Fassinger (2000): tutors have authority in the classroom to “promote discussion” (Fassinger 2000, p. 41). Tutors who are approachable and provide positive reinforcements were argued to be an important determinant affecting students’ seminar participation (Mandefro 2019).

Based upon the principles of positionality, Umaira’s interactional behaviour could be interpreted as accommodative to the expectation of Malaysian academic seminars anticipating students to contribute their answers or opinions during seminar discussions based on her position as a student who wants to obtain marks. This accommodative behaviour can be seen as marks were allocated to each contribution by the students encouraging them to contribute. Consequently, the classroom observations demonstrated her engagement with the seminar content despite giving minimal contribution to the seminar discussion. Her engagement reflects the definition of accommodative suggested by Giles, Coupland and Coupland’s (1991) accommodation theory: to make changes to fit in. In fact, another Malaysian student, KaiYin, also mentioned that her friends would contribute although they did not want to because marks would be awarded to them for their contributions.
Excerpt 21
KaiYin: everyone has to go up and present their question, to get extra 5 marks. So even if you don’t want to say anything, you still have to go and present, if you want to get the marks.

Although Umaira may be seen to not verbally participate, the format of the seminar, where students were not given enough opportunity to verbally contribute to the discussion, may be one of the interpersonal factors for this accommodative act. This suggests that the format of the seminar influences how Umaira behaves. If the tutor involved students in explaining the answers or asked questions for students to explain, there would be less tutor talk and students would be given more opportunities to interact in seminars. Hence, Umaira’s interactional behaviour: non-verbally responding and talking to herself, is how she accommodated to the needs to participate despite doing so minimally.

Umaira’s behaviour was consistent throughout the term and classroom observations revealed that similar behaviour was seen in most Malaysian students in Malaysia. They preferred to whisper to other students sitting next to them or take notes or nod their heads while listening to the explanation given by the tutor. This interactional behaviour of Malaysian students in Malaysia is consistent with Wenger’s (1998) non-participation behaviour, peripherality. Although Umaira may be observed to not interact verbally during the seminar discussions, she was actually engaged with the discussion. Her behaviour suggests that there is a possibility for full participation to happen. In contrast to the MSUK such as Ming, Qaisara, Enot, Izlin and Semek, Umaira was not found
to demonstrate marginality non-participation behaviour or be negatively passive (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011).

The classroom observation data discussed above are complemented by findings gained from interview and focus group discussion data. For instance, when prompted to talk about their participation during individual interviews, Chia, Jamal and Ruhasni perceived their participation to be low, rating the participation at one to three out of five, as can be seen from the following excerpts.

Excerpt 22
Chia: Tutorial, emm, Maybe three.

Excerpt 23
Jamal: Ohh not really… I would give it two.

Excerpt 24
Ruhasni: Maybe satu.
Translation: Maybe one.

The Malaysian students in Malaysia also described their interaction in the seminar by explaining the reasons or circumstances they were in influencing their interactions. Firstly, Chia and Umaira shared that they would prefer to keep quiet, or to either nod, smile or laugh because they believed that it is better to keep quiet than to be wrong about something. Similarly, Koo (2006) found that Malaysian students are generally quiet. Below is an extract from one of the focus group discussions when students discussed whether they prefer to keep quiet in seminars.
Excerpt 25
All : yeah yeah yeah.
Chia : I think, I think I agree lah.
Umaira : why why keep quiet?
Chia : because I don’t know. I think it’s better to keep quiet, keep silent than you speak out the wrong thing
Umaira : and then delay the class. Hehehe.
Chia : so, I prefer to keep quiet and listen.

Chia, Umaira, KaiYin, Yong and Jamal also mentioned during their interview and focus group discussion sessions that they preferred to ask questions to the tutor or their friends after seminars and not during the seminars. Asking questions after the seminar demonstrates that these students were fairly engaged with the seminar content.

Excerpt 26
Chia : but I will ask after the teacher conduct the class lah…
Umaira : I love to ask about the things that I didn’t understand to my friends, and then yeah… she will explain to me the step… and then if I’m still not clear about that, so I will ask the Dr… Dr. Azira, after the class, yeahh…

Excerpt 27
Yong : Probably I will be asking question not really in an open like raise my hand, but I will just find lecturer after that… Ya, not during the class if I don’t understand or during discussion.

Excerpt 28
KaiYin : Usually I would ask questions after the class, I will personally find the lecturer. Yes, because I don’t want to interrupt the class. But if I don’t understand, I will ask more questions.

Excerpt 29
Jamal : Some of them would ask their friend first instead of asking the question directly to the lecturer.

The fact that Malaysian students prefer asking questions after seminars was also discussed during focus group discussions where Bahar, Yong, Ruhasni, Zikri and Xuen agreed that they preferred to ask questions after
seminars due to a few reasons, such as a shy personality, afraid of being laughed at in public, and more input by the tutors after the seminars.

Excerpt 30
Bahar : I prefer to ask the tutor after the class. Yes!
Yong : Yes!
Ruhasni : Yes
Zikri : Yes, that’s true, Because I am afraid of asking in front of class
Xuen : And then everyone laughs at you
Zikri : Ya
Bahar : Especially like the response from the tutor like you know ‘What?!’
Yong : Are we shy ah?
Bahar : Shy, scared sometimes
Yong : I think asking after the class can get more input from them
Zikri : I also prefer one to one with lecturer instead of public session

The statements made by these students are similar to what some of them discussed during the focus group discussions revealing that the Malaysian students in Malaysia do not ask questions during the seminars because they do not want to disturb the flow of the seminar or delay the class if they contribute something to the discussion. In fact, Chia mentioned this reason twice during the focus group discussion where she defended her opinion after being prompted by KaiYin.

Excerpt 31
Chia : oh yeah, they got basics. so, I think the questions I ask they already know lah. So, I don’t want to disturb them… during the class. So, after class lah only I ask questions.
KaiYin : so, it’s not about shy or what? Or afraid to see that you are stupid or what?
Chia : no, but it is about you don’t want to disturb others, of course you don’t want to disturb the lecturers during the classes right. So, I prefer to meet them after class
During my interview with them, not interacting in seminars is also a common interactional behaviour. Most of them agreed that they did not contribute to the seminar, especially verbally. For instance, Chia shared that she did not ask questions during seminars because she knew that a few other students would ask questions that she could benefit from. She also mentioned during the interview that she did not contribute during seminar discussions because she did not know the answer to the question posed by the tutor. She added that contributing to the seminar discussion could be stressful due to language barrier, as she believed that she could not speak English well.

Excerpt 32
Chia: Emm maybe, maybe there's a few students, they always ask questions. So, from there I can learn. They keep silent. And then, especially a few students in my class, they will always ask questions. Because at that time I didn't think of that question but then they know that there's the problem occur in the question, so they ask.

Chia: Actually, quite stressful because I cannot speak well, so when I need to deliver some message, I need to think twice how to construct my, how to arrange my message before delivering the message. So, I thought it quite difficult lah.

Zikri, Yong, Bahar and KaiYin mentioned that Malaysian students did not interact in seminars because of the mind-set and culture where Malaysians, generally, are trained not to question or challenge the authority such as teachers or tutors. Two of them used words like 'programmed' and 'trained' to show the embedded culture of not verbally interacting in the Malaysian academic setting. Fauziah, Parilah and Samsuddeen (2005) and Tengku Sarina Aini (2010) argue that it is common to see teachers or tutors as the main authority of knowledge in Malaysia. It is also suggested nonetheless that there
is a need to change classroom convention by having teachers or tutors to elicit more interaction during seminar (Nathan 2003; Hardman 2016).

Excerpt 33
Zikri: Because… like… maybe… I don’t know… maybe because we are programmed from young to just listen to the teacher without objection.

Excerpt 34
Yong: like we are, our student from school already that time we already trained to be just like very quiet and to be just sitting there and listening, listening. But then we didn’t give much ideas and opinion when the learning process. So, it’s kind of like they just giving us, but we didn’t, we just taking, we didn’t give out or anything like that.

Excerpt 35
Bahar: because I think Malaysian, they usually don’t ask question, they just assume things... if they don’t understand they said ‘ah let it be’...

Excerpt 36
KaiYin: In secondary school, it’s always the teacher who will write the answers on the whiteboard.

Jamal, Xuen, KaiYin and Ruhasni shared that MSM did not interact in seminars due to their personality and that the information they needed is provided without them asking. This emphasises that students' personality is one of the personal factors influencing their interaction (Mandefro 2019; Zhao 2016; Abebe & Deneke 2015), as claimed by Jamal, Xuen and KaiYin about their friends.

Excerpt 37
Jamal: But some of them are shy.
Xuen: I think a lot of student, ah, I think all of us still shy to giving an opinion. Ya. I think...

Excerpt 39
KaiYin: Some of my friends are introverts, so they don’t want to.

Excerpt 40
Ruhasni: masa brief tu memang diorang dah bagi tahu dah ni ni ni, so kalau nak tanya pun macam dah tak tahu nak tanya, macam tu lah...

Translation: they will tell us what we need to know, so if we were to ask anything, I don’t see the point of doing so.

When discussing whether they interacted in seminars, Bahar, Ruhasni and Yong unanimously agreed they did not ask questions during seminars because they did not know what to ask.

Excerpt 41
Bahar: So, asking question, I don’t even know what to ask.
Ruhasni: Most of us don’t know what to ask
Yong: Sometimes... like... like... I didn’t even know to ask what question about it because I totally don’t understand like he showing a picture of mushroom then he talking about structure then...

These discussions and statements made by Bahar, Yong, Ruhasni, Zikri, Xuen, Chia, Umaira, KaiYin and Jamal reveal that they interacted in different ways during seminar discussion and they had their reasons for their interactional behaviours. None of them actually mentioned that they did not interact in seminars because they just did not want to interact verbally, but rather the circumstances such as the teacher’s roles, the format of the lesson, language barrier, other students’ perceptions, and culture influenced their interactional behaviours. Although these students may seem to not be engaged in seminars as expected by the Malaysian education system (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015), their perceptions, in reference to the principle of
emergence (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), could be interpreted as accommodative to the Malaysian academic convention and these perceptions are parallel with what was found by Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) and Zainal Abidin (2007).

**Answering collectively**

Answering collectively is also one of the common interactional behaviours observed in Malaysian students in Malaysia during whole-class seminar discussion. This extract was taken from the observations conducted during the seventh week of the term. The Malaysian students, KaiYin, Han, and Chia sat in the same group with Neha, an international student. Below is the seating plan of the seminar.

Figure 17 Seating plan: Extract 5.1 (Ekonomi Pengurusan 1, 04/04/2016)
As shown in this plan, the tutor's movement was very limited since the tutor did not move around the seminar room and stayed near the PC that he used to look at the questions he discussed in the seminar. The tutor needed to scroll up and down the questions to ensure all students could see the questions projected on the white board. The tutor moved mostly between the PC and white board. The tutor did not move around the seminar room or to the back of the room. This seating plan also shows that the students in this seminar sat very closely to each other. Similar to Figure 16, the students in this seminar also sat with their own ethnic groups. The tutor began the seminar by listening to the assigned group of students presenting their answers to the whole class. He asked the students if they needed more explanation on any of the questions. The following exchange occurred when he attempted to include the students to participate in the seminar discussion.

Extract 5.1

[to the whole class]

1 Tutor So, you know the relationship between the marginal product and average product where marginal is above average product, average product will...?

2 All students [in unison] Increase

Extract 5.1 illustrates how some Malaysian students in Malaysia seemed to prefer following the crowd as they interacted by answering the tutor's questions in unison. This occurred when the tutor was explaining the answers and prompted the students to participate by asking them questions. As shown in the extract, the tutor addressed the whole class instead of individual students judging from the rising intonation at the end of his sentence [E5.1: L1]. The
rising intonation prompted the students to complete the sentence uttered by the
tutor and as it only required one-word, the students responded collectively
[E5.1: L2]. This is possibly caused by another interpersonal factor: the tutor,
addressing the whole seminar. To reiterate, tutor’s role in managing the seminar
affects how students participate in seminars (Fassinger 2000; Mandefro 2019).
This suggests that Malaysian students in Malaysia responded to the tutor’s
questions and statements in unison many times especially when it involved one-
word answers or responses. This interactional behaviour was observed to be
consistent throughout the term. Studies by Nor Haslynda (2014), Lim (2014)
and Chiew, Anthony, Berhanuddin, Robijah and Zulida (2016) also reported that
this behaviour is common among Malaysian students. The behaviour of
answering questions collectively in this extract could be interpreted as the
Malaysian students were being accommodative to the needs to answer the
tutor’s questions and to be the same as others in the seminar.

Using Malaysian English

Extract 5.2 below suggests that unlike the MSUK, Han, KaiYin, Chia and
Vanidah interacted during seminars by using Malaysian English during the
whole class and small group discussions. As the seating arrangement in this
module was fixed, the seating arrangement of this seminar was the same as
those in Extract 5.1. This extract, taken from the audio recording of ‘Economic
Management 1’, was the same session as Extract 5.1, hence the similar format
and context. In this seminar, the interaction occurred during their 5-minute
break as they discussed non-academic matters.
Extract 5.2
[within the small group, between four Malaysian students]
1 Han Yeah... OB mid-term. What to do? Have to study.
2 KaiYin Two paper...
3 Han I have paper.
4 Chit chat background
5 Han [to herself] Oh, no. Mine is Thursday. Test..
6 Vanidah Thursday? Friday? Test...
7 Han Seven chapters, cover! I haven’t study yet. Oh my God. But it’s easy lah... This course is...
8 Chia What what is?
9 Han Organisation course maa...
10 KaiYin Gia?
11 Han Aa, yeah..
12 KaiYin Dr Gia..
13 Han Dr Gia.
14 KaiYin It’s something like...
15 Han She’s very nice laa... But then her lecture is a bit boring laa...
16 KaiYin She’s very hardworking...
17 Vanidah She’s first year is it?

A few instances where Malaysian students used distinct features of the Malaysian English, such as additional distinct grammatical particles, were found from the classroom observations’ audio recordings. The extract above reveals that Han, KaiYin, Chia and Vanidah interacted during seminars by using Malaysian English. Extract 5.2 demonstrates the use of additional distinct grammatical particle such as \(-lah/laa\) [E5.2: L7; L15] and \(-maa\) [E5.2: L9]. These particles have a few functions such as ‘to point out the obvious’ and ‘to persuade’ (Zaamah, Norazrinm & Su’ad 2015). From this extract, it could be seen that all these instances were used by Malaysian students – two Chinese students (Han, Chia and KaiYin) and one Malay student (Vanidah). This suggests that these students used Malaysian English when interacting with their classmates of other ethnicities.
This suggests that one of the personal factors affecting Han, KaiYin, Chia and Vanidah’s usage of Malaysian English is their repertoire of Malaysian English. As mentioned in the previous chapter, these students possess the language repertoire of languages and in this particular extract, they possess Malaysian English comprising different features. One of these features are distinct grammatical particles such as –maa or –lah/laa (Baskaran 1994; 2005). Because Han, KaiYin, Chia and Vanidah possess the Malaysian English repertoire, they were able to use it during the seminars. In fact, Koo (2008) and Lee (2003b) reported similar findings among Malaysian undergraduate students. According to Baskaran (1994), users of Malaysian English add the –lah/laa or –maa particles when ending their sentence. These are special expressions that add to what the speaker tries to convey and usually positioned at the end of the sentence. One of the functions of these particles is as a tag question (Baskaran 1994). Although the particle –maa comes from the Chinese language which does not have meaning, all Malaysians regardless of their ethnicities use this word when speaking to each other.

By interacting using Malaysian English, based upon the principles of emergence, this extract proposes Han, KaiYin, Chia and Vanidah to be accommodative to the other students they talk to and to the way the other students talk when they are in the context of academic settings. These instances occurred in interactions among classmates in an academic setting thus suggesting that Malaysian English is likely a common feature in Malaysian academic seminars. Indeed, my data shows that it is common for tutors and students to use Malaysian English when interacting in seminars, instead of the
Standard English. Malaysian students in Malaysia use Malaysian English in order to be accepted by the community they are in, hence attempting to accommodate to the language the community commonly uses. The use of Malaysian English enhances the students’ identity as Malaysians (Nair Venugopal 2000) and it reduces the gap between two different ethnicities as it allows them to use one neutral language, instead of their mother tongues. Other instances from the classroom observation demonstrate how Han, KaiYin, Chia and Vanidah sometimes were being accommodative towards Neha as they interacted with her using Standard English. However, the above extract demonstrates the absence of contribution from Neha, the international student, who sat in the same group when Vanidah, Han, KaiYin, and Xuen, the Malaysian students, interacted with each other using Malaysian English.

*Translanguaging*

This extract was taken from the same seminar session as Extract 5.1 and Extract 5.2. During this interaction, the tutor was explaining one question requested by one of the students to the whole class. This interaction occurred between two Chinese students whose first language was Mandarin. They sat next to each other in a small group with a Malay Malaysian student (Vanidah) and an international student (Neha). It also happened when the tutor was still talking. The two Chinese students were discussing in response to the explanation given by the tutor.

**Extract 5.3**

1. Tutor talking
   [while tutor is talking, the three Chinese students are talking]
   Mandarin                                               English
2. Chia 再讲多一次再讲多一次。

3. Han 他讲AP是增加

4. Chia 当MP超过AP。

5. Han 他说虽然虽然。。他是说虽然MP已经下来了但是哦如果MP还是高过AP的话AP是增加。

6. Chia 你看他的AP 他的M。。。你看AP一高过MP AP就再下降。

Similar to the findings in the UK, there are many instances of interactions where Malaysian students in Malaysia translanguaged in seminars. As noted earlier, Canagarajah (2011, p. 401) defines translanguaging as the “ability of multilingual speakers to shuttle between languages, treating the diverse languages and form their repertoire as an integrated system”. It is a construct approach considering a combination of a minimum of two languages (Busch 2012; Wei 2011). Garcia, Flores and Chu (2011, p. 5) define the term as the “forms of hybrid language use that are systematically engaged in sense-making”. As shown in this extract, Chia and Han demonstrated that they possessed different repertoires of English and Mandarin linguistics resources as they comfortably interacted using both languages (Pennycook & Otsuji 2014, p. 166). It allows them to be engaged in the academic discussion of the content (Garcia & Wei 2014, p. 3). This shows that, like Izlin and Semek in the UK, Chia and Han was also influenced by one of the personal factors, their Mandarin and English languages repertoires.

Translanguaging occurred a lot in the interactions among Malaysian students of the same first language in Malaysian academic seminars. For
instance, Extract 5.3 shows how the Chinese Malaysian students, Han and Chia, interacted in seminars as they translanguaged between Mandarin and the English language. From this extract, it could be seen that they used English words like ‘increase’ [E5.3: L3; L5], ‘decrease’ [E5.3: L6] and ‘when’ [E5.3: L4] within the Mandarin sentence structure. In other words, Hana and Chia used their first language as the dominant language. This means the main structure used by these students was their first language, Mandarin, and the additional language was the English language. These Chinese Malaysian students might also be interpreted to be accommodative to their ethnic identity as they translanguaged to show solidarity towards the friends they were talking to, to show they belong to the same ethnic group.

Hana and Chia could also be interpreted to be accommodative, in reference to the emergence principle, because instead of translating these academic terms into their first language (Mandarin), these students used the English terms. This might signal that they attempted to be accommodative to the academic content and to the expected convention of Malaysian academic seminars where the Ministry of Education expects students to use the English language. As they are expected to use the English language when they were in seminars, the use of English language, though only limited to the academic terms, might mean that they would want to belong to the community. In other words, they did not only use their first language, but also English in their conversation on the content so as to conform to the need of using English as the medium of instruction. Words like ‘increase’ and ‘decrease’ might be used by the students as these words could be found in the questions discussed and
were used by the tutor when explaining the answers. As mentioned previously, tutors and students are expected to use the English language during seminar discussions and due to this, the Malaysian students in Malaysia learnt the content of the module in English and were more familiar with the terms in the English language. This could suggest that, despite translanguaging, Hana and Chia used terms or language which were more familiar to them hence enhancing their understanding of the academic content as the discussion became smoother and each of them understood each other well.

In using Malaysian English and practising translanguaging in the seminars, Jamal mentioned during our interview session that he would use the Malay language when he contributed ideas or opinions especially when he interacted with Malay students, and that he used the English language when there were international students present.

Excerpt 42
Jamal : I would say sometimes, but I usually speak it out in Malay. But if there’s any international student involves, then only I would use English... if with Malays, I’d prefer to use my mother tongue.

In the present study, the definition of the term accommodative from Chapter Four is extended to include the Malaysian students in Malaysia’s perspectives. As mentioned above, Umaira, Han, Chia, KaiYin, Vanidah and Jamal were interpreted to be accommodative to the Malaysian academic seminar convention based on their interactional behaviour: minimally responding, answering collectively, using Malaysian English, and translanguaging. They were also observed to accommodate their language use
to cater to the needs and expectations of other students in the seminars as a few Malaysian students in this study were found not to use Malaysian English when speaking to international student, Neha. This means that accommodative could be interpreted as the change Malaysian students such as Umaira, Han, Chia, KaiYin, Vanidah and Jamal attempted to make in order to fit in (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991) into the academic community they were in.

5.3.2 Agentive identities

Students might be considered as agentive if they take charge of their own actions or learning process as the definition of agentive is “having or marking the semantic role of an agent” (Matthews 2014b). Duranti (2004) suggests that agency is the characteristics possessed by individuals. Having the characteristics means having control over their actions affecting themselves and highly likely other individuals. Duranti asserts that individuals perform agency as they use the language (2004). Within the parameters of this study, agency is considered in the context of the agency characteristics students may possess. Students’ agency is “having the ability to decide on tasks, choosing topics for discussion and making decisions regarding what contributions get counted as knowledge” (Ewald & Wallace 1994, p. 347) and “quality of students’ self-reflective and intentional action and interaction with their environment” (Klemecic 2015).

The two extracts below demonstrate how KaiYin, Han, Chia and Vanidah are interpreted as agentive in the context of Malaysian academic seminars based on the three sets of data.
Negotiating with the tutor

Extract 5.4 below was from the audio recording of ‘Economic Management 1’ module. The Malaysian students who participated in this study, KaiYin, Han, Chia and Vanidah, sat in the same group with an international student from Bangladesh, Neha. The table they were sitting at were at the front of the seminar room, the nearest to the tutor and white board and white screen. The seating plan of this extract is also the same as Extracts 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. The tutor in this seminar was quite laid-back and approachable, thus the students would usually ask for more explanation. Because the tutor was approachable, there were quite a number of interactions between the tutor and the students and one of them was negotiation of test date and assignment submission date. In this extract, the tutor entered the seminar early and while waiting for the assigned group to write their answers, a few students asked about their test dates. This question was asked to the tutor during the whole-class session before the seminar began.

Extract 5.4
[to the whole class]
1 KaiYin Dr, Dr, our mid-term exam is on 22nd of April?
2 Tutor Em, I will inform after this. After the break. Because I haven’t discussed, I haven’t discussed with Dr Chan.
[while tutor talking to the whole class, between Chia and KaiYin]
3 Chia So, it’s confirmed la?
4 KaiYin Mhmm... (Mhmm means yes)
[to the whole class]
5 Tutor I haven’t met Dr Chan because I have to discuss with her.
[to the whole class]
6 Tutor talking
7 Tutor: So, you have to submit by Friday.
8 Han: Huh? This, this Friday?
9 Tutor Only 2 question. So, then you can enjoy your holiday. Only 2 question. Huh? You have to submit before… 3… I already posted, last night. Only 2 question. Easy.
Extract 5.4 demonstrates how KaiYin, Han, Chia and Vanidah are interpreted as agentive as they negotiated with the tutor during the seminar. This extract also suggests that these Malaysian students in Malaysia interacted mostly with the tutors about their assignments and tests dates but not content-related matters. From the extract, it could be seen that KaiYin asked instrumental questions to request for the tutor’s confirmation of the test [E5.4: L1] and assignment submission dates [E5.4: L8] and this initiated more interactions between the tutor and other Malaysian students. Piazza also found the students in the Italian seminars initiate interactions by asking instrumental questions to ask for help from the tutor or to clarify information from the tutor (2007).

Initiating a negotiation was asserted by Van Lier (2008) to be one of the characteristics of being agentive. He adds that agentive students make additional initiatives requiring strong sense of autonomy (Van Lier 2008). Similarly, Gao (2010) and Klemencic (2015) suggest these initiatives are indicative of will and “agentic orientation” respectively. These Malaysian students later provided reasons [E5.4: L10; L13] whenever the tutor responded [E5.4: L9; L11] and they supported each other by agreeing to what each other said [E5.4: L12; L14]. From the seating plan above, all the Malaysian students involved in this negotiation sat in the same group and they sat nearest to the tutor. Due to this, they possibly felt it was easier to negotiate with the tutor as
their physical position was near to the tutor. It is also highly likely that this negotiation of test dates and assignment submission dates occurred because the Malaysian students knew and understood that the tutors had the authority to change or extend assignment submission dates since they were not university-centralised. This extract shows how KaiYin, Han, Chia and Vanidah were active in seminars when the topic was of interest to them (Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012). In this case, the topic was assignment and test dates. This suggests that KaiYin, Han, Chia and Vanidah was affected by their own personal factor: interesting topic. In other words, the present study suggests that these students became active by asking and negotiating with the tutor when it concerned their assignment and test dates. Although the negotiation failed on their part as they still needed to submit the assignment on the specified date and the test was not postponed, this extract shows that they initiated the negotiation and were confident with their arguments in deciding on their learning experiences.

Challenging the tutor

Another example of how KaiYin was interpreted as agentive could be seen in Extract 5.5 below. This extract was taken from the observations conducted during the third week of observation. It suggests that one way KaiYin interacted during seminars was by challenging the tutor during the whole class discussions. As the seating arrangement in Malaysian seminars were fixed, the seating plan of this seminar was the same as in Extract 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4, although the tutor was different in this seminar. The tutor began the seminar by writing her answers on the board. She gave the students ample time to check their answers and the students may ask her to explain the answers further. In
this seminar, one of the students, KaiYin, asked her to explain the answer to one of the questions. As the tutor was explaining, Extract 5.5 occurred.

Extract 5.5
[to the whole class]
1 Tutor talking
2 Tutor Which one?
3 KaiYin 4
4 Tutor 4. Why 4?
5 KaiYin Because revenue equals to...
6 Tutor Remember of the conditions?
7 KaiYin Mc=Mr
8 Tutor talking
9 KaiYin Marginal revenue er use total revenue but change in total revenue divide by output, right?
10 Tutor Mhm...
11 KaiYin I think it's 900. 19000-10000 divide by 100.
12 Tutor Which one?
13 KaiYin Marginal revenue. 19000-10000 divide by 100 so it's 900. We have to divide by output or input?
14 Tutor So, marginal revenue?
15 [KaiYin went to the front and explained to the tutor: inaudible]
16 Tutor I will check this and share again with you

The above extract demonstrates how KaiYin challenged the answers given by the tutor. From the extract, it could be seen that the interaction was initiated by the tutor who asked the whole class if there were questions they would like her to explain further [E5.5: L2]. The challenge and negotiation of the answers occurred between the tutor and KaiYin [E5.5: L4-14]. KaiYin pointed out that the answer written by the tutor on the board was probably not correct as she challenged the tutor’s calculation. In other words, she showed ownership of her answer, which she believed to be correct. In fact, KaiYin went to the front of the classroom to explain to the tutor that the written answer is wrong.
This interactional behaviour reflects the definition of agentive, which is taking an active control over what they do (Duranti 2004). This means, utilising emergence principles (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), KaiYin could be interpreted as agentive as she took an active role in her learning by challenging the tutor’s answer. In other words, she demonstrated how she had control over her actions to learn and thus her learning experience and learning process (Klemencic 2015; Elder 1994). KaiYin’s interactional behaviour of challenging the tutor also reflects how Ewald and Wallace (1994, p. 347) view students’ agency: “having the ability to decide on tasks, choosing topics for discussion and making decisions regarding what contributions get counted as knowledge”. Her decision to go to the front of the class showed how she reflected upon her answers and the tutor’s answer, and the decision she made showed the control she may have in deciding the learning experiences she could have and the choices she could make when in seminars (Klemencic 2015; Ewald & Wallace 1994). After the tutor listened to KaiYin’s explanation [E5.5: L15], she decided that it was possible her answer was wrong, and she informed the whole class that it would be discussed again [E5.5: L16].

The way the tutor in this seminar responded to KaiYin is in line with what was mentioned by Mandefro (2019) and Fassinger (2000): how tutors respond to students’ participation affect their participation. As discussed by Mandefro (2019) and Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamah and Maizatul Haizan (2012), students who receive positive reinforcem
tutor. KaiYin was probably comfortable with the tutor and knew that the tutor would accept further inquiries. Based on the indexicality principle, the usage of the word ‘why’ in this extract could be interpreted as agentive to show how she challenged the tutor. Challenging the answers given by tutors or teachers is not a common interactional behaviour among Malaysian students who are typically accepting and conforming. However, this extract suggests that KaiYin, one Malaysian student, did not conform to this stereotype as she challenged the tutor in seminar, thus demonstrating the trait of agentive students by being consciously active in seminars. This indicates that in the Malaysian academic community, albeit uncommon, it is possible to have students challenge the tutors without intimidating them. Hence, as KaiYin was observed to possess the characteristics proposed by Duranti (2004), she is interpreted as agentive.

Not only the classroom observation demonstrates how KaiYin could be interpreted as agentive, they also demonstrated the characteristics of being agentive during the interview and focus group discussions sessions, in reference to the indexicality principle (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). This sharing shows how KaiYin took control over her learning process and experiences during seminars. For instance, during my interview sessions with her, she mentioned that she likes to contribute her ideas and ask questions during seminars as she thought that English is good for her future.

Excerpt 43
KaiYin: I always like to say out my ideas, so I will give it a 4. Very often. I like to raise my hand and sometimes I just speak out my ideas, especially in Economy class.
She also perceived herself to interact a lot during seminars because she believed that seminars are one of the platforms for her to practise her English. She mentioned that English is an international language, a language used in workplaces and it is a language she can use to communicate with international students, who are at the university for exchange programmes, to exchange information and experiences. This suggests that KaiYin reflects the concept of language ideology (Silverstein 1979, p.193; Van Dijk 1998): her belief in the importance of mastering the English language as manifested in the three national documents: National Education Philosophy (NEP), Malaysian Education Blueprint (MEB) (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015), and School-Based Curriculum English Language (SBELC) (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia 2016). In fact, according to De Fina and King (2011), her individual agentive action is in accordance to the theory of language ideology. KaiYin mentioned her effort to speak more in the English language when she was in the seminars. According to her, she took the initiative to use the language to improve her academic ability (De Costa 2010; Darvin 2015) and consequently increasing her market value and chances to be employed (Chang 2011; Norton 2013). In addition to this, KaiYin’s sharing also reflects her investment: she was interpreted to wanting to improve her academic ability by taking a chance to contribute to the seminar discussion. According to Norton (1995), investment could be defined as the effort students put in in order to master a language. Although Norton’s definition of investment focuses on language learning (1995; Darvin & Norton 2015), this term could be expanded to improving academic ability.
Excerpt 44

KaiYin: So, it’s very good platform to us, to like to improve our English first before we step out to working environment lah. Very good. So, I think it is better to use English while studying lah. Yeah. Because in university… very good platform for you to learn first, you make mistake never mind… it’s a learning, after that you can earn it. It’s very good because English is an international language. So, in University C, there are a lot of exchange students. So, English is a good way to communicate with them, to exchange information, experience.

Apart from KaiYin, other Malaysian students in Malaysia also discussed the English language usage during the focus group discussions. This suggests that Chia, Zikri and Xuen are interpreted to be agentive as they take control over how they learn and understand why they do it (Duranti 2004; Klemencic 2015; Elder 1994). Most Malaysian students agreed that English is an international language and that English language is widely used to communicate even in workplaces. According to Chia, it is a good opportunity for her to improve her English language proficiency before starting to work. KaiYin echoed what was said by Chia regarding having the opportunity to improve her English as she wishes to work in international companies and according to her, she needs a good basic English to be offered a job at or accepted to work for the international companies. In another focus group discussion, Zikri mentioned that it is easier to use the English language when studying because of the terminologies used academically. Xuen added that it is better to use the English language when studying, as it is an international language and instead of translating the terms into many languages risking the change in meaning, it is better if everyone uses the same language. These students know the importance of English for the future and it adds pressure for them to succeed academically. This is parallel to what White (2011) suggests: understanding the
need and convention of their potential future workplace may have positioned them to use the English language. KaiYin, Chia, Zikri and Xuen’s beliefs in the use of English language were also in accordance to the language ideology theory (Silverstein 1979, p.193; Van Dijk 1998) and the concept of investment (Norton 1995): they believe that they would be able to increase their academic ability (De Costa 2010) and their value in possible employment (Chang 2011; Norton 2013).

Excerpt 45
Zikri: Yes because of all the terminologies and stuff... Because we are more accustomed to some words like framed construction rather than construction framework, so we are more accustomed to some English terminology than to...sometimes we find it hard to understand it in Malay
Xuen: Because rather than translate from one language to another language, English is an international language so the whole world uses the same language much easier to... yeah... rather than you translate from Japanese to Chinese then have to translate to English, it’s quite confusing. Maybe the meaning is changed

Excerpt 46
Chia: I also think that urmmm... study in English eh, yeah study using English is better because nowadays, because English is a world language... haa, international language. Everyone is using English even when you work outside, you have to use English to communicate... and so since we are not good in English, so we have to take the chance to improve our English first before we are going out to work.
KaiYin: yes, cause it’s very. I would like to step into international business, international companies... so I need a very good English basic, so in order they want to... like invite you to their company.

As well as taking control over how she learns, KaiYin also emphasised that she always contributed her ideas regardless of whether it is right or wrong. She would also answer when asked by tutors. She mentioned that although she might be unsure of her answers, she would still respond because she believed
that it was better to respond rather than having no one respond to the tutor’s questions.

Excerpt 47
KaiYin : I always contribute my idea lah. No matter it is correct or not. If I’m wrong, she will correct me and then the lecturer also very nice. Sometimes she asks us questions, and then I answer.

KaiYin : yeah, we know it but it’s still okay because we respond rather than no people answer the question.

Excerpt 48
KaiYin : Oh, this one no, I prefer to ask… if I don’t know and if I know, I will give you the answer.

Chia, Yong, Bahar and Xuen could also be interpreted as agentive because they acknowledged their contribution was influenced by their familiarity with the academic content to be shared with the tutor or the students.

Excerpt 49
Chia : Because, because most of the time I don't know how to write question also.

Excerpt 50
Yong : Emm, basically if the questions I know, I know how to answer it, then I will answer. Ya, give response but if I don't know I'm a bit shy for it and I don't answer it laa. Because if I don't know I really blank. So, I didn't answer.

Excerpt 51
Bahar : sometimes when I am very confident with my ideas then I just voice out my ideas...But then when I feel like, oh it is going to be something bad, so I just keep quiet lah, that's it.

Excerpt 52
Xuen : Ah… depend on the class… Maybe if the class I am familiar with the teacher or I think I closed to the student I will ask but if I am feeling I am so not so, not so clear or not so.
When asked about how she perceives the culture of asking questions in Malaysian academic seminars, data from the interviews demonstrate Chia perceived a few of her peers as those who always ask questions which means most Malaysian students stick to being passive as expected in the academic culture in Malaysia.

Excerpt 53
Chia: Emm maybe, maybe there's a few students, they always ask questions.

Chia, Xuen and Umaira mentioned during the interviews that they asked questions depending on the seminar they were in. They specifically mentioned that they asked more questions in modules they perceived to be more difficult. However, classroom observations demonstrated that the students did not ask questions, other than the ones illustrated in Extract 5.4 and 5.5.

Excerpt 54
Chia: I think five. I ask a lot.

Excerpt 55
Xuen: I think quite often. But I think four.

Excerpt 56
Umaira: Microeconomics are very tough subjects, okay, so most of my friends are keen to know more about the subject so they tend to raise up their hands and asking why. So, my friends have asking the same question, like me.

KaiYin also mentioned that she asked more questions in the current semester as compared to the previous semester because she felt more confident and more comfortable with the environment that she was in. Although
she did not want to interrupt the class, if she did not understand something
during the seminars, she would ask more questions.

Excerpt 57
KaiYin: In class? I think this semester, I quite often ask questions. Maybe
because I already know this environment. I feel more comfortable
compared to last semester. I feel a lot confident.

As could be seen from the extracts, most of these extracts were taken
from the first week of observation. This is because as the term progressed and
classroom observations were conducted, fewer interactions were found among
the participants. For instance, from the audio-recordings of one seminar in
Week 1, there were 98 exchanges occurring among the Malaysian students
whereas only 26 exchanges found from a seminar in Week 6. These
interactional behaviours and perspectives towards their own interactions reflect
agentive behaviour as they did not only understand their own behaviour but
also know the reasons for their actions.

In the context of this study, as mentioned in Chapter Four, agentive could
be defined through MSM’s agency act in which the students were observed to
determine their own learning. This definition is in line with Ahearn’s (2001)
definition of agency (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004, p. 20) and Duranti’s (2004)
characteristics of agency. This study reveals the interactional behaviour of
Malaysian students in Malaysia: negotiating with and challenging the tutor are
interpreted as agentive. This means that these interactional behaviours are also
coherent with the characteristics of agency (Klemencic 2015; Ewald & Wallace
1994).
With reference to the emergence, positionality and indexicality principles adopted from the identity framework by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), this section has extensively discussed how KaiYin, Zikri, Xuen, Chia, Jamal, Umaira, Bahar, Yong, Vanidah and Han could be interpreted as agentive.

5.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter is to explore how Malaysian students in Malaysia interact in seminars, their perceptions towards their interactions and others’, and how these interactions and perceptions influence their identity construction in these academic seminars. Hence, in achieving its aim, this chapter answers the three research questions of the present study:

a. How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in Malaysia?

b. How do these students perceive their interactions and others’ in seminars in Malaysia?

c. How do Malaysian students in Malaysia construct their identity through their interactions and perceptions?

Firstly, the chapter begins with the description of the university in which this study was conducted: its physical setting and the format of seminars. This description gives context to the data gathered. It also demonstrates that the identities MSM construct are on-going and dynamic as they do not necessarily
construct and negotiate only one identity. These identities change according to the contexts they were in. They were interpreted to construct and negotiate accommodative and agentive identities by adopting three of the five principles in identity in interaction framework (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). KaiYin, Chia, Han, Vanidah and Umaira may seem to be accommodative to the convention of Malaysian academic seminars. KaiYin may also appear to be agentive as she challenged the answer given by the tutor during the whole-class discussion. However, this kind of behaviour is rare in Malaysian academic seminars. This chapter also describes the interactional behaviour shown by KaiYin, Chia, Han, Vanidah and Umaira when they were in seminars: answering collectively, using Malaysian English, translanguaging, negotiating with the tutor, and challenging the tutor. These interactions were identified based on thematic analysis in reference to conversation analysis as an analytical tool.

The next chapter discusses the findings illustrated in Chapter Four and this current chapter.
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION

6.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section provides an overview of the findings from the analysis of how Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysia (MSM) interacted in seminars, and their perceptions of their interactions and others’ interactions. The second section compares and contrasts MSUK and MSM in terms of the students’ interactions and perceptions. Within this chapter, I will also discuss distinctive findings and make inferences based on the understanding of the highlighted issues in reference to the two main concepts guiding this study, which are (i) Community of Practice (Wenger 1998), and (ii) Identity in linguistic interaction (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). The final section elaborates on the study’s implications for the Malaysian and UK academic communities, and recommendations for future research.

The findings of this present study, as previously presented in Chapters 4 and 5, answer the main research question which is:

**How do MSUK and MSM engage with spoken academic discourse?**

In exploring this main research question, the following sub-questions were looked at:

1. How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?
2. How do Malaysian students perceive their and others’ interactions in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?

3. How do Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia construct their identity through their interactions and perceptions?

These research questions were explored by a selection of complementary research methods (classroom observation, interviews, and focus group discussions). These different research methods made obtaining rich and varied data sets possible. With these data sets, the research questions could be investigated from different angles.

6.1 An overview of the findings

The general aim of the present study is to explore Malaysian students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse in academic seminars, and if they do not, how they avoid it. This section of the chapter discusses the findings to the three research sub-questions.

First research question

The first research question is ‘How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?’. To obtain the answer to this research question, Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysia (MSM) were observed and audio-recorded in the seminars. Their interaction patterns were noted. Adopting broadly the principles of ethnography, these field notes and the audio-recordings were analysed following the principles of
Conversation Analysis, as an analytical tool, in the classroom (Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). These classroom observations showed that the Malaysian students interacted differently depending on the contexts they were in.

Both groups interacted similarly as they practised translinguaging. In fact, in both settings, the Malaysian students were observed to translanguage between their first language: Malay and Mandarin, and the English language. These students were found to use academic terms in English, instead of using these terms in their first language. In both settings, UK and Malaysia, MSUK’s and MSM’s interactional behaviour were somewhat similar with the rest of the seminar members. They were observed to mostly respond non-verbally or minimally give verbal response in pairs or small-groups. However, a few MSUK and MSM were found to be more engaged with the seminar content than the majority of the other students. These few were also observed to respond more than the rest of the group and to contribute verbally to whole-group discussion. MSUK were also observed to have a wider range of interactions than MSM. Malaysian student-participants in the UK were observed to interact by not contributing, asking and answering questions, explaining answers to the whole class, rejecting invitation to share answers, and interacting with non-Malaysian peers while Malaysian student-participants in Malaysia interacted by minimally responding, negotiating with tutor, answering collectively, challenging the tutor, and using Malaysian English.

Second research question

The second research question is ‘How do these students perceive their interactions and others’ in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?’ To arrive at an
answer, MSUK and MSM were interviewed on their perceptions towards their own interactions and others’ interactions. Focus group discussions were also conducted where they discussed their interactions with each other. Both these tasks were audio-recorded and later analysed using Thematic Analysis where emerging themes, namely seminar engagement contexts and English-speaking environment/country, were recorded.

The findings of the interview and focus group discussion data showed that the MSUK and MSM held different perspectives on the Malaysian academic culture. Although most MSUK (Semek, Qaisara, Teratai, Puspa, Ammar, and Izlin) mentioned that it is common in the Malaysian academic culture to engage and participate in classroom discussions, more than half of them (Qaisara, Ming, Ammar, Izlin and Enot) held the view that they did not interact much when they were in Malaysian classrooms. The interviews and focus group discussions data also show that, in relation to their interactions in the UK seminars, a majority of the MSUK were aware they did not interact much, whether by contributing opinions or asking and answering questions. Only one student, Fatin, claimed that she interacted a lot in the seminars and the classroom observation confirmed that she contributed most during the small-group discussions. On the subject of others’ interactions in seminars, some (Ming, Semek, and Teratai) of the MSUK perceived others as not interacting in seminars whereas a couple of them (Izlin and Semek) held the view that they contributed more than other students. Thus, a few of them perceived that they did engage in the seminar discussions.
Some of the MSM (Umaira, Jamal, Xuen, Zikri, Bahar, and Ruhasni) expressed their opinions that it is not common in the Malaysian academic culture to participate in classroom discussions because according to them, Malaysians were trained or programmed not to ask questions or speak in classrooms. However, a few (Latifa, Chia, and KaiYin) conveyed the opposite. Regarding how they thought of their interactions in Malaysia, most of the MSM also mentioned that they interacted less in seminars when it came to contributing opinions and answering or asking questions. In relation to others’ interactions in seminars, a majority of the MSM held the view that their classmates did not interact much.

Third research question

The third research question is ‘How do Malaysian students construct their identity through interactions and perceptions?’. To obtain the answer, the framework for identity and interactions (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) was adopted to analyse the interactions that occurred in seminars, interview, and focus group discussions’ recordings. The classroom observations and the corresponding interviews and focus group discussions showed that the MSUK and MSM interacted differently and had diverse perceptions of their and others’ interactions. Judging from these interactions and perceptions, MSUK and MSM were found to construct and negotiate different and flexible identities. As mentioned before, the interactions observed showed that the Malaysian student-participants’ interaction patterns are flexible and belongs to different parts of the interaction spectrum. From these interactional behaviours, the way MSUK and MSM constructed and negotiated flexible identities could be identified. Identifying these identities provides evidence on how the students fit
in within different contexts. It may also help them to adapt to an unfamiliar academic environment more easily and possibly adopt different conventions with little trouble.

This study suggests that MSUK and MSM constructed and negotiated similar identities: accommodative and agentive. MSUK were interpreted to construct and negotiate the identity of accommodative students when they non-verbally responded or gave minimal response while the MSM constructed and negotiated the same identity: accommodative, by answering collectively and using Malaysian English. The students' interactions also indexed accommodative identity based on the responses they gave during interviews and focus group discussions concerning the reasons for their accommodative identity.

Agentive identity was constructed and negotiated by the MSUK as they took the initiative to answer questions posed by the tutor, ask the tutor for explanation during whole-class discussion, and explain answers to the whole class. The same identity, agentive, could be interpreted from the Malaysian students in Malaysia's interactional behaviour where they were observed to negotiate with the tutors and challenge the tutor’s answers during whole-class discussions. Both MSUK and MSM were also interpreted to construct accommodative identity when they practice translanguaging. The MSUK were found to translanguage as they used academic terms in the English language to show their attempt to accommodate to the need of using the English language in the UK seminars while MSM were observed to translanguage to
accommodate to their first language and their friend’s. However, MSUK were found to construct and negotiate resistant identity, which was not found in MSM.

Similarly, the data sets from interviews and focus group discussions suggest that, depending on the contexts they were in, MSUK and MSM exhibited a variety of identities. A few Malaysian students in this study demonstrated some behaviours that indexed the identity of agentive students. Agentive identity was particularly indexed through the perceptions of one MSUK (Fatin) and two MSMs (KaiYin and Zikri) as they perceived they interacted differently from other Malaysian students. Meanwhile, a majority of the MSUK and MSM perceived they did not interact much during seminars. Within the context of Malaysian academic seminars, Zikri stated that he interacted a lot, particularly by asking questions.

From the classroom observation, Zikri was also observed to contribute a lot during whole-class and small-group discussions and he led the discussion within his small group. During the discussion, he seemed to delegate tasks to the other group members and ensure other students know their role by confirming with them what they needed to do. He was also observed to ask a lot of questions during whole-class discussions especially when the tutors were explaining the criteria of the students’ assessment to confirm his understanding of the tutor’s assessment requirement. This type of questions could be categorised as instrumental questions (Piazza 2007). However, he mentioned that he was always quietened down by his tutor, who stopped him from asking questions or sharing his opinions. This was also mentioned during focus group
discussion and others agreed with him. Regardless of how the tutor responded, Zikri was observed to still pose questions to the tutor, thus indexing an identity of an agentive student. The tutor denying Zikri’s participation shows that there are instances in the Malaysian academic convention that may not allow students to contribute to seminar discussions or to ask questions.

However, KaiYin did not experience similar challenges in interacting during seminars and she shared that she interacted a lot during seminar discussions. She mentioned that she was confident with the English-speaking environment although English is not her first language. She also shared that she wanted to improve her English language proficiency as she held the view that English would give her an advantage when job-seeking. Consequently, she mentioned that she always shared her ideas and contributed to seminar discussions. The data from interviews and focus group discussions support the data from classroom observation as KaiYin was observed to always ask and answer questions even without the tutors’ nomination. In fact, from the classroom observation in Malaysian academic seminars, she was observed to be the only student to challenge the tutor’s answer. Her behaviour and beliefs showed that there are Malaysian students who challenge the academic norm in Malaysia.

KaiYin’s behaviour in seminars and her acknowledgement of the importance of English language fluency for her future indicated that she was being agentive in her actions. The different experiences shared by Zikri and KaiYin suggest that Malaysian academic conventions demonstrate a gradual
change from being a one-way communication and teacher-centred to two-way, student-centred communication. In the UK academic seminar contexts, Fatin was observed to interact a lot during small-group discussions mostly with non-Malaysian peers because she was the only Malaysian student in the UK who did not sit with other Malaysian students by choice. Fatin’s behaviour indexed the identity of agentive students when deciding where to sit and that she took charge of her own learning experience. Other MSUK and MSM also constructed agentive identity when talking about how they acknowledged different learning styles of their Malaysian friends.

When talking about studying in an English-speaking country, the MSUK did not mention the importance of English in their studies or future work. Instead, they talked about how they had to adapt to the new academic and non-academic culture. The data from focus group discussions proposes that most of the MSUK constructed the identity of accommodative students when they talked about how they need to adapt to the new culture they were in. For instance, all of them talked about the difficulty in adapting to the new learning style, particularly self-directed learning as they were used to being spoon-fed in Malaysia. Most of them talked about how they had to find answers and references independently and do their own readings when they were in the UK. They further mentioned that if they did not do their own readings, find their own sources or try to solve the exercises given to them before the seminars, they would have trouble understanding the content discussed in lectures and seminars.
Excerpt 58

Fatin: But here it’s like, since everything is really new... yeah, everything is basically self-studying... so you got no choice but to actually crack a book open and read it to know what you suppose to answer in your papers... so that has been the challenge, the whole self-studying thing, you got to do your own notes... or you got to read your own notes. You have to go out of your way to get a book... and to read it...

Fatin mentioned that although it was difficult, she had to complete the work as it was her choice to study in the UK and she acknowledged the different academic learning conventions from the experience of her father who used to study in the UK. Although Fatin expected to face challenges because of the different education system between the UK and Malaysia, she was being accommodative to the challenges as she changed her behaviour to fit the education system she was in – the UK education system – by learning how to find resources on her own.

Some of the MSUK also mentioned how they had trouble in the beginning of the term to understand what was spoken by the tutor and other friends. However, according to them, this changed as the term progressed. Language barrier was mentioned by almost all MSUK except Fatin and Ming who speak English as their first language. In the focus group discussion 2, the MSUK also talked about how they had trouble coping with the different non-academic culture when they were not on campus. For instance, Semek shared her experience of being stared at when using the sink in the public toilet at a shopping mall, which resulted in the toilet being wet. According to her, due to the stares, she understood that she was supposed to keep the toilet dry. All these examples suggest that the MSUK constructed their accommodative
identity when talking about their experiences in studying in an English-speaking country.

In contrast, the MSM discussed how English is important for their future work opportunities, as they perceived they would need to use the language in their future workplace. Employers in Malaysia lamented that Malaysian graduates’ English proficiency has deteriorated, hence imploring universities to do something to increase the graduates’ English language proficiency level (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2015; Tengku Shahaniza 2016; Isarji, Zainab, Ainol Madziah, Tunku Badariah & Mohammad Safari 2013). Seminars could be one of the platforms for the MSM to improve their English language proficiency – a fact mentioned by almost all of the MSM during focus group discussions and interviews. These MSM held the view that English language is important and seminars could be the platform for them to use and improve their proficiency of the language.

Most of them were therefore observed to engage in the seminar content by translanguaging during small-group discussion or in pairs instead of using only their mother tongue. Although this restricted them from contributing during the whole-class discussion, translanguaging encourages students to use all the relevant language and knowledge they have to make meaning (García & Wei 2014). For instance, during classroom observation, it was observed that the Chinese MSM translanguaged between Mandarin and English when talking to each other. Translanguaging practice by the Chinese MSM was interpreted as accommodative to how they see the prospects of the English language because
instead of using only their mother tongue, the students also use the English language, despite minimally. In fact, when talking to the international student in the group, Neha, the Malaysian students did not translanguag, but they used the standard English language. This means they were accommodative to the needs of Neha who did not understand Mandarin.

Identities also emerged from the interactions’ patterns and perceptions as a result of the contexts the student-participants of this current study were in. Some of the contexts that influence Malaysian students’ interaction patterns were seating preference, tutor’s role, students’ personality, other students’ perceptions, content familiarity, language, and students’ personal and educational background. These different contexts allowed the Malaysian students to construct their identities to suit their contextual needs. Understanding how these contexts influence their identities construction provides opportunities for them and their tutors to maximise their learning in the academic seminars.

One of the MSUK, Fatin, mentioned that Malaysian students generally did not speak in class due to the perceptions of other students who perceived that students who contributed to the discussion liked to show off or boast and those who asked questions would be looked down upon (Mohd Yusof et al. 2012; Lee 2003b). She described these students as kiasu, which means ‘the fear of losing out’ or ‘selfishness’ or ‘calculating’ or ‘greed’ or ‘kiasi-ism (literal translation: fearing to die)’ (Ho, Ang, Loh, & Ng 1998, p. 363). In other words, despite having peers who were described as kiasu, Fatin constructed agentive
and accommodative identities. She could be interpreted as agentive as she still contributed to seminar discussions although she may be perceived as showing off or boastful. Nevertheless, when she did not contribute to the seminar, she could be interpreted as accommodative to the expectations of her peers: not contributing during seminar discussions.

The data from interview and focus group discussion sessions also suggest that familiarity contributes to whether the MSUK and MSM contributed to seminar discussions. Familiarity is desired by the Malaysian students, as admitted by a majority of the Malaysian student-participants in the UK and Malaysia. A few MSUK stated that they would only contribute when they were well-prepared and absolutely sure of what they wanted to say, perhaps because they were used to the education background where mistakes were met with jeering laughter by friends and in some isolated cases, embarrassing remarks from the teachers. In the UK academic context, students need to be able to accept that they need to learn by making mistakes, hence the need for the MSUK to be familiar with the content. In order to avoid being embarrassed in front of their friends, they most likely need to provide accurate or ‘100% correct’ (as used by Semek and Fatin) answers by being well-prepared. Most of the MSUK also mentioned that they did not really contribute to the seminar discussion because of the language barrier. One of them, Qaisara, stated that she had trouble understanding what was said by her tutors and some of her peers in the beginning of the term and she managed to overcome the language barrier after a while. This suggests that these student-participants constructed the identity of accommodative students.
According to these student-participants, Malaysian students generally do not contribute to the discussion or ask questions during seminars since they are trained by a system where they are instructed to listen to teachers and not question. Due to stricter discipline practiced specifically in Chinese schools, students preferred not to contribute to classroom discussions. As mentioned by Ming, the school culture embarrasses students who give the wrong answers by scolding them in public or making them stand during class and consequently, students do not contribute to the discussion or ask questions to avoid being embarrassed. These students’ portrayal of Malaysian education system suggests that Malaysian students conformed to the system that trained them to not challenge what the tutor said. Other MSM explained that one of the reasons Malaysian students did not contribute to seminar discussion was because tutors provided everything and they had nothing to question.

6.2 A Discussion of the findings

The concepts adopted in this study of students in a community, in particular academic seminars, were communities of practice, and identity construction. The context of this present study also acknowledges that the Malaysian students were members of a community of practice who were involved in academic seminar discussions in the UK and Malaysia. These academic seminars use English: in one case as the language of the country, and the other as the medium of instruction although they may have different academic conventions. These differences will be explained further in the subsequent sections. Working within a Community of Practice framework
(Wenger 1998), this study explores how Malaysian students engage in seminars. Taking into account the concept of conversation analysis, the Malaysian students’ engagement in seminars were also explored (Schegloff 1997, p. 501; Schegloff & Sacks 1973; Sinclair & Coulthard 1975). To this end, it was necessary to explore how Malaysian students interacted in seminars, the perceptions they had of their own interactions and others’, and the identities they possibly constructed and negotiated based on these interactions and perceptions. Consequently, it was necessary to show whether this coincided with the existing discussions relating to the Malaysian academic norms (Naginder 2006), Malaysian students' interaction patterns and perceptions (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Dass & Ferguson 2012; Zainal Abidin 2007), and identity construction (Bulcholtz & Hall 2005).

Based on the concept of Community of Practice introduced by Wenger (1998), UK and Malaysian academic seminars are considered as one of the Communities of Practice in which the MSUK and MSM were in. This concept allows me to see a wide range of practices within the academic conventions between the UK and Malaysia academic seminars. It is suggested that these communities of practice, academic seminars in the UK and Malaysia, practise different conventions. Academic seminars in the UK encourage debate style discussion where lecturers’ and students' views and opinions are appreciated and encouraged (Durkin 2008) as verbal contributions indicate students are engaged in their learning and their critical thinking skills are enhanced (Shieh & Chang 2013; Swart 2017). Cameron (2000) suggests that understanding and
knowledge occur through talk in interaction. In other words, self-expressions are valued positively in UK academic seminars (Flowerdew & Miller 1995).

Lecturers and tutors within the UK academic background are viewed as facilitators who guide and make way for the students to contribute and show their understanding of the content discussed (Durkin 2008). In UK seminars, students are encouraged to ask questions (Kember 2001). Western academia is described as the venue to accept or reject ideas or theories with supporting evidences (Thayer-Bacon 1993). UK academic conventions also encourage independent learning where students are expected to display individually critical thoughts. Kember (2001) describes UK home students as the expert students because they have been exposed to the western style of learning. In other words, the expert members of the community of practice are the lecturers/tutors and home students while new members of the community are international students in the UK. Flowerdew and Miller (1995) add that lecturers in UK seminars are viewed as facilitators. This present study confirmed that all the tutors in the observed UK seminars took the role as facilitators who guided and encouraged their students to contribute to the seminar discussions.

In contrast, as discussed by Thang (2001; 2003; 2005), the academic seminars in Malaysian universities are mostly teacher-centred where students are regarded as an empty vessel (Naginder 2006) to be filled with knowledge by the teachers or tutors; perceived to be the sole knowledge-givers (Lim 2003). Malaysian National Educational Philosophy (NEP) aims for the Malaysian students to be proficient and fluent in the Malay and English languages
expecting the students to offer their opinions and speak during classroom lessons or seminars. However, studies found that most Malaysian students were passive, silent, and did not contribute during seminars (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007). They were reported to mostly respond nonverbally and only a small number of students were reported to be actively engaged verbally in seminars (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011).

Other than viewing learning as storing information (Biggs 1988) and that students are empty vessels (Naginder 2006), according to Koo (2008, p.56), this behaviour is the consequence of the emphasis on examinations, especially public examinations, by the society, ministry, schools, and teachers. Subsequently, lessons in schools focus on teaching students for the examination, which comprises certain skills, thus encouraging drilling and rote learning (Ambigapathy 2002). For instance, in the teaching and learning of the English language in Malaysia, it was reported that although Malaysian teachers recognised the importance of speaking and listening skills, the teaching of grammar, reading, and writing was still prioritised while speaking and listening skills were rather neglected (Spawa & Hassan 2013). Tan and Arshad (2014) too mentioned that teachers have the authority and control of the lessons, hence limiting students’ participation. In fact, Malaysian students especially the Malays were reported to be trained to respect their teachers and accept their knowledge without question (Siti Zuraina et al. 1999). Adamson (1990) suggests that one of the reasons Malaysian students were reluctant to
participate in verbal discussions was cultural background, citing that a Malaysian student in his study even suggested for Malaysian students to be assessed based on their written work only.

Different communities of practices may consist of different cultures. The description above demonstrates that the UK and Malaysian academic conventions and UK and Malaysian seminars could also be connected to the theory of big or small culture. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, culture is defined as the sets of beliefs, values, behaviours, customs, conventions of a group differentiating it to other groups (Banks, 1988, p. 261). These sets change according to multiple factors (Lee 2003a) resulting them to be dynamic (Clifford 1986, p. 476). Based on this definition of culture, the UK and Malaysian academic convention lies within the UK and Malaysian academic culture. Within this culture, lies the UK and Malaysian seminars and their own conventions. The Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia are the members who share the respective culture so that the seminars could operate successfully and effectively (Lee 2003a). Within these seminars, these students construct and negotiate their identities.

According to Holliday (2008), there are two paradigms of culture: large and small cultures and these two paradigms consist of different values (Schwartz 2011). Large culture could be defined as 'ethnic', 'national' or 'international' (Holliday 1999, p. 237; Schwartz 2011) comprising the conventions expected of the members of the culture. Small culture is, however, avoids culturism (Holliday 2005; Schwartz 2011), focusing on behaviours
emerged from members of the culture. In other words, small culture is characterised by different social grouping which will construct large culture. This also means that multiple small cultures may exist within a large culture. From the perspectives of the large and small cultures (Holliday 1999, p. 237; Schwartz 2011), the UK and Malaysian academic convention could be considered as the large culture and within this large culture, the small culture is the specifically seminars in the UK and Malaysia. This is because within the UK and Malaysian academic conventions, students are expected to follow these conventions reflecting the large culture. On the other than, the conventions of the seminars in both settings may emerge from the behaviours of the individual Malaysian students mirroring small culture (Wilson 2015; Holliday 1999). Within these small cultures (UK and Malaysian seminars), the Malaysian students may exhibit different types of behaviours and these collective behaviours results in the conventions of the large culture (UK and Malaysian academic culture).

Other than that, the description of UK and Malaysian academic seminars above illustrates the difference in the convention adopted by both communities of practice. Because of these differences, Malaysian students are expected to face challenges when they study in UK universities. As argued by Street (2004) and Lea and Stierer (2000), students, both home and international, might face challenges when transitioning into higher education. This is related to the need to be competent in understanding the conventions of the different community of practice including to communicate effectively: communicative competence (Canale & Swain 1980; 1981; Savignon 1972; 1983). Hence, according to Fantini (2006), intercultural communicative competence could be defined as the
understanding and the need to master the values, norms, beliefs and practices of a certain culture in all aspects in order to communicate competently and successfully. Intercultural competence also requires individuals to have the knowledge, skills and motivation to communicate effectively (Wiseman 2001).

In order for the Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia to be able to communicate effectively in the different academic cultures, they are encouraged to be competent in four of intercultural communicative competence (Byram 2002) dimensions: savoir être, savoirs, savoir apprendre/faire and savoir s’engager. This means they would need to have savoir être (know-how): the attitudes, be prepared to face different cultural expectations and willing to sacrifice a part of their own. Within the savoirs (knowledge) dimension, Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia would need to have the knowledge of the UK and Malaysian academic culture and what is expected of them from the members of this community. The third dimension that Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia would need to be competent in is savoir apprendre/faire (know how to learn / do): they would need to be able to apply the knowledge and skills of the targeted culture they may have mastered in order for them to communicate and be interculturally competent. The final dimension is savoir s’engager: this dimension requires Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia to be able to critically evaluate matters from different perspectives within different cultures. Despite these dimensions were designed for language classrooms (Byram 2002), Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia demonstrates that they are also applicable for non-language classrooms and in this study, academic seminars. Local or international students in the UK
academic seminars are expected to engage and contribute to the academic seminars verbally (Durkin 2008). International students in the UK are thus expected to understand and master the academic convention and norms of UK universities. Despite these expected challenges, Malaysian students were sent to the UK to study to expose these future graduates to "scientific and technological advancements" for them to be a professional workforce and return to Malaysia to help develop the country (Ismail 2015, p. 10) However, the skills to engage and contribute to seminars verbally could not be acquired naturally and these conventions and norms need to be explained. Only then could students develop their understanding and mastery through conscious strategies (Borland & Pearce 2002; Durkin 2008).

Within these academic communities, insights from the conversational analysis, as an analytical tool adopted for this study, was utilised in reference to the concept of ‘naturalistic inquiry’ (Schegloff 1997, p. 501). Schegloff and Sacks (1973) assert that sequence of talk displays how people bring their identity into play when interacting with others and inviting the audience to react to these identities. Consequently, verbal and non-verbal exchanges within the academic seminars, as a community of practice, are considered as ‘naturally-occurring interactions’ (Waring 2014) within a specific setting. This is to ensure that the actual learning process occurring in seminars can be investigated from the perspectives of the participants (Nakane 2005). Employing this concept of conversation analysis, the interaction patterns of the MSUK and MSM were identified. Utilising the emerging interaction patterns, students’ identities were interpreted.
Taking into consideration the concept of ‘identity’ – individuals do not have fixed but multiple, dynamic, and fluid identity – the Malaysian students’ identities are drawn out and the contexts they were in were described (See Chapter Four and Chapter Five). Bulcholtz and Hall (2005) propose that there are five ways to identify identity from interactions, namely emergence, indexicality, positionality, relationality, and partialness. Individuals do not only have their personal and dominant identity, but also identities expected of them (White & Lowenthal 2011). Adapting Bulcholtz and Hall’s (2005) proposition, the identity of MSUK and MSM were described. Identity could also be influenced by many contexts individuals are in (Gee 2003) including the interactive situation and communities of practice. The identities constructed by MSUK and MSM are discussed in the next section.

Relating the theory of identity, within the concept of Community of Practice as explained above, the way MSUK and MSM engaged with spoken academic discourse, specifically academic seminars, was explored. These MSUK and MSM were observed in academic seminars in order to determine their interaction patterns. They were not only invited to comment on how they perceive their and others’ interactions but also on the challenges and advantages of learning in an English-speaking country or environment, during interview and focus group discussion sessions.

Findings: Malaysian students’ interaction patterns and identities are flexible

The observations of seminars in this study reveal a small difference between how Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysian students in
Malaysia (MSM) interacted in seminars and consequently, the identities they constructed and negotiated. Both groups were found to construct and negotiate accommodative and agentive identities. Nonetheless, only MSUK demonstrated the construction and negotiation of resistant identity. These identities were constructed through the interactional behaviours the students demonstrated during seminar discussions. These interaction patterns indicate that Malaysian students’ interaction patterns are flexible and belong to different spectrums of interactions, from rejecting the invitation to share answers to challenging the tutor. The MSUK demonstrated that they interacted by not contributing, asking and answering questions, explaining answers to the whole class, and rejecting invitation to share answers while MSM interacted by negotiating with tutor, answering collectively, challenging the tutor, and using Malaysian English. Both groups were observed to interact by non-verbally responding, giving minimal response, and translanguaging. This means that MSUK and MSM engaged flexibly within the spoken academic discourse, academic seminars.

Firstly, a few MSUK constructed and negotiated resistant identities as they were observed to not interact with the tutors and other students in the seminars (e.g.: Extract 4.1). The classroom observations illustrate that there were instances when Qaisara, Enot, Ammar and Ming did not contribute and engage at all during the seminars. In fact, they did not even speak to any student sitting next to them unless these students were Malaysians. This behaviour could be observed during whole-class and small-group discussions and they were recorded not to say anything at all during the seminar and were silent all the time. They were observed to only play with their phone and be in
their own world. These behaviours reflect how Alpert (1991), Liu (2001) and Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) define resistance: the conflicts between how students behave and feel during seminars with what is expected of them by the seminar community. This is more apparent in students who come from different educational backgrounds and in this context, Qaisara, Enot, Ammar and Ming who came from Malaysia and were studying in the UK. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 4, Enot was seen to play with her phone many times which is parallel to Baron’s (2008) definition of resistance. Similarly, Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) found that 3.6% of their student-participants were passive participants. Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) divided these passive participants into two categories, positively passive and negatively passive. Positively passive students refer to the students being silent for they perceived they would learn more by listening while negatively passive ones were not interested in the lessons/module content. Therefore, in the case of the aforementioned MSUK, they could be categorised as negatively passive (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011) since they did not interact with anyone. In contrast, none of the Malaysian students in Malaysia were found to be negatively passive.

A few Malaysian students in Malaysia also mentioned that they did not contribute in the seminar discussions because they did not want to disturb the flow of the lesson and that they had nothing to contribute. These reasons were also mentioned by Zainal Abidin (2007) whose student-participants reported several factors affecting their contributions such as not wanting to interrupt the flow of the lesson when the tutor was teaching and the perceptions of others who may think they were busy body or not listening to the lecturer. They were
also reported to perceive that it is rude to interrupt the lecturer and consequently, they would rather wait until the end of the class to ask questions. In fact, Zainal Abidin also reported that his student-participants believed that they should not speak during the lesson unless they were asked to by the tutor. One of the students in his study also mentioned that other students should not speak too much and let the lecturer teach as he/she went to class to learn from the lecturer, not from other students. This finding implies that Malaysian students are more exposed and familiar with one-way communication where teachers do most of the talking and students only listen. As such, the term spoon-feeding is normally used to describe the Malaysian education system, though not exclusively. Because of this education practise, the Malaysian students hold on to this way of teaching and learning even after they enter tertiary institutions. The Malaysian student-participants (in UK and Malaysia) also perceived Malaysians as the non-questioning type of people. They mentioned that this happened because the education culture trained them this way.

As discussed in the previous section, Enot admitted that her lack of contribution was due to her personality as an introvert while KaiYin described her friends as having introvert and shy personalities. Some of them also mentioned that they were passive, shy, reluctant to interact, and lacking in confidence. Thus, students’ personality determines whether they would contribute to seminar discussions. Similarly, Mohd Yusof et al. (2012) found that one of the reasons Malaysian undergraduate students were passive during classroom discussions was because of their personality. The students in the
study further described passive students’ personality as being afraid to ask questions, having the fear of getting scolded by lecturers, lacking confidence, just sitting and listening, having difficulty to focus during seminars, lacking interests to learn or in the topic studied, lacking knowledge, disliking reading books, and lacking the language ability.

Other students in this current study mentioned that they did not contribute much due to other students’ perceptions of interactions during seminars. Malaysian students in this present study also shared similar experiences of being mocked and perceived as showing off when they used English in the Malaysian classrooms. For instance, Fatin shared that other students may mock students who interact during seminars or perceive them as showing off and being boastful possibly because Malaysians consider the English language as the language of the elite. The findings from a study on the factors contributing to Malaysian undergraduate students speaking in classrooms confirmed that peers’ perceptions of participation influence whether Malaysian students would contribute to seminar discussions (Mohd Yusof et al. 2012). The students claimed they preferred to keep quiet during seminar discussions because they were afraid others would laugh at them. Mohd Yusof et al. (2012) also established other factors such as the size of the classroom, instructors’ and other students’ personalities.

Instead of others’ perceptions towards participation in the classroom, Lee (2003b) suggests that how others perceive the use of the English language would influence whether the Malaysian students would use it. She found that
the Malaysian postgraduate students in her study experienced resentment from the wider society when using the English language in the local context. For instance, she found that Malaysian students experienced mocking and discrimination by their peers when they used the English language. Her participants emphasised on the discrimination they received if they used English language to interact. In fact, her Chinese participants commented on how they were perceived as ‘banana’ by their Malaysian peers. ‘Banana’ is a derogatory term used to describe someone who is seen as too westernised and cannot speak their original mother-tongue (Zhou 2004). In relation to this, one of the Malaysian student-participants in Malaysia also used the term ‘banana’ to describe her Malaysian Chinese friends who cannot use Chinese or Mandarin. However, this term was used to describe her friend positively as she could practice using the English language with this particular friend.

In the context of the current study, the medium of instruction in the higher education institutions in this study is the English language. Because Malaysian students would need to use the language, others’ attitudes towards the use the language would contribute to whether they interacted in the classrooms. The context of Lee’s (2003a) study is different from this present study. While Lee’s (2003a) study involved the use of English inside and outside of the classroom, this present study focused on the interaction patterns of MSUK and MSM and how they perceived their interactions. Also, this study involved undergraduate MSUK and MSM whereas Lee investigated Malaysian postgraduate students in Malaysia. The methods to collect the data were also different as Lee utilised
interviews, personal narratives, and questionnaire while this study conducted classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions.

Secondly, there were also MSUK and MSM constructing and negotiating accommodative identities. Communicative Accommodative Theory suggests that individuals change their behaviour based on who they talk to, where and when the conversation occurs. (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991; West & Turner 2010; Gallois et al. 2005). Matthews (2014a) also define accommodative as the “general terms for ways in which the speech of individuals is adjusted in accordance with or in response to that of others with whom they are speaking”. These students adjusted how they communicated depending on the context they were in, suggesting that they were being accommodative. For instance, it may depend on the people they talked to. They were minimally engaged in the seminar as they only listened to the tutors, took notes or copied the answers on the board (e.g.: Extract 4.4, Table 24). Most of them however may be assigned to the positively passive group (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011). Malaysian students’ minimal engagement with the seminar echoes studies investigating Malaysian students’ participation and engagement which found that there were Malaysian students who did not contribute or engage in seminar discussions (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007). Zainal Abidin (2007) investigated the interaction patterns of Malaysian undergraduate students in two different seminars.
Zainal Abidin (2007) found that a majority of Malaysian undergraduate students did not take part in whole-class discussions voluntarily and only did so when asked by the lecturer. Liu (2001) introduced four interactional categories namely total integration, conditional participation, marginal interaction, and silent observation based on his study on Asian students studying in American higher learning institutions. According to him, total integration happens when students are spontaneous and active in participating in classroom discussions while conditional participation occurs when students’ participation depends on other factors such as language barrier or fear to show their weaknesses. Marginal interaction refers to students who do not speak during classroom discussions, but mainly listen to the teacher and take notes; and the final category is silent observation, which refers to students who unconditionally accept what is discussed in the classroom. The data suggests that a few Malaysian in the UK and Malaysia demonstrated the criteria of positively passive students as grouped by Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) or marginal interaction as categorised by Liu (2001).

The data from classroom observation were also interpreted as MSUK and MSM being accommodative since there were occasions when some of the Malaysian student-participants in the UK and Malaysia did interact during seminars. Within the context of MSUK, some students were observed to speak to their non-Malaysian peers (e.g.: Extract 4.5) and translanguage (e.g.: Extract 4.6). In the Malaysian context, the students were observed to interact by translanguaging (e.g.: Extract 5.3), answering collectively (e.g.: Extract 5.1), and using Malaysian English (e.g.: Extract 5.2). MSUK were observed to
equally contribute to the whole-class and small-group discussion. Meanwhile, there were only two instances of MSM contributing to the whole-class discussions and the moment these instances occur varied between the MSUK and MSM. This suggests that they reflect the concept of convergent where these students accommodate towards what was expected of them within the UK and Malaysian seminars (Giles 1973; Giles & Ogay 2007). Hence, this current study suggests that some of the Malaysian students, whether they were in the UK or Malaysia, were accommodative as they were somewhat active and engaged in seminars during whole-class or small-group discussion in order to accommodate to the community convention they were in and to the community members they interacted with.

This finding is similar to those of other studies on Malaysian students’ interactions and participation (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007). Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) found that Malaysian students’ participation were flexible. Their participation ranged from active participation to negatively passive participation. Most of them displayed minimum verbal contribution while a small number were found to be either actively very engaged or unengaged. As previously discussed, when asked about their interactions, most of the MSUK and MSM mentioned that they perceived they did not interact much during seminars. However, during interview and focus group discussion sessions, a few of the MSUK mentioned that they perceived that they interacted more than other students, be it home or international. They further explained how they
perceived other students held the view that the Malaysian students dominated the seminar discussion.

Although home students were considered as expert members of the UK academic seminars as they have been trained within the UK style of learning – speak during seminars, give opinions and debate (Kember 2001) – MSUK were observed to interact more during seminar discussion especially during whole-class discussion with the tutor compared to home and other international students. Thus, the Malaysian students who were new to the UK academic convention somewhat display the behaviour of expert members of the UK academic convention. They were considered as new to the UK academic convention because they were first year students who had just started their first term when the observation took place. In other words, MSUK showed that they understood and acknowledged the UK academic convention which requires them to verbally interact in the discussion. This behaviour could be interpreted as the MSUK being accommodative. They mentioned that they were expected to share answers with the whole class since the beginning of the term. They were constantly asked by the seminar tutor, who could also be considered as an expert member of the community of practice (academic seminar), to share their answers with the whole class or ask questions during whole-class and small-group discussion. It is also likely that they were aware what was expected of them, as mentioned by Fatin stating that her father who used to study in the UK shared with her what was expected of students studying in the UK.
Finally, a few MSUK and MSM also demonstrated that they were agentive students. As mentioned previously, agentive is the “the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001, p. 112) while Duranti (2004) defines it as the characteristics which individuals have showing their control over their behaviour affecting others. Duranti et al. (2012) suggests that agentive behaviours are dynamic depending on the process of socialisation. Duff (2012) asserts that those who exhibit the ability to make choices are considered as agentive. These definitions suggest that the few MSUK were engaged with the seminar content as they took control of their learning experience. One of them rejected invitation from a tutor when invited to share his answers (e.g.: Extract 4.1) while another MSUK explained answers to the class (e.g.: Extract 4.2). In the Malaysian context, one of the Malaysian students in Malaysia, KaiYin, was observed to challenge the tutor’s answer during a whole class discussion (e.g.: Extract 5.5). Positively acknowledging this challenge, the tutor took KaiYin’s answer as an option. This event reflects Wenger’s (1998) idea that members of the community learn from each other regardless of whether they are expert or new members of the community, thus reiterating that students’ role could interchange with the tutor’s role as the knowledge giver. However, this role change is not common in Malaysia. As established in the earlier section, the Malaysian education system is very exam oriented where knowledge acquisition is emphasised instead of knowledge mastery and comprehension. Lessons are more focused on drilling the students for examination and rote learning. For example, in the context of English language lessons in Malaysia, writing and reading are more emphasised on as examination mainly assesses these skills (Spawa & Hassan 2013).
The data exhibit the Malaysian students to be the initiators in starting the conversation and they did not necessarily wait for the tutor to prompt them. These interactional behaviours were interpreted as agentive. Despite most of them stating that they would mostly wait for tutors to mention their names, a few Malaysian students explained that they would only initiate to contribute or interact when they were well-prepared or absolutely sure of their answers or explanation. It is not common, however, to find Malaysian students to be initiators during whole-class discussion. Previous studies (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007) reported that most Malaysian students did not interact in classrooms and they contributed minimally or were quiet and only listened to the teachers or lecturers. These studies also found that Malaysian students would only contribute when prompted by the tutor. However, these studies (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007) focused on the context of communicative lessons where students were expected to speak.

A study investigating Malaysian students’ perceptions of their classroom participation conducted by Siti Maziha et al. (2010b) found that the Malaysian students perceived they interacted with the lecturers and other students in the classroom. They also perceived that they were fully involved in the classroom activities. Although this study is similar to the present study where the classes adopted the English language as the medium of instruction, they involved
different groups of students and different academic environment. For instance, Siti Maziha et al.’s (2010a) study focused on undergraduate students in Malaysia whereas the present study emphasised Malaysian undergraduate students in the UK and Malaysia. While other research focused on Malaysian students in Malaysia (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007), this study compares MSUK and MSM. This present study focuses on core modules while other studies (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012) emphasised communication lessons where students were expected to speak.

The data from this study suggests that it was whom they were sitting with that influenced whether the Malaysian students interacted in seminars. A majority of the MSUK were observed to interact mostly with the tutor or other Malaysian peers, especially as they sat next to each other unless grouped otherwise by the tutor. The present study also suggests that they did not consider their ethnicity when deciding where to sit as there were instances where Chinese Malaysians sat next to Malay Malaysians and interacted with each other most of the time. The Malaysian students would also talk to other students when they consciously decided not to sit next to other Malaysians or when they were the only Malaysian in the seminars. In addition, the MSUK were observed to sit with other Malaysian students and interacted with their Malaysian peers by translanguaging. Very few instances were seen of them interacting with non-Malaysian peers when they were sitting next to other
Malaysians, not necessarily of the same ethnicity. In fact, during focus group discussions, some of these MSUK mentioned that they prefer to discuss academic content with their Malaysian counterparts, rather than discussing with the tutor or other students in the seminar.

Two MSUK, Fatin and Qaisara, however demonstrated different preferences. As mentioned in her interview, Fatin consciously decided to sit next to non-Malaysian peers because it was not necessary for her to discuss academic content only with Malaysian peers. Unlike Fatin’s conscious decision, Qaisara mentioned that she had no choice but to sit next to other non-Malaysian peers because she was the only Malaysian student in the seminar (as described in Chapter Four). Consequently, she had to interact with these non-Malaysian peers especially during small-group discussions. In this context, Fatin was interpreted to be agentive by taking charge of her decision to sit with non-Malaysian peers while Qaisara was accommodative as she accommodated her behaviour to fit in with the rest of the seminar members.

In contrast to the MSUK, MSM were observed to sit with Malaysian peers of the same ethnicity. Consequently, they were seen to interact only with the same group. Although there was an international student sitting in the same group, the Malaysian students did not really interact with them. This was because they mostly interacted by translanguaging between English and their mother tongue, Mandarin. In fact, there were also instances where the Malaysian student-participants were recorded to use Malaysian English by adding the distinct grammatical features like –laa and –maa. It was also
observed that the international student did not really interact with the Malaysian students, probably because she does not understand Mandarin or is not used to distinct grammatical features of Malaysian English. Due to either sitting with Malaysian peers in the UK context or peers of the same ethnicity in the Malaysian context, the MSUK and MSM mostly resorted to translanguaging.

Although the context is different, the findings suggest the MSUK and MSM always chose to sit with whom they were comfortable with. Seating preferences might have also contributed to whether these students engage when they were in the seminars. Thus, the seating during the seminars played an important role in determining whether Malaysian students interacted, with whom they interacted, and how they interacted. With whom the Malaysian students sit with influence the identities they constructed and how these identities were constructed. Whether MSUK and MSM sat in front or at the back of the class did little to affect their seminar contributions. The location of the seating was also observed to not influence their seminar contributions. The seating arrangement in the UK was flexible where students could sit anywhere they wanted and the tables and chairs were not arranged in line from the front to the back. The tables and chairs were arranged in groups or U-shape where no student was considered to sit in front or at the back of the classroom. The chairs and tables in UK seminars were light and could be picked up and moved easily. Although the seating arrangements, tables, and chairs in Malaysian seminars were fixed and could not be moved, this kind of arrangement was also observed to have had no influence on whether students contributed verbally to the seminar discussion.
To an extent, this is similar to the findings of Zainal Abidin (2007), who found that seating arrangement is one of the factors influencing whether the Malaysian students in his study contributed to seminar discussions. The findings, however, emphasised on the location of the students in relation to the setting of the classroom. In other words, his findings suggest that whether students sat at the front or at the back of the class influenced whether they contribute to the seminar discussion. The study also proposed that the seating arrangement of the classroom contributed to whether Malaysian undergraduate students contributed verbally to the seminars. Zainal Abidin (2007) posited that students who sat in front of the classroom talked more compared to students who sat at the back, based on the findings that showed actively contributing students preferred to sit at the front and those who were not verbally active tended to sit at the back. It was also found that the lecturers tended to ask more questions to the students who sat at the front. In addition, the students in his study mentioned that students who sat at the front were the ones who completed the work given to them before the lesson or those who came to the lesson prepared.

6.3 Recommendations from the Findings of this Study

As discussed in the previous sections, the findings of this present study suggest that the Malaysian student-participants in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysia (MSM) interacted flexibly to engage in seminars. The findings also suggest that the identities MSUK and MSM constructed and negotiated are not fixed. These interaction patterns and identities depend on the contexts, be they personal,
Based on these findings, recommendations tailored to each stakeholder are discussed in the following sections.

Malaysian undergraduate students

The findings of this present study would be beneficial to the MSUK and MSM because they could understand and acknowledge how they interacted in seminars and the identities they constructed when they were in seminars. By understanding who they are and how they could possibly interact, the students would be able to learn better and maximise their potential. Furthermore, it would help them to be agentive in deciding on how they would interact or behave in seminars, instead of being forced to be someone they are not which may hinder their learning. The findings of this study could also inform these students of the possible factors and contexts that could influence their interaction patterns and identities. Recognising these factors and contexts may increase their awareness of their social environment, which in turn help them in maximising their learning. Acknowledging what is expected of them and how the contexts they were in could help them navigate the expectations as best as they could.

The findings of this study could also be advantageous to the MSUK. In the UK academic community, international students, including Malaysian students are expected to contribute during whole-class discussions and they are also expected to participate in a debate-style discussion. Consequently, they will also learn the conventions in which they can voice their opinion in academic seminars. Being international students in the UK might make them feel marginalised as they might feel their opinion is not as good as that of the home or other international students. However, understanding that they could
actually voice their ideas or opinions in a polite and unintimidating manner could
possibly help them to be more critical and would also help them to fit in with
other students, home and international.

Similarly, MSM will also benefit from this study as they would be able to
learn more about the potential that they have or that they could develop in
seminars. They would also be able to learn that the academic community that
they are in is not as intimidating as they might think. They would realise that the
Malaysian academic community is more receptive towards or accepting of
students or novice members challenging the tutors or expert members of the
community. The findings of this current study also implicate Malaysian students
who are undergoing preparation programme to go to overseas universities,
particularly western universities such as those in the UK. Understanding and
acknowledging the environment they will be in would help them to prepare
themselves accordingly.

Academic institutions UK and Malaysia

The findings of this study contribute to tertiary education especially in
accommodating international students. By understanding how the Malaysian
students and other international students interact and the identities they may
construct, and the contexts that might influence their contribution/interaction,
academic institutions in the UK could be more empathetic towards the students
especially those who have just arrived in the UK from their home country and
have just started their first year in UK universities. An understanding of the
differences between the students’ home academic convention and the UK’s
would help academic institutions in providing relevant courses for the
international students. This intervention may help the students to be aware of, and eventually master the academic convention in the UK. As suggested by Borland and Pearce (2002) and Durkin (2008), the academic seminar convention such as the skills to engage and verbally contribute need to be explained to students and can be mastered through conscious strategies.

The current study also provides recommendations for Malaysian academic institutions. The findings illustrate that there are Malaysian students who are not only active, but also agentive as they asked questions to the tutors or challenged them. The instances observed and illustrated in this study show that the tutors in Malaysia accepted this type of behaviours and identities, hence implying that the Malaysian academic community is welcoming towards students who ask and answer questions during whole class discussions. Students, in certain contexts, are no longer stopped or prevented from asking questions or saying something during class discussions. In fact, the students are encouraged to challenge the tutor when necessary, provided that it is done politely. Thus, the academic convention in Malaysia, especially seminars, is possibly changing from the kind of communication that is one-way and teacher-centred to one that is two-way and student-centred.

Encouraging students to be more active and agentive during seminars would provide them with the opportunity to interact during whole-class discussions. Because English is the medium of instruction in the seminars, Malaysian students are expected to use the English language when they want to interact during seminars. This could potentially help in improving Malaysian
students’ English proficiency because they are not only exposed to the language but are also given the opportunity to use the language. Consequently, the increasing exposure and usage could help realise the aspiration highlighted in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025), which stated that Malaysian students should be proficient in at least the Malay and English languages.

According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2015-2025) (p. E-6), Malaysian academic institutions have become one of the top destinations for international students (Kerr 2011). Considering that students who are in the Malaysian academic institutions come from different personal, educational, and cultural background, the findings of this study could encourage the institutions to be more understanding towards these international students and eventually enabling them to cater to the different needs of the students. Malakloulunthu and Selan (2011) and Talebloo and Roslan (2013) suggest that university staff members, both academics and non-academics, should be trained to manage international students of various backgrounds. This is because these studies found that international students in Malaysian universities face challenges in academic adjustments involving course and facility administration.

Faculty members in the UK and Malaysia (Lecturers and tutors)

The findings of this current study could be illuminating to the faculty members, as by understanding how and why Malaysian students interacted during seminars, they could be more empathetic towards the students. Although there are studies equating verbal interaction to engagement, the findings of this study illustrate differently. Being silent in seminars does not mean that students are not engaged. Some students learn better by listening to the tutor’s
explanation, while some require more time to digest the content explained by the tutor. Either way, not asking questions or sharing answers do not necessarily mean the students do not understand what was explained. One of the Malaysian students in this study confessed that although she might not speak in seminars or ask questions, she was always consulted by her friends; hence a testament to her understanding of the seminar discussion. Therefore, instead of forcing students to verbally interact in seminars, understanding that some students learn better by listening and taking notes would help the faculty members to not perceive these students as not being engaged in the learning process. With this understanding, faculty members could possibly help the Malaysian students to maximise their potentials. Hence, this study proposes the lecturers and tutors to be flexible in their teachings as they could possibly a reason for students to interact.

The current study also delineates the contexts and factors that possibly influence students’ interaction patterns and the identities they construct and negotiate. Understanding these factors and different contexts could help the faculty members to utilise the learning contexts or process so as to maximise the students’ potentials. They could provide the students with contexts and prompts which may help students to verbally interact if it is the requirement of the modules. In other words, faculty members should acknowledge the different ways of learning. By also understanding, accepting, and acknowledging that Malaysian students have flexible identities and interaction patterns in seminars, lecturers and tutors could be more sensitive to the students’ different needs and reflect this in their pedagogy practices. Considering that the Malaysian students
are flexible and diverse in their interactions and identities, the faculty members could take the role of encouraging and guiding these students to be more engaged. The faculty members could also guide the students to acquire the seminar content, instead of providing students with the knowledge.

Malaysian students, in general, were expected not to ask questions or answer questions asked by the tutor. They were also expected not to challenge the tutor and to not contribute to the discussion. However, the data of this study suggests that MSM did challenge their tutor; they asked questions to the tutor and answer questions posed by their tutors. This behaviour is a deviation from the norm in the Malaysian academic community, which is mostly defined by its unquestioning culture. These students’ behaviours, therefore, are challenging this norm albeit with a small number of contributions during the whole class discussion. It did not only happen in the UK when Izlin asked questions to the tutor, but also in Malaysia when KaiYin asked the tutor if the written answer was correct. Thus, the faculty members in the UK and Malaysia need to understand that Malaysian students could possibly challenge them or ask them questions during seminars. Although it may not be the case previously especially in the Malaysian academic context, the change in the interaction patterns and identities the students constructed and negotiated indicate that Malaysian students are more aware of their surroundings and the learning process that take place in the academic contexts. They are also more critical of the process involved and content discussed in the academic seminars. For instance, one of the MSM, KaiYin, was aware that she was being active and speaking a lot
during seminars because she wanted the chance to practice and improve her English language proficiency.

The findings of this study suggest that the MSM are gradually changing from being resistant to being agentive. When Malaysian students construct and negotiate the identity of agentive students, the tutor positions herself as a flexible tutor who accepts questions when challenged by the students. This instance shows that the expert members in the Malaysian academic community acknowledge that challenging the tutor is starting to be acceptable in the academic setting. Although this might have been the convention all this while, the Malaysian students, who are the novice member of the academic community, still do not practise it because they have been trained that it is disrespectful to challenge the knowledge-givers and the authorities who are the expert members in the academic community, which in this case are the tutors. It is important that faculty members in the UK and Malaysia take these contexts and different personal, educational, and cultural background into consideration when dealing with Malaysian students and other international students.

6.4 Summary

Chapter Six presents the discussion of the findings demonstrated in Chapter Four and Five. First, it provides an overview of the findings based on the research questions. Next, the discussion of how Malaysian students’ interactions and perceptions influence their identity construction was presented. The Malaysian students in the UK were interpreted to construct and negotiate three academic identities when they were in seminars: resistant,
accommodative and agentive. In addition to that, the Malaysian students in Malaysia were found to construct and negotiate two academic identities: accommodative and agentive. These identities were interpreted by employing Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) framework. Finally, the recommendations for stakeholders: Malaysian undergraduate students, UK academic institutions and faculty members were provided.
CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

7.0 Introduction

My motivation was due to the fact that, as a Malaysian student in Malaysia and an international student in the UK and previously in New Zealand, I was never the agentive nor accommodative type, whether during whole-class or small-group discussions. Intrigued by my experience as a Malaysian international student navigating academic settings different from the one in my own country, I decided to explore and document how Malaysian students engage with spoken academic discourse. I was particularly interested in studying their interaction patterns and identities in academic seminars. I anticipated that the Malaysian students I would observe would behave like I did, not asking questions or interacting during seminars or classrooms. Many studies conducted on Malaysian students found that they are somewhat passive, and these studies also found that the Malaysian students perceive their contribution as being influenced by different contexts such as their personality, tutor’s personality, other students’ perceptions, and seating arrangements (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012). The findings from this study, however, negated what I had anticipated because there were some MSUK and MSM who did not follow the norm of being passive in seminars or classrooms. In the context of the MSUK, most of these students were the opposite of the norm in Malaysia because they had to be accommodative to the UK academic seminars and be agentive of their own learning experience.
In investigating the Malaysian students’ interaction patterns and identity construction, I utilised the insights of Communities of Practice (CoP), and Identity Construction. Further explanation on how this study contributed to the development of these two concepts is given in the upcoming section. Taking into account the notion that CoP conceptualises participation within a community, UK and Malaysian academic seminars are considered as two communities of practice with different conventions. The insight from the analytical tool, conversational analysis, was adopted to identify the interaction patterns of the Malaysian students in the UK (MSUK) and Malaysia (MSM). I also utilised the identity construction framework within talk in interaction with two of its five main principles; emergence and indexicality (Bucholtz & Hall 2005), to identify the identities the students may have constructed and negotiated. Identity turned out to be an important construct to analyse because it would help the students to understand who they are and at the same time, fit into the targeted academic community, if need be. By employing the understanding of interaction patterns and how identities are constructed and negotiated within certain communities of practice, I investigated the interaction patterns of MSUK and MSM and the identities they construct and negotiate. From the analysis of the data gathered, I discovered that the Malaysian students are varied in terms of their interaction patterns and identity construction in seminars. Some of these patterns and identities are similar to the ones found by other studies and at the same time, new insights on Malaysian students have also been generated.
Before proceeding to conclude this study, in this final chapter, I will discuss a few theoretical and practical contributions of the relevant findings based on the research questions. I will also reflect upon the methodology I employed to carry out this study. This is followed by a discussion on the limitations of this study and some implications into further direction for future research. Finally, this chapter will end with my own personal reflection upon the experiences I have gained in conducting this study.

7.1 Summary of the study

The main objective of this study was to explore how MSUK and MSM engage with spoken academic discourse in English, particularly answering the three research questions below:

1. How do Malaysian undergraduate students interact in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?
2. How do these students perceive their interactions and others’ in seminars in the UK and Malaysia?
3. How do Malaysian students in the UK and Malaysia construct their identity through their interactions and perceptions?

To answer these research questions, nine MSUK and 12 Malaysian students in Malaysia were recruited and data was collected by observing them interact in seminars, conducting interviews with them, and carrying out focus group discussion. The generated data shows that the MSUK and MSM interacted flexibly while they were in seminars. Most of them also held different
views to each other regarding their own interactions during seminars. Finally, the data illustrates that the MSUK and MSM constructed and negotiated different, multiple, and flexible identities depending on the contexts they were in. To conclude, the Malaysian students are flexible in terms of their interaction patterns and the identities they constructed and negotiated.

7.2 Malaysian students

Most studies conducted on Malaysian students in Malaysia generally found that the students offered minimal verbal exchanges while very few of them were reported to be either very active or very passive (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012; Thang 2009; Thang & Azarina 2007). Lee (2003a) also found them to experience resentment when they used the English language in certain local contexts. This was reflected in their actions as they avoided using the language in these local contexts. According to Faizah (2012), Malaysian students navigated through a range of identities depending on the time and space given to them. This current study illustrates similar findings that Malaysian students may interact in different ways and possibly construct multiple identities when they are in seminars depending on the contexts they are in.

7.3 Contributions to knowledge and community

The findings of the present study may help generate tangible theoretical and practical contributions. Malaysian students' interaction patterns and identity construction may be a stepping stone to studies on the communities of practice,
such as the wider UK and Malaysian academic communities, involving home and international students as well as faculty members. The findings are based on the evidence that Malaysian students are flexible and able to adapt to changes and to be prepared to accommodate to a new and different environment comprising different conventions. I believe that this study mainly contributes to the development of the theories as will be discussed in 7.3.1. There are also practical contributions which I will discuss in section 7.3.2.

7.3.1 Underlining Theoretical Contributions

Adopting the insight from Whetten (2009, p. 35) that ‘looking through the lens to improving the lens’: research could be conducted by adopting one theory to improve the theory, the theoretical contributions of this study are established on the basis that it adds and contributes to the existing theories and previous literature.

Before explaining the theoretical contribution of this study in more detail, I would like to repeat what was mentioned by Edwards (2005). He stated that discussing limitations of the theories does not indicate criticism. On the contrary, the limitations suggest that the theories can be developed and improved, and also illustrate the many possible interpretations for the theories and concepts employed in this study. In fact, instead of fully critiquing them, I intend to simply focus on how I look at some insights of the theories to make sense of the findings of this study.

In this section, I explored and explained how the findings, discussed in Chapter Six, contribute to the development of theories below. To reiterate, to
gain a deeper understanding of how MSUK and MSM engage with spoken academic discourse, particularly their interaction patterns and identity construction, I have employed some insights from the two main theoretical constructs and domains, namely Community of Practice, and Identity Construction in Interaction. These theoretical constructs and domains were suitable for the purpose of exploring and understanding how MSUK and MSM engage with spoken academic discourse for different reasons as discussed below.

First, the concept of Community of Practice within the discipline of Language Socialisation as introduced and advocated by Wenger (1998). Community of Practice in the context of this study refers to the MSUK and MSM, tutors, and other students (home and international) who are members of the community. It also consisted of the convention of UK and Malaysia academic communities in which the students are encouraged to assimilate into. Community of Practice is a convention that members of the community attempt to follow in order for them to become a part of the community and be acknowledged by other members (Lave & Wenger 1991). I have further discussed this concept in Chapter Two and elaborated it in Chapter Six. In those chapters, I described and explained the significance and relevance of (i) the Community of Practice concept in academic community, and (ii) employing English as the medium of instruction, in the pursuit of dissecting the interaction patterns and identity construction among Malaysian students in this study. One of the reasons I employed the concept of Community of Practice is because I see the MSUK and MSM as members of a community of practice, either in the
UK or Malaysian academic seminars, where academic seminars consist of new and expert members. These members share common targeted conventions on how they interact and the identities they possibly construct and negotiate within the communities. I also employed insights from Community of Practice because it argues for a group dynamic and this is related to the current study as the study explores how the Malaysian students engage in academic seminars in relation to other members in the community of practice.

Hence, from this study, I propose that the concept of Community of Practice could be the starting point to investigate how students engage with spoken academic discourse, particularly their interaction patterns and identities in seminars. I also propose that the conventions within certain community of practice are not fixed and should not be fixed. In other words, conventions of targeted community need to be flexible to accommodate to the different needs of students who are either novice or expert members of the community. Students in these communities of practice may come from different cultural and educational backgrounds. This difference in background should be emphasised, especially for multicultural academic institutions, as these institutions consist of international students who may be multilinguals and come from different cultural backgrounds. International students, who are considered as novices, are often expected to be proficient and competent in the specific academic conventions of the institution. This expectation however could result in negative experiences for them and consequently, risk their opportunity to be a part of the member of the community. Other than being novices, some students are also expert members of the academic society and they would need to accommodate their
level of expertise to the novices’ level. This could help the novices to consequently also become expert members. Thus, the discussion of this concept contributes to the development of awareness and acceptance of possible change in roles of the members of the community of practice, and in the context of this study, academic seminars. It is vital for the members of the community to be aware of this change, including tutors and students because they are the classroom agents. Instead of expecting international students to adjust their competency and accommodate to the needs of the academic conventions, I suggest that these academic conventions be flexible in the aspect of their expectations and teaching styles, and also for these communities of practices to acknowledge the students’ needs to be who they are and behave accordingly when it comes to their learning process and experiences.

Secondly, I look at the concept of ‘naturalistic inquiry’ within Conversation Analysis (CA) centring on the principle that interactions are actual real-life events, and contextually situated. In Chapter Three, I discussed how I adopted this tool to explore how the MSUK and MSM engage in spoken academic discourse, particularly academic seminars. Taking into account the principle of CA specifying that interactions are actual real-life events, always in order, and contextually situated, this study explored the interactional behaviours demonstrated by the MSUK and MSM. The findings illustrate that these students developed a wide range of interactional behaviours that could be called upon during formal academic seminar discussions. For example, some of the MSUK interacted in seminars by rejecting the invitation by the tutor to share,
explaining answers to the whole seminar, and translanguaging. The interview and focus group discussion data reveals the different factors that contribute to the Malaysian students’ interactions in seminars. Some of them perceived their personality to be one of the factors while others mentioned that the tutor’s role is important. This finding is similar to that of other studies (Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd. Yusof, Noor Rahamad & Maizatul Haizan 2012).

While adopting CA, the discussion on Malaysian students’ interactional behaviours in academic seminars contributes to the understanding of how Malaysian students behave and interact in seminars. Therefore, this study also proposes that further research could be done to explore students’ interactional behaviour in core module seminars. It also allows the members of the community of practice to be aware and accepting of different interactional behaviours.

As a final point, in attempting to analyse how Malaysian students identities in seminars, I initially employed Bamberg’s (1997) self-positioning theory looking at identity construction and negotiation in relation to self, others, and the world. However, I decided to employ Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) identity construction framework, which looks at identity construction from the perspectives of sociolinguistics, linguistics, anthropology, and cultural studies. These multiple perspectives are more relevant to this study as the data are interactions occurring in seminars and narratives shared during interview and focus group discussion sessions. This framework is also holistic with its five main principles – emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness. Considering the three out of five principles mentioned, the data
reveal three main students’ identities (as discussed in the Discussion chapter), namely agentive, accommodative, and resistant, portrayed by the Malaysian students for a number of reasons. For instance, the findings show how some of the Malaysian students were accommodative as they translanguaged when they were in seminars. MSUK and MSM could be observed to translanguage between the Malay and English languages, although the medium of instruction is English. Those in the UK, especially, mentioned that language barrier was one of the challenges they encountered in seminars. Thus, I propose that Bucholtz and Hall’s (2005) identity construction framework could be further employed by studies attempting to explore how students engage with spoken academic discourse.

Although the findings of this study cannot be generalised to all MSUK and MSM, other research possibilities focusing on Malaysian students’ interactional behaviour and identity in academic seminars could be initiated. The theoretical frameworks underpinning this study have been utilised throughout various fields including anthropology and sociolinguistics. I hope that the utilisation of the theoretical framework this could stimulate contributions that are valuable and significant to the development of the theories and concepts by bridging the gap not only between theories and practices, but also within the theories themselves. In other words, I hope it does not only improve these theories but also develop its usage and application for other studies with different contexts and settings.
7.3.2 Underlying Practical Contributions

In this section, I will discuss the practical contributions this current study has towards the academic conventions and community in the UK and Malaysia. The practical contribution of the study lies in the various interaction patterns and identities of Malaysian students and their perceptions towards their interactions, particularly in core module seminars rather than directly in the field of teaching and learning in ESL classroom as was the case with most studies conducted in Malaysia (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Siti Maziha, Nik Suryani & Melor 2010a; Mohd Yusof, Noor Rahamah & Maizatul Haizan 2012). Despite the student-participants’ inclination or desire to behave and be who they are in seminars, it is vital that they are able to accommodate and adapt to the new and different environment and conventions. If they cannot accommodate and adapt, they may experience negative learning experience (Rashidah & Nor Azlah 2016). Exploring how MSUK and MSM interact in seminars and the identities they construct and negotiate through their own accounts has provided some new insights into how interactions influence identity construction in academic seminars.

The ability to acknowledge and be aware of the contexts that may influence their interactions in seminars enables Malaysian students to appreciate the learning environment they are in. They are also open to opportunities and be flexible with learning in different contexts. Understanding the flexible characteristics that they have may allow the students to adapt and accommodate to the needs and conventions of the new academic settings better and faster. This flexibility may also prevent Malaysian students from
becoming stressed due to being in a new academic setting and the expectation that they master the conventions of this setting. Addressing this issue may help them realise that they can contribute to the discussion and that they are all in a safe environment. They may also learn to respect their peers and consequently, the learning environment becomes safer for all students. Consequently, interactions occurred in these academic contexts influence their identity construction. These recommendations could be communicated to the Malaysian students by informing programme coordinators, faculties, pre-university institutions, universities, and education policy makers of the need to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for students in the institutions’ mission statements and most importantly in practice too.

This study demonstrates how tutors in the UK encouraged students to ask questions and share their answers with the whole class. By acknowledging that Malaysian students have flexible interaction patterns and multiple identities depending on the contexts they are in, the tutors in the UK could also be more flexible in their pedagogical practice. This flexibility is imperative because UK academic seminars consist of not only home students who are considered the expert in the UK academic conventions, but also international students who come from different cultural and educational background and thus may be unfamiliar with the new conventions. Hence, while encouraging students to ask questions and share answers in the seminars seems given for the home students, the same practice could marginalise international students who will likely shy away from this unfamiliar convention.
The findings of this study also illustrate that Malaysian students translanguate when they interact in seminars. Garcia and Wei (2014) emphasise that translanguaging practice is one of the ways students make meaning, by using the language and knowledge that they have. Therefore, it is suggested that the tutors teaching in UK academic seminars be more flexible by accepting the students’ personal, educational, and cultural diversity and thus allowing the students to act and behave accordingly. They are also recommended to view these academic seminars as one of the means to help students to learn by possibly enhancing and expanding their understanding of the seminar content and improving the students’ skills. The tutors are also encouraged to be more sensitive towards how Malaysian students engage in seminars, particularly when they interact and how they behave in seminars. By knowing when and how the students interact, tutors could provide similar contexts to encourage students to interact more if necessary.

The study also shows that academic seminars are one of the venues for Malaysian students to use the English language, especially for the Malaysian students in Malaysia. Therefore, tutors are recommended to create a safe environment for Malaysian students to use the language so that they feel comfortable to interact during seminars. Safe environment may mean the environment where students are not intimidated by the feedback from the tutor and other students. A few of the research participants in this study mentioned that they had negative experience when contributing to whole class discussion as their peers saw them as students who were boastful and eager to show off their knowledge.
As there are tutors and other community members who may be well aware of the contexts influencing students’ interaction patterns and identity construction, this finding may not be something new in the Malaysian educational context. Nevertheless, tutors and other members of the academic community are encouraged to address the context-related issues and consequently work together to help students to learn. The present study fills a research gap because it is different from other studies in a number of aspects:

- focus on how Malaysian students’ interactions influence their identity construction;
- comparison of Malaysian students in two different settings: UK and Malaysia. The comparison also includes how they interacted in seminars, the identities they constructed and the ways they deal with cultural expectations from the two academic settings;
- the research setting of this study focuses on seminars which were content-based;
- the adoption of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1974) as analytical tool, and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) and identity construction in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) as analysis framework

Consequently, this adds to the existing knowledge of Malaysian students’ interaction patterns and identities in seminars and expands its scope within educational contexts that, previously, are seldom discussed in the context of Malaysian academic seminars, particularly core module seminars. Thus, this
study is appropriate at the time when Malaysian students are reported to not speak and are passive in the classrooms. By working together, the Malaysian academic community can minimise the negative experiences of the students and optimistically overcome this issue. Other than the Malaysian academic community, this study could be a reference for other similar academic communities involving Asian students who are claimed to have similar behaviour as Malaysian students (Wong 2004; Wearring, Le, Wilson & Arambewela 2015; Zhao & Bourne 2011; Bartlett & Fischer 2011; Ruble & Zhang 2013).

7.4 Methodological Issues and Future Research

Chapter Three has described how the present study employs an interpretive approach seeking to explore how Malaysian students engage in spoken academic discourse, particularly their interaction patterns and identity in seminars. To date, studies in the area of spoken academic discourse tend to prefer a quantitative rather than qualitative approach. Employing interpretive approach is therefore an attempt to widen the scope of the linguistics study in Malaysia and other countries, as interpretive approach is able to deepen the understanding of the issues in students’ engagement with spoken academic discourse, in particular, interaction patterns and identity construction. Other studies on Malaysian students’ engagement, interaction patterns, and identity construction had focused on ESL classrooms or identity in the use of the English language.
To my knowledge, there are only two studies on Malaysian students’ participation and two on Malaysian students’ identity (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007; Lee 2003a; Faizah 2012). The studies carried out by Siti Maziha and Nik Suryani (2011) and Zainal Abidin (2007) looked at interaction patterns in the context of communication- and engineering-based seminars while Lee (2003a) and Faizah (2012) emphasised identity construction by postgraduate students’ in terms of their use of English, and school students’ shared identity respectively. These studies focused solely on the Malaysian students studying in Malaysia. Meanwhile, some of the research participants in this present study are Malaysian students studying in the UK. Thus, the present study may possibly be the first to focus on both; Malaysian students’ interaction patterns and identity, and emphasise on not only Malaysian students studying in Malaysia, and in the UK. The present study also employed three methods to collect its data, namely classroom observation, interviews, and focus group discussion. While it is common for studies on students’ engagement or participation to interview or observe students in the classroom (Siti Maziha & Nik Suryani 2011; Zainal Abidin 2007), employing all three at the same time is quite rare, particularly in investigating students’ interaction patterns and identity construction.

Findings from this current study illustrate that the MSUK and MSM are flexible in their interaction patterns and identity construction. Future research focusing on different target groups in different setting or academic institutions in the UK and Malaysia is worth considering. The focus is likely to help in enlightening the relevant stakeholders to look into various insights on how
students engage with spoken academic discourse. Further studies must also be conducted to explore their interaction patterns and identity construction. This raises a few questions: How do Malaysian students interact focusing on the micro-level of analysis? How do tutors perceive the students’ interaction patterns and identity construction? How do Malaysian students engage in group studies?

7.5 Limitation of the study

Echoing Ioannidis (2007), every study has its limitation. It is fundamental to address these limitations as it could provide a deeper understanding of the findings. The limitations also inform future research direction as they include information that could be looked at for further development and improvement. There are a few limitations of this current study that I have identified and will now attempt to address. Despite these limitations, the reliability of this study is not jeopardised.

Firstly, I was able to investigate a limited number of MSUK and MSM. Recruiting a larger sample would have enabled me to access a larger number of MSUK and MSM. However, employing the ethnographic approach allowed me to conduct more in-depth investigation with the limited number of Malaysian students who were my participants. The short length of the academic term in the UK and Malaysia also limited the time that I could spend with my participants. Due to this, I would not be able to generalise my findings to the wider context of Malaysian students as different settings or disciplines may have varied conventions and practices that might influence the findings of that
particular study. The findings are limited to the two university in the UK and one public university in Malaysia. The university in the UK provides the Malaysian students who studied there with a new academic culture while the Malaysian university chosen was one of the best universities in Malaysia, which recruits only the best students.

Secondly, this study is constrained by the limited access to research venues/setting. In the UK context, my access to the MSUK was limited to the UK university I go to as a PhD student as it was difficult for me to travel and get access to other Malaysian students in other universities in the UK. In the Malaysian context, there were only two main universities possessing similar variables with the university in the UK, in the sense that they employ English as the medium of instruction and they have many undergraduate international students enrolled in their academic courses. However, I was only given the permission to conduct this study at one university in Malaysia as my application to access another university was rejected.

Researcher bias and my professional background could have considerably affected my study. As I mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, being a PhD researcher and someone who is older and a professional – who could likely be their lecturer if we were in Malaysia – may lead them to craft their responses according to what they perceive could please me. However, I made sure they understood that the intention of conducting this study was not to evaluate nor assess them, and that in no way the study could affect their academic performance. I also explained that their participation in this study
would not affect their status or others’ position. The Malaysian students involved were reassured that their confidentiality and anonymity would not be jeopardised and eventually they gave their permission to use the data they had provided.

Despite these limitations, this study provides the space and platform for further future research, as I will discuss in the next section.

7.6 Further directions for research

Based on the limitations addressed above, there are worthy areas to be further investigated. Firstly, future research could replicate the current research in various higher institutions in Malaysia including the ones that may not have international students and are not located in the urban areas. The same could be done for Malaysian students at other academic institutions in the UK.

Similar studies could also be carried out in the future by involving more Malaysian students. Other than that, the focus could shift to the tutors where their behaviour and perceptions could also be investigated. Future studies could also highlight other students including Malaysian, international, and local students where more comprehensive comparison could be made between Malaysian students and other students in the seminars.

Similar methods and approaches (with suggested refinements) can also be conducted in future studies. In fact, I initially intended to conduct the interview twice, once before I started observing the students in seminar (early
term) and another after (end of term). However, due to time constraints, I only managed to interview them once. Nevertheless, it did not affect the findings of this study, as the students would also allude to their experiences during the beginning of the term in making their point. For instance, they talked about how they had trouble understanding what was spoken by their tutor and peers initially and how, as the term progressed, this ceased to be a challenge for some of them.


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Appendix 1

INFORMATION SHEET

PROJECT TITLE: International Students' Engagement with Spoken Academic Discourse

You are invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

The study aims to understand how Malaysian students engage in seminar discussions. The researcher will observe and take field notes during the seminar discussions. The researcher will also interview the students after the seminars. Students might also be invited to participate in focus group discussions and answer a questionnaire to clarify certain details. Furthermore, if permitted by the participants, there might also be the possibility of audio recording the seminar, interview and focus group discussion to ensure aspects are not missed.

Names and other details of the participants will be treated strictly in confidence at all stages and will not be included in the study.

Participation in the study will not affect the outcome of the participant’s course, either positively or negatively. Participants have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time if they wish.

The information provided by participants will be used as data for my PhD research project.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Zurina Khairuddin

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Email: Z.Khairuddin@sussex.ac.uk

Date: 8 August, 2015
Appendix 2

CONSENT FORM

PROJECT TITLE: International Students’ Engagement with Spoken Academic Discourse

I agree to take part in this research project. Someone has explained the project to me. I understand that my agreement to take part means that I am willing to:

- take part in recorded classroom observations, interviews and focus group discussions

Any information that I give is confidential, and I will remain unidentifiable. My personal details will not appear in reports on the project, either by the researcher or by anyone else. I can choose whether to take part in the project, and can stop taking part at any time without any problems or disadvantages.

Any personal information I give will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 1998. I can withdraw my consent at any time until it is no longer practical to do so by contacting the researcher by letter, phone or email:

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Telephone: +44 778 422 9447 / +6019 240 6482
Email: Z.Khairuddin@sussex.ac.uk

Participant name (PRINT): .................................................................
Age (years and months): ....................... (eg 22 years 7 months)
Gender (please circle): Male / Female
First language (mother tongue): ..........................................................
Participant signature: .................................................................
Date: .................................................................
Participant (email): .................................................................
12 November 2015

Cik Zurina binti Khairuddin
B316, Arts B
School of English
University of Sussex
BN1 9QN, Brighton
East Sussex, England
United Kingdom

Puan,

MEMOHON KEBENARAN MENDAPATKAN AKSES UNTUK MENJALANKAN PENYELIDIKAN PhD

Surat puan bertarikh 4 November 2015 berkenaan perkara di atas adalah dirujuk.


Untuk makluman puan, Fakulti Perniagaan & Perakaunan hanya mempunyai 6 orang pelajar Antarabangsa Tahun Pertama iaitu 3 orang bagi Program Sarjana Muda Perakaunan dan 3 orang lagi bagi Program Sarjana Muda Pentadbiran Perniagaan.

Sekian.

Yang benar,

KAMARUL FAIRUZ HASSIM
Ketua Pendaftar
b.p. Dekan
s.k. Dekan, Fakulti Perniagaan & Perakaunan
Timbaian Dekan (Ijazah Dasar)

UNIVERSITI MALAYA

FAKULTI PERNIAGAAN & PERAKAUNAN
Universiti Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: (603) 7967 3800 / 7966 2191 • Faks: (603) 7967 3980
email: fp@um.edu.my • http://www.um.edu.my/fpp
Appendix 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Certificate of Approval</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference Number</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title Of Project</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Principal Investigator (PI):</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborators</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Duration Of Approval</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Expected Start Date</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Approval Expiry Date</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Approved By</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Name of Authorised Signatory</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*NB. If the actual project start date is delayed beyond 12 months of the expected start date, this Certificate of Approval will lapse and the project will need to be reviewed again to take account of changed circumstances such as legislation, sponsor requirements and University procedures.

Please note and follow the requirements for approved submissions:

Amendments to protocol
- Any changes or amendments to approved protocols must be submitted to the C-REC for authorisation prior to implementation.

Feedback regarding the status and conduct of approved projects
- Any incidents with ethical implications that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported immediately to the Chair of the C-REC.

Feedback regarding any adverse and unexpected events
- Any adverse (undesirable and unintended) and unexpected events that occur during the implementation of the project must be reported to the Chair of the Social Sciences C-REC. In the event of a serious adverse event, research must be stopped immediately and the Chair alerted within 24 hours of the occurrence.
Appendix 5

Classroom Observation Instrument (W__ OBS__)

A. General Information

1. Date:
2. Day:
3. Time:
4. Venue: Jub
5. Subject:
6. Lesson title:
7. No of students:
   • Male:
   • Female:
8. Tutor(s): Male/Female

B. Classroom Map

C. Observation List

1. Tutor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T asks question to students for discussion</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>T asks for clarification from the students (who might give their opinion)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S asks question to T</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S asks question to other students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S contributes ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Items</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>S answers T's question in unison</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>S pays attention while another student is speaking</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* _____________ recorded the lesson.

Observation Note:

1. The nature of the course:

2.
Appendix 6

Focus group prompts – UK

1. I love studying here (UK/Sussex).
2. Given that I have been in a new learning/academic environment, the challenges I have experienced so far are __________.
3. I don’t have any problems coping with the self-directed learning here.
4. I am more comfortable in __________ (name of module/course) seminar because ______.
5. At the beginning of the term, it took time for me to understand what others are saying.
6. I think the expectations I previously had before I came here were met.
7. I prefer not to ask questions or contribute answers during seminars/workshops.
8. I am very conscious of who I am when I am in the seminar.
9. I prefer to smile, laugh or nod during group discussions to avoid being asked to contribute ideas, opinions or answers.
10. I believe that I contributed more during seminars here (UK/Sussex) compared to when I was in [Malaysia] because ____________.
11. I prefer to keep quiet and listen to the tutor or other classmates especially on topics I am not comfortable with.
12. I prefer discussing questions/topics I don’t really understand with my fellow [Malaysians] after class.
Appendix 7

Focus group prompts – Malaysia

1. I love studying in an English-speaking environment (from interview)
2. I find it challenging to study/learn in an English-speaking environment (from interview)
3. I believe it is better to use English when studying (from interview)
4. The university I am studying at uses English as a medium of instruction (from interview)
5. I believe the ideas that I contributed or questions I asked during tutorials/group discussion are appreciated by my tutor and classmates (from interview)
6. I prefer to smile, nod or laugh during tutorials/group discussions to avoid being asked to contribute ideas, opinions or answers (from observation)
7. I prefer to keep quiet and listen to the tutor or other classmates especially on topics I am not comfortable with (from observation)
8. I prefer not to ask questions or contribute answers during tutorials/ group discussions (from observation)
9. I think using English is a way for me to communicate with classmates of other races and international students (from interview)
10. I prefer to ask questions to the tutor after the class (from interview)
Appendix 8

Classroom Observation Instrument (W1 OBS1)

A. General Information

9. Date: 5 October 2015
10. Day: Monday
11. Time: 1100 – 1400
12. Venue: Jubilee JUB G-30
13. Subject: Intro to Business and Management
14. Lesson title: Organising Structure and Configuration
15. No of students:
   • Male: 27
   • Female: 24
16. Tutor(s): Male/Female

B. Classroom Map

C. Observation List

1. Tutor

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*Anis recorded the lesson.

Observation Note:
3. The nature of the course:
   It is a 3-hour lesson where there is a combination of lecture, whole-class discussion, group discussion and pair work. According to the students, during the first week, they were asked to sit in groups and they should sit in this group every time they attend the class, if possible.
4. In the beginning of the lesson, the tutor asked all students to quickly review what they learnt during the previous week in their respective groups. It is noticed that none of the Malaysian students said anything during this quick review.
5. It is also noticeable that all Malaysian students did not sit with each other except Fiza, Syaza and Aiman who sat next to each other. This should make the students to speak with other students in their groups.
6. There were two 10-minute breaks in during the lesson. Fiza, Syaza and Anis went out and had drinks together. Michael didn’t go out and just stayed in the classroom for both breaks. Farah went out alone both times. Wasn’t aware of Aiman.
7. Anis paired with M1 a few times and it seemed that they had a brief discussion
8. It is observable that farah contributed a lot to the discussions in her group. She also actively participated during the discussion by also asking questions to the tutor. The tutor also
9. The other students seemed like they are receptive of the Malaysian students in the classroom. They listened and responded to what the Malaysian students (Farah) said.
10. It’s difficult to observe Michael as his back was facing me. I wasn’t sure whether he contributed or not.
11. During group discussion in the last one hour, the students were given a set of questions on an article they were required to read before attending the class. During this session, Anis seemed a little bit left out. She didn’t contribute verbally;
asked questions or give opinions. She kept to herself and was playing on her phone. Though sometimes, I can see that she nodded and smiled a few times when listening to her group mates' contribution.

12. During this session, from afar, I can see that Farah contributed a lot to her group's discussion. Everyone in her group listened and responded to her, though I'm not sure what they said as I was sitting far from her and she didn't have a recorder.

13. A topic that could be utilized for focus group discussion: Theory X vs Theory Y; which one do you prefer to be and why? Do you have any experience with either/both theories, maybe when you worked previously or when you were in school?
Appendix 9

Interview – UK

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<th>Items</th>
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<td>Place</td>
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<td>Interviewer</td>
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<td>Interviewee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position of interviewee</td>
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**Brief description of the project**

This interview will be on the students’ academic experiences during their study in an English-speaking country, particularly in terms of their spoken language. The project would like to specifically find out the students’ experiences during seminars (class discussion) and if there are any difficulties they face in that context.

**Questions:**

A. **Background information**

1. What programme are you undergoing now?
2. Length in years:
3. What year are you in now?
4. Did you undergo any English preparatory class before coming here?
   - If yes, what are the details:
     - Where?
     - How long?
     - How was it conducted?
5. How long have you been at Sussex? / How long have you been in an English-speaking country?
6. Do you intend to go back to your country when your course finishes? If not, do you plan to stay in this country?
B. Current academic experience

7. Have you ever responded to questions during class discussion in your home country? How often on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly at all and 5 = often?

8. How common a practice is responding to questions in class discussion in the academic environment of your own country? Is it something people do all the time? On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly at all and 5 = often?

9. How do you feel about studying in an English-speaking country?

10. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest score), how comfortable are you to study through the medium of the English language?

11. What do you like or find easy when studying in an English-speaking country? What kind of difficulties have you faced when studying in an English-speaking country?

12. How well do you understand lectures on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly at all and 5 = very well?

13. How often/much do you contribute ideas during seminars/tutorials, etc. on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly ever and 5 = often?

14. How often on a scale of 1 to 5 do you ask questions during seminars/tutorials when something is not clear or you need more explanation, where 1 = hardly ever and 5 = often?

15. If you gave a scale of 1 or 2, what could change that to raise your score?
   A. How comfortable do you feel speaking English?
   B. How much practice have you had at asking questions in similar situations?
   C. Other

15. What would you like to be able to do in a seminar?

16. How do you feel about the contributions of other students in seminars? How much do they contribute in comparison to you? How much do you contribute in comparison to them?

17. Can you reflect on your experience so far? / Can you tell me how you feel in class?

18. What else could I have asked you about your experience in seminars that I didn’t think to ask?
Appendix 10

Interview – Malaysia

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<th>Items</th>
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Brief description of the project
This interview will be on the students’ academic experiences during their study in an English-speaking country, particularly in terms of their spoken language. The project would like to specifically find out the students’ experiences during seminars (class discussion) and if there are any difficulties they face in that context.

Questions:

B. Background information

16. What programme are you undergoing now?
17. Length in years:
18. What year are you in now?
19. Did you undergo any English preparatory class before starting university?
   • If yes, what are the details:
     o Where?
     o How long?
     o How was it conducted?
20. How long have you been in this university?
21. Do you think there are any differences between school and university?
B. Current academic experience

22. Have you ever responded to questions during class discussion in Malaysia? How often on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly at all and 5 = often?

23. How common a practice is responding to questions in class discussion in the academic environment? Is it something people do all the time? On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly at all and 5 = often?

24. How do you feel about studying in an English-speaking university?

25. On a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest score), how comfortable are you to study through the medium of the English language?

26. What do you like or find easy when studying in an English-speaking university? What kind of difficulties have you faced when studying in an English-speaking university?

27. How well do you understand lectures on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly at all and 5 = very well?

28. How often/much do you contribute ideas during seminars/tutorials, etc. on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = hardly ever and 5 = often?

29. How often on a scale of 1 to 5 do you ask questions during seminars/tutorials when something is not clear or you need more explanation, where 1 = hardly ever and 5 = often?

30. If you gave a scale of 1 or 2, what could change that to raise your score?
   A. How comfortable do you feel speaking English?
   B. How much practice have you had at asking questions in similar situations?
   C. Other

19. What would you like to be able to do in seminars/tutorials?

20. How do you feel about the contributions of other students in seminars/tutorials?
   How much do they contribute in comparison to you? How much do you contribute in comparison to them?

21. Can you reflect on your experience so far? / Can you tell me how you feel in class?

22. What else could I have asked you about your experience in seminars that I didn’t think to ask?