

Bridging the Cultural Gap: Re-shaping Education by Integrating Multiculturalism in Teaching and Learning

Marilyn F. Deocampo
Graduate School of English,
Assumption University

Abstract

In a world in which interracial conflicts and tensions seem to have become an inevitable phenomenon of daily life, one of the effective ways to teach respect for diversity is through education. Although people in society are more knowledgeable about the nature of global acceptance, the idea of equal-status situation and mutual expectations, racial discrimination proliferates.

The multidimensional effects of Computer Information Technology (CIT) can have a direct effect on the role of anonymity that challenges the government and reflects issues that might have consequences in countries like Singapore and the Philippines where 'multiculturalism' is stressed as a positive part of the economy.

This paper aims to focus on the importance of multiculturalism in teaching and in the learning curriculum in order to understand different 'cultures' so as to bridge the cultural gap. Reinforcing multi-cultural education especially in English Language Teaching may help the next generation to learn and integrate respect and dignity for all people and thus improve race relations, develop democratic values and attitudes in treating people with some degree of self-worth and not judging groups of people for the actions of a few.

Keywords: interracial conflicts, racial discriminations, multicultural education, multiculturalism, cultural gap, teaching and learning curriculum, Singapore, The Philippines

Introduction

Diversity within societies along with an increasing number of people who speak a second language have made multicultural education crucial. Even countries like the Philippines and Singapore who are both recognized as being multi-cultural countries are challenged by these factors.

The Philippines and Singapore have some similarities but even greater differences. In the Philippines, politics tends to be dominated by issues concerning 'graft and corruption'. As the Philippine economy and its domestic demands grow and investment in the country attracts more foreign investors, the education system seems to be improving in general terms. However, the quality of education is unevenly spread throughout the country. Education is a vital part of Filipinos lives as this means lucrative employment and the promise of a better life. However, not everyone is able to achieve this dream as the cost of education is beyond the capabilities of common Filipinos. As poverty remains a major issue in the Philippines, it contributes to a decline of literacy rates among Filipinos as well as a decline in the quality of education.

As the government is more and more aware of the consequence of this social divide and its impact in the country and its people, more concern is focusing on education. Although, there are still various elements that are considered to play a part in the deterioration of government education, such as the low budget allocated in education, low teacher salaries and a lack of proper facilities in the classroom, the government is making an effort to ensure that Filipino children will be given an opportunity to pursue their goal in life through education. An educated society is one of the elements that build the economic progress of a country.

In contrast, Singapore's education system is considered one to be emulated by many countries. Pearson's chief education adviser, Michael Barber named Singapore as "the educational superstar" (*AsiaOne*) and stated that Singapore's success comes down to a combination of different elements, apart from the government that maintains centralized control through systems of accountability and funding. According to Barber, Singapore's success is due to its remarkably high regard for the teaching profession and a 'culture of accountability', in regards to which, parents and students are both self-directed and accountable for their own success in terms of strategic thinking and effective implementation of plans (*AsiaOne*).

Education in Singapore is also seen as the driving force that measures the achievement of the ordinary Singapore citizen. But problematic issues arise when it comes to foreigners; the majority of Singaporeans blame the government for having limited places in education when it comes to its citizens because of the increase in the number of foreign students. The immigrants are seen as competitors not only in terms of places in various educational institutions but also in terms of housing and employment. These issues cause considerable discontent among ordinary Singaporeans.

BRIDGING THE CULTURAL-GAP: THE CYBER-WORLD

The role of the internet in society has certainly posed challenges to various governments. The Philippines' and Singapore's governments are no exception. The internet has transformed Filipino society and given new avenues for the freedom of expression. The Philippines may have freedom of speech and expression in the media but when publishing the truth is threatened with libel, this freedom can be replaced by fear and possibly silence. The rise of the internet also brings up the issue of 'freedom of expression'. There is a growing argument about censorship of the internet by governments seeking to control what people read especially in social media. This topic is often a subject of discussion.

In the context of Singapore, the internet without doubt poses a challenge to the PAP in terms of media control. It is the only medium of public communication for which producers are not required to obtain a government permit (George, 2012). This has allowed for alternative media in spite of the laws of defamation and contempt of court. What this means is that, it would seem that the regime has attempted to keep itself open to the flow of ideas and responsive to change while attempting to control any political competition.

Because of these challenges, blogging plays a significant role in providing unrestricted information to the masses who otherwise could not obtain it from the mainstream media. It gives Filipino and Singaporean people a choice as to where they can discuss different issues and where there is quality information available for them to hopefully have a clearer awareness of what is going on around them.

What seems to be happening is that people now live in a strange amalgam of the 'real' world and cyberspace and that the "real" world is in the process of

becoming destabilized by the power of networks. People could also ask themselves the question whether networking will be as revolutionary as first believed. Would it really lead to a change in the old order? From a certain angle what seems to be emerging is an order that looks much like the old one. Power has shifted to those controlling the internet platforms rather than simply to governments. The enabling, empowering, and enlightening effects of the internet are not quite what we think; simply thinking that a technology can be wonderfully enabling may not be what it is going to be.

It may be true that the internet has created tremendous changes not only in the way people view the world around them but also in our attitudes to other things. People becomes more digitalized and exposed to sources of information as never before. They can communicate to a much wider audience and to exploit information that enables them to communicate in various ways. The internet also gives the masses the possibility to discuss a whole range of issues that otherwise would have passed them by because of a lack of awareness of what was happening in the world at large.

In principle, as information comes within the reach of more and more people there is the possibility of us becoming more open with regards to ideas and to “bringing ourselves together in a way that defies space, time and physicality” (Harper, 2011: 22).

News is no longer a ‘product’ with a one-size-fits-all mentality, but a ‘process’ where there is collaboration with the readers or viewers. The earlier hopes that the internet would offer new possibilities for people in societies that have limited freedom of expression in terms of governance to be heard as the then South African president, Thabo Mbeki said:

[...] people should seize the new technology to empower themselves; to keep themselves informed about the truth of their own economic, political and cultural circumstances; and to give themselves a voice that all the world could hear [quoted in Crystal, 2002:IV].

This statement may have been premature because public understanding of the power of the internet to create change lags some way behind emerging reality. The different voices which have been heard in online discourse have caused governments and other powerful institutions to be more cautious in consenting to the wider freedom of expression first envisaged; rather, governments are finding ways to intervene in such freedom by censoring information online, as China or even Singapore do. The fact that ‘anonymity’ gives the readers/writers the freedom to express their feeling and share these

thoughts with a larger community may give new credence to the old notion of *vox populi*. But how 'real' is it? Obviously, the digital media and the opportunity it provides allows readers/writers interact with one another and share their views by using a multiplicity of languages or 'linguaging'. This multimodality has in itself become a medium of discourse and a different kind of interpersonal communication with the element of anonymity as a key characteristic (Talbot, M., K, Atkinson, & D. Atkinson, 2003). However, whether such features have made ordinary people become part of an instrument to promote *freedom of expression* in order to participate in discussions and share ideas and opinions with others may be much more limited than we think. However, it is still widely believed that the rise of the internet creates a cyberspace which is believed to flatten organizations, globalise society, decentralize control, and help harmonize people (Taylor 2014). The network would be about the rise of a new digital generation and it would see that generation gather into a collective network of powerful peers.

What is largely undervalued in research at present is the study of how language is structured in social and semiotic terms, especially in the cyber-world. We also need to be more aware of how language produces ideology and ideology produces language which is seen as operating, not so much as a coherent system of statements imposed on a population from above (political ideology), but rather through a complex series of mechanisms whereby meaning is mobilized in discursive practices of everyday life.

Theories of language as a social semiotic and of language and ideology need to concern themselves with language as a form of social interaction, as a meaning potential in and through which subjects and the social are constructed and reproduced while cultural and human conflict are negotiated. Exploring the relationship between social meaning-making practices and language and ideology means engaging in the kind of research which involves more than a study of the socio-historical conditions in which subjects act and interact.

An analysis of the conditions in which subjects are constructed as such in discourse, and in which discourse is produced as received, necessarily involves a detailed discursive analysis of the text and an interpretation of that analysis. Such an analysis may then illustrate how meanings, systems of ideas and beliefs, ideologies, are constructed in discourse and function to maintain and transmit existing power relations (Threadgold et al., 1986). Much of the

research in this area is centred around Halliday's (1978:3) systemic linguistics which describe language in relation to social context: "Language not only serves to facilitate and support other modes of social action that constitute its environment, but also actively creates an environment of its own".

According to the former Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, understanding the language of other cultures "creates a sense of belonging to the regional community" while encouraging teachers to prioritize 'multilingualism and learning neighbors' languages'. These remarks were made during his speech at Assumption University Annual Faculty Seminar on 23 of May 2012.

Furthermore, understanding how society uses different features of language, in what context and situation, might give a better understanding on how language is practiced in Singapore and the Philippines in cultural ways and in different levels of society.

Human Emotion: The Tie That Binds

Understanding human expression of emotions involving feeling and behavior, any evaluation of such state of mind helps to understand the overall importance of a given message. This might lead to a certain belief which can become a driving force behind the message and thus leads to action.

Human emotions can be seen as contagious and often hidden within individual discourse. It can also be seen as an essential component of discourse. Writers and readers can often bring their feeling and emotion together which can produce the 'we' concept. Harper (2010:26) describes it as an "analogous to the touching of a heartbeat-the human reflection of the topic of the moment. No person owns this heartbeat or produces it: it's a collaborative affair" as it creates "a sense of intimacy between those who are involved". This is what inspires 'bloggers', a sense of togetherness or the 'tie that binds' that lead these group of people to be one.

As Harper (2010:234) says:

In allowing us to express ourselves, make us what we are, what we are seen to be and who we are seen to be connected to. Each culture has

its collective belief that can be influential in society. Singaporeans for example believe that individuals should be measured according to their individual talent and their academic achievements. This 'meritocracy mentality' makes Singaporeans think that they are more than capable of doing the job given to the foreigners as they think foreigners are not skillful enough but are employed because of foreigners' willingness to accept lower pay. Moreover, there is this *Singaporean first* and *Entitlement* mindset that let them think they are owed a comfortable living, whether it is their parents, their employers, the government, or the world in general. Singaporeans' unhappiness comes from the idea that foreign workers/talents are given more recognition than they are. They believe that the government has to make sure that Singaporean should be prioritized first before others. This different 'ideologies' embedded in Singaporeans' mentality is part of the driving force which shapes their mentality to express what they want and can be a factor in their discontent hoping, the government will listen and give into their demands (Han, 2013).

Various "dimensions of power" (Gaventa, 2007:206) influence society with regard to 'ideologies' that tend to be imbedded in their value system. Such ideologies can become *invisible power* that makes Filipinos or Singaporeans more skeptical about whether their demands and expectations will materialize. For example, the Singaporeans' idea of being 'afraid to lose' and 'wanting to be the first' mentality drives some Singaporeans to perceive contentious issues as results of error judgments by the government. This is one of the reasons why foreigners and different government representatives are blamed for Singaporeans' unhappiness. This invisible power that more or less builds up the *kiasuism* of Singaporeans is perhaps the reason they are always competitive as they might be afraid of being left out. Singaporeans are also considered as 'comfort loving people', so changes can be difficult sometimes especially when their lifestyle is threatened. In addition, Singaporeans have a 'close family bond'. This inter-dependent intergenerational relationship between the young and the elders can be very hard to separate, so a bigger place for the whole family is often considered as the ideal 'house'.

In the Philippines, the growth of the economy has recently created an influx of foreigners in the country, especially in the education sector. The recent relaxation of an issuance of visas to foreign students, affordable education and the low cost of living in comparison to other countries make the Philippines a seemingly obvious popular destination for foreign students.

However, in the country, the majority of Filipinos are still facing their own socio-economic inequalities which are relatively high and children are still facing difficulties in attaining proper education. Also, the cost of education is still considered high given the Filipino standard of living yet the government budget is not sufficient to provide for millions of Filipino children who are in need of special assistance.

Globalization involves complex decision making and its consequences not only affect the country but the international community. The progress and the image of a country depend to a large extent on the education system. In short, the progress of each country depends on its 'knowledge economy'. However, the Philippines, already quite complex in terms of economic structure, has additionally a complex geography, many religions, ethnic groups, languages as well as its system of governance to contend with.

If Singaporeans are driven by certain ideologies, so are Filipinos. In the Philippines the dominant ideology is influenced by the family's tradition, politics and to some extent education. There are two clichés in this regard: *isip wang wang* (negative mentality) or a mentality that always find fault in others and the *'utak talangka'* (crab mentality) or pulling others down and giving them a bad image for the sake of revenge. It appears that this kind of mentality is rampant at different levels of society at both the national and local levels. This type of thinking is an invisible power and has a great influence on Filipinos. In addition, the *'utang na loob'* (debt of gratitude) mentality can be something positive, but politically it contributes to nepotism that leads to corruption which is commonly perceived as the biggest problem by Filipino people.

METHODOLOGY

This study investigates the various comments in *yahoo.ph* and *yahoo.sg* to understand and reveal the feelings and attitudes manifested by different respondents to the news articles by using Martin and Rose's (2011) Appraisal Theory.

Understanding how various respondents express their opinions and use language in *'yahoo pulse'* opens possibilities to better understand how

individuals view other cultures through the use of various linguistic features; there are culturally “different ways of saying the same thing” (Fowler, 2001:4). For example, the different language (s) the participants used in the yahoo ‘comments’ section are expressed in varieties of style, such as graphic euphemisms and metaphorical languages in order to convey the message intended. Such a variety in the use of language can often be explicit or implicit. Critical Discourse Analysis is one of the major approaches that can help tease out any hidden meaning in the language used.

The objective of this study is to understand the language, meaning and ideologies beyond discourse and to find out how the different attitudes of the respondents about other cultures shape their language (s) in the ‘comments’.

As the paper is focusing on the attitude of various respondents from the Philippines and Singapore on other culture, the focal question is: What are the different attitudinal elements manifested by various respondents of the news articles in *yahoo.ph* and *yahoo.sg*?

Framework of the Analysis

Table I: Abbreviations and symbols use in the analysis

Attitudinal elements and types of evaluation	Contextual value
<u>judg</u> = judgment	(-) negative
aff = affect	(+) positive
<u>app</u> = appreciation	Graduation or degree
exp = explicit or overtly ‘inscribed evaluation	(↑) up scaling volumes
imp = evoked or implicit evaluation	(↓) downscaling volumes
	(≈) neutral (neither positive nor negative

The analysis of different attitudinal elements

The classifications of attitudinal properties are as follows: the *evaluative text* or the comments containing evaluation comes first, followed by the bracket containing the *types of evaluation*, the *attitudinal evaluation*, its *contextual value* and its *sub-types*, the *graduation or degree* of the evaluation and the *evaluated entity* or the target of the evaluation. These are of considerable

importance in terms of evaluation as they explain how readers or participants demonstrate their attitude. In discussing the language of the discussants, the researcher uses a similar variety of English to that used by them in an attempt to emically enter the language-space of the people involved. In this way, the distance between the researcher and the participants is narrowed and so indicates her own personal experiences of living in the two countries involved in this study.

An evaluative language that represents **Attitude** is presented in the following way:

- ❖ The underline 'judg' indicates 'judgment'
- ❖ The 'aff' in **bold** indicates 'affect'
- ❖ The underline italic 'app' signifies 'appreciation'
- ❖ The *explicit* attitudes are expressed with 'exp'
- ❖ The indirectly evoked or *implicit* evaluation indicates with 'imp'
- ❖ The contextual values are stated: positive attitudes are mark with a plus sign (+) and negative attitudes are marked with a negative sign (-).

Singapore Context

Example I [Vigo]

They will stay here and get *fat pay* [*exp: + app: social significance ≈ : pay*] where they *cant get in their own country*. [*exp: - app: complexity ≈ : pay*] *Almost half of our population comprises of foreigners*. [*imp: -app: balance ≈: population*] They come here to enjoy our facilities and learn many skills. [*imp: -judg: capacity ≈: foreigners*] Some bring back these skills and set up business there. [*imp: + judg: capacity ≈: foreigners*] But many of our locals are very nice to them. [*exp: + judg: propriety ↑: local*] If we are in foreign lands, we will not be so nicely treated. [*exp: - judg: propriety ↓: foreigners*]

Vigo started appraising the salary paid to the foreign workers, describing it as 'fat' a metaphor with an underlying meaning of being '*over paid*'. The implications being that these foreign workers cannot earn so much in their own country. Vigo expressed the social significance of the salary in his comments, in a negative way, *can't get in their own country* which might imply an ethnocentric mindset. He touched upon issues such as the number of foreign workers in Singapore as '*Almost half of our population comprises*

of foreigners' highlighting the unbalanced proportion of the population and a fear of the foreigners. His 'negative' judgment towards the FT (Foreign Talent) is defined by the social expectation towards these foreigners commenting, 'They come here to enjoy our facilities and learn many skills'. This intolerant feeling creates the '**they**' and '**our**' mindset. The use of 'to enjoy' is another example of sarcasm. The remark, 'Some bring back these skills and set up business there' has an underlying meaning that Vigo was not happy if the foreign workers leave and prosper in their country. Conversely, he described local Singaporeans as 'very nice' connoting a positive judgment. The final remark, 'If we are in foreign lands, we will not be so nicely treated' is a way of asking sympathy from the other readers but can be also an indication of a xenophobic mentality.

Example 2 [harryho]

"And this China nationals stall holders. are very dirty not hygienic and rude.

And their food is like shits, very saltish, has any of the MPs been to eat at these stalls. They spits and dig their nose and handle your orders. How disgusting."

I WAS EATING AT BUKIT MERAH VIEW COFFEESHOP AND WAS **SHOCKED** TO SEE [exp: - aff : unhappiness↑: **harryho**] A DEAD LIZARD FRIED WITH CABBAGES AND IKAN BILIS ON A PLATE [imp:- app: impact ≈: scenario] AND I IMMEDIATELY TAKE A LOOK AT THE COOKING AREA. I SAW A COOK FROM CHINA COOKING INSIDE. . . . DIRTY COOK AND KITCHEN AREA. [exp:- app: impact ≈: kitchen area]

Harryho started his discussion by using a direct quote copied from previous comments describing how Chinese nationals' stalls look like the way they behave. This sarcastic comment is supported by a recount of the writer's previous experience in a coffee shop in Bukit Merah. Harryho elaborated what he saw in the kitchen area. Putting the previous blogger and Harryho's experience together reinforces the judgement made on the cook. The language itself comes over as being quite negative and judgmental, which again illustrates a xenophobic mentality. By describing the cook being dirty and unhygienic, support is given to the argument of JC and Harryho of not liking PRC Chinese, foregrounding social cohesion.

Example 3 [BeautifulSwan]

I agree! agree! agree! This is exactly how i feel [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction/frustrated ≈: BeautifulSwan] when they don't understand my english!* (English) [imp: - aff: unhappiness/frustrated ≈: PRC] I need to "speak" with either sign language or body language to these ppl. :(Some even very rude to me, [exp: - judg: impropriety ↑: PRC] they talk to me like i am very stupid when i don't understand what they are talking about GRRR!!!! [imp: - aff : unhappiness↑: BeautifulSwan] They look at me like i am very very very stupid. [imp: - aff : unhappiness↑: BeautifulSwan] Just yesterday, i ordered a mineral water from this china lady, She didnt understand. [imp: - judg: incapacity ≈: Chinese lady] Gosh, [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction/frustrated ≈: BeautifulSwan] it's only mineral water, not other difficult vocab! and it's related to the job she is doing what..not that i am talking un-related non-sense) Why can't they at least learn how to speak some vocabs which related to their JOB! ARGHH!! [imp: - aff : unhappiness↑: BeautifulSwan] End up, this lady only give me ice cube in a cup! waht the! then i tried to talk again, she still didn't get me and she ignored me then she served otehr *(other) people, how rude! [exp:- aff : unhappiness ↑: lady] Then I was angry and i said never mind lor! [exp:- aff : dissatisfaction ↓: BeautifulSwan] After that uncle came to me and asked what i need, he served me the drink.. everyday have to face this kind of things.. haiz.. At least train them to speak english* lah!

In reply to *Bluff*, *BeautifulSwan* expressed feelings of negativity in connection with the situation and the experience at the hawker center. She described how frustrated she was, "they talk to me like I am very stupid when i don't understand what they are talking about GRRR!!!!", and "Why can't they at least learn how to speak some vocabs which related to their JOB! ARGHH!!" and she ignored me then she served otehr* (other) people, how rude!" These statements are punctuated with 'affectual' evaluations that reinforce the negativeness of her feeling. The adverbials 'exactly' and 'very' are also used as an intensifier that indicates the dissatisfaction of the standards of the PRC Chinese. The use of interjections or different emotions like "GRRR!!!!", "Gosh", "ARGHH!!" and "haiz" probably emphasized the writer's anger and frustration.

Example 4 [Arl O]

I've been working here (in China) and all I can say is. it's ingrained into their DNA to be ignorant collective fools. [imp: - judg: incapacity↑: PRCs] Nah.. Kidding. It's just that their brand of intelligence is measured by dollars and their version of sense. [imp: - judg: incapacity ↑: PRCs] But yes, they should balek kampong if u ask me. Does that mean though, I have to balek kampong also? A lot of things here in Middle Kingdom, I roll eyes at or even throw a tantrum about, plus my chinese* (C) is only survival at best. [imp: - aff:unhappiness/frustrated ↑: Arl O] I've had many encounters where locals shout at me to balek kampong (in their language of course). [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction ≈: PRC locals] You can't really blame the ignorant for the devious, greedy, snivelling, swines in the upper echelons of our society in Singapore can you? [imp: - judg: impropriety ↑: PAP] Besides, isn't it about time Singaporeans stop being the "Yes-man" [imp: - judg: incapacity ↑: Singaporeans] to everything the government tells us to do? I left Singapore for this very reason. Almost everyone I encounter in Singapore will just comply and then @#\$\$ and complain. [imp: - judg: incapacity ↑: Singaporeans] Complain so much for what if you're not willing to sacrifice [exp: judg ↑: Singaporeans] your non-existent careers and pittance of a salary [exp:- app: quality ↑: careers & salary] ? This awakening will create a reaction in government but also at everyone's expense. [exp:- app: impact ≈: careers & salary] We have to be prepared for sacrifices [imp: - judg: incapacity ≈: Singaporeans] and, instead of bitching, whining and complaining, [imp: - aff: unhappiness↑: Singaporeans] we should take action and also take ownership of our own lives. [imp: - judg: incapacity ≈: Singaporeans] PAP was a stepping stone. [exp: +app: social significance ≈: PAP] We, the people, have to make the difference. Regardless how hard the consequences are. [exp: - app: complexity ↑: changes]

Arl O's (AO) responded to *BeautifulSwan* by writing, 'it's ingrained into their DNA to be ignorant collective fools and their brand of intelligence is measured by dollars' which are used as dysphemisms to ridicule and insult PRC Chinese. This comment has an implied reference to PRC Chinese behaviours imbedded in the text. AO also stressed his negative judgment towards PAP calling them, 'the ignorant for the devious, greedy, snivelling, swines in the upper echelons of our society in Singapore'. Although No party mentioned, the words 'upper echelon' indicates, people who are in power, which implies the ruling party (PAP). This display of hatred in the blogger's

discourse demonstrates how anonymity is used as a screen to criticize PAP relying on the unlikelihood of knowing who the person behind the pseudonym is. The blogger also expressed his disappointment about Singaporeans' attitude of 'being the Yes man', people who 'always comply' but 'complain after wards'. Through these descriptions, the underlying message is, 'Singaporeans can be just obedient in their own way or just afraid to defy the government'. Yet, the blogger saw it as 'cowardice', as he stated 'Complain so much for what if you're not willing to sacrifice' urging that they 'should take action and also take ownership of our own lives' or be responsible. This description of being 'the Yes man' towards the ruling government can be a use of 'reverse psychology' to challenge Singaporeans to demand changes from the government. His strategy perhaps is to let Singaporeans challenge the ruling party PAP as the 'stepping stone' to change by defying them by not saying 'yes' every time.

The Philippines Context

Example 5 [Luding]

fellowmen, ang aking opinyon dito ay sa tingin ko *hindi ito gaanung kaaya-ayang balita*. [exp: - app: quality ↓: article] Mula sa aking personal na eksperyensa, meron akong mga kilalang dayuhang magaaral tulad nila. [imp: + judg: propriety ≈: foreigners] ang iba ay kaibigan ko ngunit **hindi ako komportable sa pakikipaghalubilo sa kanila**. [exp: - aff: dissatisfaction ≈: L] Hindi naman sila pumunta dito para makatulong sa bayan. [imp: - judg: inveracity ≈: foreigners] Sa katotohanan, personal na interes lamang ang pangunahing dahilan kaya sila nandidito. [imp: - judg: impropriety ≈: foreigners] bukod sa *napakamurang sistema ng eduksayon* para sa kanila dito [exp: + app: quality ↑: education] kumapra sa kani kanilang bayan, tayung mga pilipino, ang nagsisilbing tagapagpatnubay sa kanila. [imp: + judg: propriety ≈: Filipinos] tayu pa ang pilit umintindi sa kanila sa pamamagitan ng salitang ingles [imp: + judg: propriety ↑: Filipinos] sapagkat hndi naman nila kelangan ang ating salitang tagalog. [imp: - judg: abnormality ≈: foreigners] hindi naman natin sila masisisi [imp: + judg: normality ≈: foreigners] dahil karamihan sa atin ay mas tinatangkilik pamandin sila kesa sa sarili nating mga kababayan. [imp: - judg/bias: impropriety ↑: Filipinos] sa katunayan, habang pinapagaral sila dito kanilang magugulang ay, kumakayod din ang mga 'magugulang' nila sa pagpasimuno sa minahan. [imp: - judg/

takeadvantage: inveracity ↑: Foreigners] at dahilan ng pagkalagas ng mga yamang natural dito, [exp: - app: impact ↑: natural resources] sympre sa tulong ng mga baluktot nating gobyerno na nasa likod nila. [imp:- judg: impropriety ↑: government] para sa akin ay hindi na sila nagkakalayu kumpara sa mga linta. [imp: - judg: impropriety ↑: foreigners] mas masisiyahan pa ako kung ang ibinalita dito ay ang pagdami ng mga dayuhang pumupunta sa bansa bilang mga turistang pumunta at pabalikbalik dito sa bansa dahil buhay at sagana pa ang ating mga likas na yaman (sana) o ang patuloy ang paglinang ng sistema ng ating edukasyon "para sa kabataang pilipino" . at hindi itong balitang ito [exp: - aff: dissatisfaction ↑: L]... habang karamihan ng kabataang pilipino ay hindi man lang mabigyan ng edukasyong dapat ay nakakamtan nila. [imp: - judg: abnormality ↑: Filipino children]

Translation: [In my opinion, this is not really a very good news. From my personal experience, I know foreigners who are studying here like them. Some are my friends but I am not comfortable to socialize with them. They did not come here to help our country. The truth is, the reason why they are here is because of their personal interest. Besides from the low cost of education of our system compared to their country, we serve as their guides. We have to oblige ourselves to understand them by speaking English because they don't need our language, Tagalog. We cannot blame them because majority of us are supporting these people than our own (people). The truth is, while they are studying here, their parents are managing jobs in the mine the reason why our natural resources are becoming scarce, of course by the help of our crooked government who are behind them. For me they are not different from the leeches. I will be happier if the news tells us about tourist keep on coming back in the Philippines because of our rich natural history or the changes of education system and its effect on our youths but not this kind of news. While the majority of our Filipino youth has no education that they should have.]

Luding's reaction about the news was not particularly positive. She stated, 'hindi ito gaanong kaaya-ayang balita' (this is not really very good news) referring to her personal experience of foreign students. She claimed to be 'uncomfortable' about them and alleged that students are made as an alibi by their families to set up businesses, like mining in the Philippines. She

disagreed with what other thinks about foreign students. She believed foreign students are not helping the Philippines at all. Instead she accused them of causing the natural resources to become scarce. Luding's statement indicates indifference towards foreigners is not entirely xenophobic but there is some prejudice. She labeled foreigners 'linta' (leeches), a metaphor used for a person that will only leave once he/she finishes everything. Like a leech, the person only comes out once full of blood. However, she had a different impression of tourists. She reckoned if tourists come, it indicates economic progress. Luding expressed skepticisms about foreign students studying in the Philippines; possibly a bad experience influences her perception as no efforts are being made to help poor Filipino children.

Example 6 [Blue Archer]

I agree. [exp: + aff: satisfaction ≈: BA] they abuse [imp: - judg: impropriety ↑: foreigners] our hospitality [imp: + judg: veracity ≈: Filipinos] and our passiveness and understanding that they are tourists. [imp: + judg: propriety ↑: Filipinos] When they act that they are superior, [imp: - judg: impropriety ↑: foreigners] you just have to stand up against them and remind them [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction ↑: Filipinos] that they are in OUR country and they need to respect us, otherwise you can have them deported. babait agad yun. (They will behave immediately) [imp: -aff: insecurity ↑: foreigners]

Blue Archer's expressed support to Luding's comment. He alleged foreign students are 'abusive' while Filipinos are 'hospitable', 'passive' and 'understanding'. Though hospitable and understanding are all positive evaluations, 'passive' can be negative. So, the implication is Filipinos' passive mentality could be a factor why some foreigners dominate them. As a consequence, the domineering attitude of the foreigners is seen as being rude and disrespectful. Blue Archer exhibits an ethnocentric mentality in which he only sees the goodness in Filipinos while other cultures are bad.

Example 7 [Brian]

bai you are absolutely right ! [imp: + judg: capacity ↑: B] tignan mung manga checkwa alipin tayo sakanila [exp: - judg: incapacity ↑: Filipinos] and baba tingin nila saten parang tae . [imp: - judg: incapacity ↑: Chinese] soon the korean* (K) will be the same they are very competitive [exp: + judg: capacity ↑: Koreans] habang ang

manga ibang pinoy anak ng anak pero hindi naman kayang paaralin [imp: - judg: incapacity ↑: Filipinos] how can they compete with this foreigner in the end under privilege pinoy children become slave ! [exp: - judg: incapacity ↑: Filipino children] its so obvious now [exp: - app: quality ↑: situation] .. shame on our damm* (damn) politician who dont care [exp: - aff: unhappiness ↑: politicians] about us and stupid parents who dont think . [exp: - judg: incapacity ↑: parents]
 [Friend, you are absolutely right! Look at Chinese, we are slave to them and they look down on us like shit. ... while Filipinos keep on producing children and could not even afford to give them education...]

Bian agreed as a sign of support with *Bal*'s opinion about Chinese, whom he addressed as 'checkwa', a Filipino colloquial term of Chinese people. *Brian* claimed Chinese treated Filipinos 'parang tae (like shit)' and assumed Koreans will do the same. Although he viewed the majority of Koreans in a negative way, he was impressed by their competitiveness. Koreans are 'very competitive' he said, unlike incompetent Filipinos. He also blamed Filipinos who "keep on producing children but could not send their children at school", thus revealing his opinion towards poor families. *Brian* also blamed politicians for their 'insensitivity' towards underprivileged children's suffering and called the parents of these children "stupid". *Brian*'s criticism of the government and the parents are perhaps shaped by frustration with how Filipino children are treated. Although he did not explicitly state the real condition, an implied reference is that these children are not treated well. Or maybe, his assumption is influenced by the previous writer's negative comment.

As there is no particular location specifying where *Brian* comes from, the use of 'bai', a colloquial word for friend (masculine: man friend), can be an indication he is from Central Visayas or Mindanao. The word 'bai' is only used by Cebuanos or people who reside in these particular parts of the Philippines. This might indicate that there are a number of bloggers from different parts of the Philippines that show interest in the foreign students' issue and not only in the national region (Manila) where the most instances of antagonism can be normally found.

Example 8 [Chloejean]

wow... I can't believe some people still call themselves Filipinos. [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction ↑: Cj] For those who are saying being neutral is good, I say not all the time, [exp: + app: impact ↓: Neutrality] this is case to case basis. Don't you ever say [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction ↑: readers] gotta examine ourselves first before we make negative posts. [exp: - app: quality ≈: posts] These negative posts are actually for you Filipinos who have never had close encounters with the people we are talking about here [imp: + app: impact ↑: posts] ... or if you had, maybe you weren't totally immersed, you got wet.. yes... slightly.. [imp: - judg: incapacity ↓: bloggers] These posts are for you, you need not worship them or something cuz they should not be worshiped. [imp: - judg: incapacity ≈: foreign students] There's is nothing to be grateful about, [exp: - judg: incapacity↑: foreign students] they come here because they want to get away from the typical life in their country, [imp: - judg/boredom ↑: foreign students] not because of our education. They come here to criticize, [exp: - judg: incapacity↑: foreign students] they come here to belittle you, [exp: - judg: incapacity↑: foreign students] I never felt grateful to these people. [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction ↑: Cj] So I go to their country and do what they have been doing here in the Philippines. You don't know the lies they spread [imp: - aff: insecurity ↑: foreign students] when they go back to their country. You don't know how they act behind our backs when in front of you they pretend to be nice. [imp: - aff: dissatisfaction ↑: Korean students] You don't know people, [imp: - aff: insecurity ≈: readers] I suggest you just love your own rather than patronizing and worshipping them. [imp: -aff: satisfaction ↑: Filipinos]

Although this comment started with the interjection 'wow', it does not mean *Chloejean* was impressed by what she had read; instead this word portrays **sarcasm**. Chloejean articulated "those who have never close encounter" which indicates that Filipinos perhaps know foreigners in the news but have no contact with them personally while she had. She expressed strong negative feeling about foreign students. She used 'they' at least 10 times and claimed foreign students are liars and pretentious, 'stereotyping' all foreign students. This statement shows skepticism and prejudice to foreigners. Chloejean asserted, 'I never felt grateful', and I suggest you just love your own rather

than **patronizing** and **worshiping** them'. These statements indicate objection against those who thinks foreigners are good and illustrate the 'nationalistic' mentality of the writer.

The analyses of the data collected indicate that the comments are generally infused with negative attitudes with regards to the issues being discussed. Participants tend to express different tones in a continuum of politeness from extreme to directly impolite expressions. Various comments reflect attitudes, as indicated in terms of sarcasm, hate, dislike, prejudice, and racial discrimination throughout the exchanges.

Findings And Discussions

Based on the analyses of the discourse, while respondents/participants expressed their thoughts and feelings, other attitudes are revealed. *Racism*, *prejudice*, *ethnocentrism*s and *social intolerance* tend to dominate the discourses and indeed feed on each other.

Singapore's expansion of economic growth has contributed to its rapid demographic change. The influence of globalization impacts the 'unstoppable influx' of foreigners and the change of 'tone' of local Singaporeans' attitude to the government policies. Thus, as Singapore's population increases Singaporeans face an 'identity crisis', their own 'national identity'.

This feeling of being threatened by 'outsiders' can be explained because Singaporeans for many years have been in a 'comfort zone' as the government has organized their life in such a way that everything is laid out for them so there is 'less need to think independently'.

The mentality of 'being afraid to take risks' or 'afraid to come out of the comfort zone' is a point that Singaporeans need to think about. Instead of accusing the government of 'unfairly giving foreigners priority' and 'blaming government's policy' for their unhappiness, Singaporeans might have to learn how to reconsider their situation in a more positive light and do some 'soul searching' on facing up to a changing world.

In other words Singaporeans have to learn that the world does not revolve around them only. Being too protected by a system of laws and stable government can also lead to vulnerability in terms of not being able to cope well in terms of competition in a global economy. Singaporeans tend to be too sheltered to be able to deal with the reality of life.

As for Filipinos, while the 'foreign students' are considered well to do with money to spend, some participants think they are provided with more privileges by the government. This issue creates resentment among Filipinos, as they believe that they are abandoned in favor of foreign students. **Resentment** constructs negative judgment, distrust and sarcasm and to some extent prejudice. Some Filipinos perceive foreign students as racist, competitors and not only a threat to them but to the natural resources of the country. Furthermore, Filipino participants have also a tendency to exhibit racism and ethnocentrism. Saying all that, foreign students are assessed and labelled in negative and positive ways depending on respondents' personal experiences. Some participants believe the influx of foreign students is not about the quality of education but the low cost of education. Most of the participants voiced that improvements should start with helping Filipinos. The lack of assistance for Filipino underprivileged children is still seen as one the major deficiencies of the present administration. The implication is that, what is done and implemented at the national and international level is different from the lived or experienced scenario in local areas. The actuality of what education is like in the localities is different from what can be found in the national system. The reason why the discourses of the participants may vary is because it reflects this reality.

Also, the data reveals that the assessment can be positive or negative, explicitly and implicitly as well as denotative and connotative in meaning. Sometimes, the evaluation used can be almost abstract, demonstrating how participants choose the language to express their emotions.

There are different attitudinal elements expressed in the data by Singapore and the Philippines participants in terms of judgment, **affect** and appreciation. The diversity of attitudes revealed the 'heteroglossic' opinions of the participants reflected how they viewed the issues under discussion.

Judgment is an assessment of people's behavior. Based on the judgment conveyed by the participants of the Philippines and Singapore, different opinions about the various evaluative entities (individuals evaluated) portray both positive and the negative evaluations. The discourses in the interactions not only show how the participants perceive different individuals but their evaluations reflect their different personalities as well. The majority of the attitudes display *ethnocentrism*s, *xenophobia*, *prejudices*, *social intolerance* while very few show more tolerant attitudes.

Affect is the evaluation of different emotions. Different participants from different countries expressed different feelings about the different evaluative entity. These different emotions can be triggered by a variety of elements sometimes, such as the individuals that the participants express hatred towards were perceived as those who impacted on the participants' lives. A person's personal experiences and ideologies may very well have a direct effect on participants' views of people or situations which is reflected in the language used also, as participants' emotions can be activated by the news or by responses from other participants. These emotions can be powerful enough to coerce or intimidate the readers.

Appreciation is an evaluation of things, objects, states of affairs or a person's physical being. In the data, this type of evaluation indicates that often it can be subjective because the participants from both countries tend to appraise the value of things/situations depending on their preferences. For example in Singapore, the influx of the immigrant workers is viewed by the majority of the participants as a threat to their job positions, overcrowding of transport and causing housing shortages but for others it is a sign of economic progress. The same differences may be observed in the Philippines, where the influx of foreign students was seen by the Filipinos in two different ways: competing with Filipino students for a place in the school and a sign of economic progress especially in the education sector. So depending on how the participants perceived their environment and the personal impact of these situations, the evaluation differs.

The use of 'we', 'us', and 'our' versus 'them' and 'they' were also constantly used in the comments from both countries. This labelling is used to demonstrate 'in group' and 'out group' division or an 'exclusiveness' of being Singaporeans and the 'otherness' of being foreigners. This kind of expressivity constructs Singaporeans' nationalism which is part of their national identity, their thinking cohesively and their sense of being part of one group. Such classification also illustrates that foreigners are regarded as outsiders. There is also an indication that Singaporeans' are trying to retain their sense of 'entitlement' for everything. For example, in terms of places or financial aid in schools or universities and the priority in terms of housing, their views would involve prioritizing Singaporeans before foreigners. This is where the 'kiasuism' of the Singaporeans can be apparent

Personal judgments as in the following examples, well-educated, very poor and helpless, arrogant and bullies, generous yet always complaint, spitting in

the lift and dirtying the corridor, and pro-active and friendly were commonly utilized to judge different evaluative entities. **Moral judgments** such as bad, good, and think highly of themselves were used. Some evaluations were explicitly stated while others were implicit. It was also noticeable that the participants had different stylistic modes of expressing their judgment. The use of dysphemisms such as ball carrier type, bottom dwelling scum sucking scavengers, bridge-crossers ungrateful slobs with no dignity and brazen lots, loud voice, ill-mannered portray how participants manipulated the language to make it sound more dramatic while seeming to speak in the everyday language of their target readers. Euphemisms were also exploited when implicitly judging a group of people and individuals to produce a subtle criticism. For instance: will be vanished in the air or underground, continue to turn a blind eye, a pretty straight forward problem and away from the ground.

The analysis reveals that the different factors/elements which shape the ideas and beliefs of the respondents are often characterized by the language they used when writing comments. The social and educational backgrounds, as well as personal experiences reflect anger, frustrations and unhappiness in variety of ways. There are possible reasons why such languages are used; one of those reasons may be a lack of education and cultural awareness that might hinder their critical thinking in realizing the consequences of their action. Having limited education possibly made it difficult for some respondents to understand and change their mindset so as to adapt to the changes happening in Singapore. Nevertheless, there are educated individuals who know how to manipulate and stir up discontent among other participants and readers.

Through language manipulation, discourse can generate a range of emotions that can impact the reader. The downplaying or the exaggerating of words might determine how emotion can be sustained or reproduced in the power relations of the cyber world.

People's social background is shaped by different components in their environment, their language, and upbringing, the shared value of their speech community, the norms and education. In countries such as Singapore and the Philippines the multiplicities of cultures reflect society's diverse social and cultural background that is responsible in shaping their language. Singapore for example, although a small island, has a multicultural background that produces a multilingual community. The stress that is made in several blogs is on the importance of multiculturalism and education both in the home

and at school. This is felt to be a corner-stone in the changing world that the bloggers are trying to bring about.

An understanding of the attitudinal elements that shapes the uses of language as a tool to express these ideas would seem to be vital for teachers and students, in this case, through computer mediated discourse and its effect on society. Interestingly, this study indicates that sometimes people who are perceived as unaware and passive of what is going on around them are actually informed and responsive if they are given a chance to express their opinion freely. Although this study does not represent the whole population of Singapore and the Philippines, the data suggests that through freedom of speech, people share their feelings and thought freely about what is happening in their world and in their discourse communities

A cyber-ethnographic study, therefore, can reveal the power structures that lie hidden in society. It was hoped, as previously indicated, that the internet would flatten organizations, globalise society, decentralize control, and help harmonize people, and that the invisible would become more important in this new age of the internet than the visible. The question in an educational context is whether this is happening in the 'real' world.

Education in general is perceived as one of the elements that generates the 'bonum' or goodness in society. It teaches people valuable lessons which enhance social awareness locally and globally. As well as contributing to the economic progress of the country, education has the potential to help the community to see and determine the real benefits that can enhance not only individual countries like Singapore and the Philippines but the world at large. The ability to participate in the public discourse of a society and its ideologies involves some degree of control of language, as an essential tool for any form of development in the future.

The use of *Appraisal* to determine different participants' attitude towards certain issues can help teachers and students to understand the 'culture' of a society and adapt where necessary. Appraisal as part of the structure of a language allows breadth and depth in understanding the underlying meanings being conveyed. As illustrated in this study, the attitudes of the participants can be discerned as part of the overall prosody, negative or positive, of their discourse. Such linguistic tools avoid the danger of simply commenting on what has been written without the required linguistic evidence. A language filled with emotions can evoke different responses and sometimes be thought

provoking. Knowing how to choose the right words can create a positive impact that might encourage students to see the value of the functional use of language and the way it is put together, especially if a teacher is dealing with students from different backgrounds. This is where the *Appraisal system* and the *Dimensions' of Discourse* are significant in understanding the meaning making possibilities beyond discourse as it is still too commonly understood in the narrow sense in ELT.

In a world in which interracial conflicts and tensions seem to have become an inevitable phenomenon of daily life, one positive aspect has been the increase in knowledge on a more global scale. As part of this process, the increase in English as a 'world language' together with other languages has opened up opportunities to use developments in technology, especially cyber-space, to create on-line communities. Consequently, a multicultural education has become crucial.

Multicultural education is seen as an opportunity to improve race relations and to help students gain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to take part in cross-cultural interactions. Teaching has also become a multicultural experience. Instead of fearing or ignoring the diversity in the classroom (and society), teachers can use diversity to enrich their instruction. As teachers and students belong to diverse groups distinguished by variables such as age, social class, gender, race, and ethnicity a multicultural and multilingual awareness becomes even more important in educational settings. These issues should be given prominent stress in any education system related to ASEAN and the AEC that is looming next year.

Providing people with the freedom to function beyond their ethnic and cultural boundaries keeps societies more open-minded. Using the dimensions of multicultural education (e.g., prejudice reduction) may help students develop more democratic values and attitudes. Discussing issues, whether it be directly in the classroom or in cyber-space, should help students not only develop their language skills but also their critical awareness of the world around them. In this sense, multicultural and multilingual education should be a factor in implementing intercultural exchange and in helping students to gain democratic values and attitudes.

A social view of language, and specifically of English as the predominant 'world language', seems to suggest that the teaching of English lessons should become an essential tool in helping to address either directly or indirectly the

issues of multicultural communities in the classroom, neighborhood, and nation; in other words, in developing respect for diversity. By incorporating multicultural education in English language classrooms, teachers, in particular, can help students to value the significance of treating all people with a recognition of everyone's self-esteem and not judging groups of people from the actions of a few. More importantly, teachers must model tolerance and compassion in their words and behavior. They can also encourage students to explore their feelings about prejudice and hatred. In doing this, society might secure a better chance for the next generation to learn and integrate respect and dignity for all people.

Getting inside the 'heads' of the respondents even at a fairly superficial level gives some indication of the prevailing attitude of the participants through the language used. The *cyberworld* offers alternative channels of communication that helps in the understanding of the stance taken by a particular cyber community on specific issues. The physical being can be harmless but the mind that dictates it can be dangerous. It can influence a person to do certain undesirable actions to satisfy their desires.

In a world of technology, power is not only gained through war anymore; instead power is to be gained through emotions that may be accumulated and can be used in the real world. So knowing the minds of different participants means learning to prevent the accumulation of undesirable emotions. This can be attainable through multicultural education. Inculcating the importance of cultures in the minds of young students might help to lessen the 21st century prejudices that cause problems in the world.

References

- AsiaOne. <http://education.asiaone.com/content/singapore-takes-third-spot-global-education-rankings#sthash.snO0xHGP.dpuf>
- Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the Internet*. UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Fowler, R. (2001). *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Gaventa, J. (2007). Levels, spaces, and forms of power: analyzing opportunities for change. In F. Berenskoetter and M.J. Williams (eds). *Power in World Politics*. London: Routledge.

- George, C. (2012). *Freedom from the Press: Journalism and State Power in Singapore*. Singapore: NUS Press.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1978). *Language as a Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Harper, R.H.R. (2010). *Texture: Human Expression in the Age of communication Overload*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press
- Han, K. (2013, October 20). COMMENT: Singapore, discrimination and 'Singaporeans First'. *Yahoo! News Singapore*. Retrieved from <http://sg.news.yahoo.com>
- Martin, J.R. and D. Rose (2007). *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause*. New York: Continuum.
- Talbot, M., K. Atkinson, & D. Atkinson, (2003). *Language and Power in the Modern World*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Taylor, A. (2014) *The People's Platform: Taking Back Power and Culture in the Digital Age*. UK. Fourth Estate.
- Threadgold, T., E.A. Grosz, G. Kress and M.A. K. Halliday (eds.) (1986). *Semiotics, Ideology, Language*. Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture: Sydney.