INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED BY FRONTLINE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF WHEN INTERACTING WITH FOREIGN STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT
Intercultural communication strategies are used to overcome language barriers across cultures (Berardo, 2008). The strategies are important for frontline administrative staff when interacting with foreign students in a local university. This qualitative study was carried out in three centres in a public university. The study used Gallois and Giles’ communication adaptation theory (2015) and Hall’s theory of intercultural communication (1959). Data were collected from observations and semi-structured interviews with six Malaysian administrative officers and six foreign students. The findings revealed that although the Malaysian administrative staff members have good command of English and communication skills, they still encountered problems when dealing with foreign students. Most of the foreign students reacted positively towards the intercultural communication strategies, but a few reacted negatively because they did not understand the differences between cultures. High-context communication and low-context communication were essential in interactions across cultures. This study provides insights into the use of intercultural communication strategies when communicating with foreign students. This enables them to foster norms that could reduce conflict from miscommunication or cross-cultural differences.

Keywords: foreign students, high-context communication, intercultural communication strategies, low-context communication

INTRODUCTION
Intercultural communication strategies are often used when interacting with people from other cultures (Berardo, 2008). Normally, communication could be transmitted in two ways, namely high-context communication and low-context communication. Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim and Heyman (1996) identify high-context communication to be indirect, ambiguous, harmony maintained, reserved, and understated. In contrast, low-context communication is identified as direct, precise, dramatic, open, and based on feelings or true intentions.

In a public university in Malaysia, English is used as a medium of communication between the frontline administrative staff and foreign students. However, language barriers exist due to cultural differences. This causes problems between the frontline administrative staff and foreign students. Being a minority culture, language barriers, socialisation and non-verbal form of communication not having the same meanings, and racism are the problems that foreign students face (Hall, 1959). Communication, understanding and learning may also be inhibited by the cultural value gap. Therefore, intercultural communication strategies should be used across cultures in order to fulfil the purpose of communication.
The theoretical framework of this study was based on Gallois and Giles’ communication adaptation theory (2015). This theory focuses on linguistic strategies to decrease or increase communicative distances. It also argues that when people interact, they adjust their speeches, their vocal patterns and their gestures to accommodate to others of different cultures. It explores the various reasons why individuals emphasise or minimise social differences between themselves and their interlocutors through verbal and nonverbal communication. This theory is concerned with the links between language, context and identity. There are two main intercultural communication strategies: convergence and divergence. Convergence refers to the strategies through which individuals adapt to each other’s communicative behaviours in order to reduce the social differences. Sometimes when individuals engage in convergence, they could become over-accommodating and their convergence would be perceived as condescending. Meanwhile, divergence refers to instances in which individuals accentuate the speech and non-verbal differences between themselves and their interlocutors.

Hall’s theory of intercultural communication (1959) was also used in this study. In intercultural communication, ignorance of contexts usually leads to misunderstanding and conflicts. This theory generalises the basic distinctive characteristics of two contexts by analysing the actual cases in daily communication. Context is important in all communication, but it is relatively more important in some situations than others. There are also significant differences across cultures. Hall (1959) has described cultural differences in the use of language and context in communication. High-context transactions transmit minimal message to the receiver. A low-context communication is the opposite whereby mass information is vested explicitly. Low-context transaction transmits maximum message to the receiver.

Literature on intercultural communication reveals that intercultural communication and context are inherently difficult. Culture differences could cause communication problems (Begley, 2000; Irwin, 1996; Kim & Paulk, 1994). Culture shock could also be affected by a change in the cultural environment (McKinlay, Pattison, & Gross, 1996; Begley, 2000). Lustig and Koester (1993) pointed out that the difference in culturally-based expectations about the interpersonal communication caused difficulty in interpersonal relationships between people from different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication is not always successful and often represents a stressful event (Lustig & Koester, 1993).

Phang (2002) carried out a study on communication problems and difficulties, as well as factors and ways on how to overcome communication problems experienced by African graduate students in their interaction with Malaysians in a local university. The findings showed that communication problems were reservation towards foreigners, issue of greetings, indirectness, interrogations, and gender issues. The factors that contributed to the problems were cultural differences, language, prejudice and stereotypes, as well as limited exposure to Africans. The Africans used problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies to regulate the psychological discomfort and stress when encountering these difficulties.

Along this line, the present study is conducted to investigate intercultural communication strategies used by Malaysian frontline administrative staff when interacting with foreign students to add to the pool of knowledge on the use of intercultural communication strategies. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:
1. What are the intercultural communication strategies used by frontline administrative staff when interacting with foreign students in three centres at a local university?
2. How do the foreign students react to the intercultural communication strategies used by the frontline administrative staff?
3. How do high-context communication and low-context communication affect the information transmitted to the foreign students?

METHODOLOGY

Setting
The qualitative study was conducted in three centres (Centre A, Centre B and Centre C) in a Malaysian public university. Centre A is in charge of visa and passports processing for foreign students. Centre B is an entity that offers short and long term programmes in line with current market needs. Centre C offers students a unique experience to learn English in a friendly environment. The functions of these centres are:

a) To manage and administer the University's strategic agenda for internationalisation.

b) To plan, implement, and monitor support service activities for international scholars and students.

c) To plan the centre's international marketing and promotional strategies to sustain its image in the international arena.

Participants
Purposive sampling was used to select six frontline administrative officers. Two administrative officers were selected from each centre. They were chosen because they were stationed there for the entire week during the observation period. All the administrative staff members had considerable international experience, and they were deliberately chosen to work in an international setting. Therefore, they have good understanding about foreign students’ needs. The background of the frontline administrative staff is shown in Table 1. They were given a code for the referencing purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Working experience (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Head</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M4</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M5</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Administrative assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Six foreign students were selected using purposive sampling. Two foreign students were selected from each centre. They were chosen because they visited the centre at least three times a week. Table 2 shows the background of the foreign students. The coding is assigned to each student as in the table.
Table 2: Background of foreign students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Duration of stay in Malaysia (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>S5</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>S6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data collection
The study employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected from observations and semi-structured interviews. The observation took place in three centres over three weeks. Each centre was observed five days from 10 am until 1 pm because these were the busiest hours where most foreign students would go to the centres to ask for information. In a week of observation at a centre, various scenarios could be captured.

A semi-structured interview was carried out on the last day of observation in each centre. Two frontline administrative staff members from each centre were interviewed to get their feedback on the intercultural communication strategies they used. The interviews were conducted individually. A different set of semi-structured interview was also conducted with the six foreign students individually. The twelve interviews, recorded and transcribed verbatim, were used to complement the findings from the observations.

Member checks were done to solicit feedback on the findings from all the frontline administrative staff and foreign students who were interviewed. Member checks are used to assess the accuracy of the interpretation of data through consistent checking with the participants (Koelsch, 2013; Maxwell, 2005). Studies have shown that member checks are the single most important way to rule out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what the frontline administrative staff and foreign students said and did, as well as the views about what was going on.

Data analysis
Qualitative data from observation field notes and semi-structured interview responses were classified into common categories. There were altogether 15 sets of observation field notes and 12 interview transcripts which were collected from two frontline administrative officers and two foreign students at the centres. The first set of observation field notes was assigned marginal codes. Then the notes and marginal codes were looked through again and regrouped. The process of regrouping these open codes is sometimes called axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) or analytical coding. Analytical coding goes beyond descriptive coding because it is “coding that comes from interpretation and reflection on meaning” (Richards, 2005, p.94). A running list of these axial codes was attached to the field notes. Dozens of tentative categories were generated. The first set of interview transcript was also analysed the same way as the observation field notes.

The second set of observation field notes and interview transcripts was coded and grouped exactly the same way as the first set of qualitative data. A second running list of codes was generated. Then the two lists were merged into one master list of concepts. This master list constituted a classification system reflecting the recurring patterns of the study. These patterns became the themes. The same procedure for analysis was repeated for the remaining sets of observation field notes and interview transcripts.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The observations and semi-structured interviews at the three centres were analysed collectively as the findings were similar. To answer the first research question about intercultural communication strategy used by frontline administrative staff, data from observation field notes and interview responses were collected. Excerpts from the interview responses were transcribed verbatim. Data were organised according to common themes.

**Intercultural communication strategies**

Berardo (2008) proposed 10 intercultural communication strategies to overcome language barriers. The strategies are: 1) speak slowly and clearly, 2) ask for clarification, 3) frequently check for understanding, 4) avoid idioms, 5) be careful of jargons, 6) define the basics of communication, 7) be specific, 8) choose your medium of communication effectively, 9) provide information via multiple channels, and 10) be patient.

From the 10 intercultural communication strategies proposed by Berardo (2008), the staff used only seven of the strategies when they interacted with the foreign students. These strategies were categorised under the main group of convergence approach.

**Showing friendly behaviour**

The frontline administrative staff showed friendly behaviour as an intercultural communication strategy. It means showing kind interest and goodwill. The administrative staff greeted the foreign students politely, smiled, joked with foreign students or apologised if they could not help the students. They displayed friendliness by greeting the foreign students politely to make them feel at ease and to establish rapport before formal communication transaction takes place. M2 mentioned in the interview:

> If you want to know them, greet them politely and make friends with them. This will enable us to share knowledge with each other and we can become close friends.

Opposite the service counter, a chair was placed for students to sit while asking for information. M6 was often heard telling the foreign students: “Please be seated”. This was because after a long day attending classes, foreign students might be tired, thus, the female administrative officer was friendly to them by asking them to have a seat. This is another way of making the foreign students comfortable.

**Exercising patience**

Another intercultural communication strategy that the administrative staff used was exercising patience. It means being tolerant and having even-tempered perseverance. This strategy includes providing information via multiple channels, repeating information, as well as speaking slowly and clearly.

Many foreign students felt lost when they first enrolled in the university. Therefore, they had many queries regarding the forms they had to fill up and kept referring to M2 at Centre A. M2 had to repeat herself several times when giving instructions because the foreign students were confused on what they needed to do. Some instances of repeated instruction are as follows:
Complete the forms, then only I give you the number.
Complete the requirements and come back to me.
Write your name here.
Check your website. Check your insurance first.
Two dependents. You need two copies for those dependents.
You receive a notification to come and collect?

Most of the foreign undergraduate and postgraduate students did not complete the requirements and she needed to repeat the information. For example, they did not know which forms to be downloaded from the website because there were different forms and requirements for different applications. There was a case regarding visa termination because the foreign student received an offer letter to further her studies at another university. Therefore, M2 repeated the instruction to inform her that she had to write a formal letter to terminate the visa.

There were also times when foreign students crowded the help desk counter, and it was difficult for M2 to attend to everyone. Thus, she exercised patience by asking them to line up. Problems also occurred due to difficulties in understanding pronunciation and accent. Hence, M2 had to repeat instructions. For instance, the foreign students did not understand the pronunciation of “approval” and “results”, thus M2 pronounced these words repeatedly and slowly. There were also instances where some foreign students were quite demanding and did not listen to M4; therefore, she had to ask the students to calm down and listen to her in order to help them.

M3 also mentioned that he had to repeat instructions due to language barrier which is a recurring problem. This could lead to miscommunication. He mentioned that he had to exercise more patience to help the foreign students solve their issues. M3, who is an even-tempered person remained calm and lowered his voice to listen to the students before meeting their demands. In the interview, he mentioned:

If they do not understand certain terms, something is wrong with them. This is due to language barrier. For example, if we use “you might get…”, the foreign students will understand by seeing it as “you will get…”, then they will say that we do not fulfil our promises. Besides that, we will try to remain calm, lower down our voice although the foreign students are aggressive, be friendly, and listen to them first then only say “no”.

Frequently checking for understanding
Besides that, the frontline administrative staff also regularly checked with the foreign students to find out if they understood the information that was conveyed. The administrative staff would seek clarification from students to understand their problems and concerns better, gave advice, gave explanation or passed the more complicated student cases to more experienced colleagues to solve the problems.

There was a situation whereby a foreign student came to the centre with a passport issue. This meant that he overstayed in Malaysia because he did not realise that his passport expired a few days ago. He referred to M2 on what he had to do. M2 requested more clarification about his problem, but he could not explain it well. Therefore, she referred the case to her superior. In another situation, a female student hastily rushed to the centre to collect her passport, but she did not bring relevant documents. M5 persistently asked her for information before handing her the passport.
In another example, S4 needed to fill in the documents for the whole family and he had many forms to fill. The documents were very thick. M6 called him from afar because he came in without filling certain sections of the forms. He looked lost and spent almost the whole morning at Centre C. Therefore, M6 frequently checked on S4 to see what she could help him with. Although M6 did not use Standard English, S4 could still understand her question. An instance of their conversation is shown below:

M6: Sir, is your family done?
S4: Yeah
M6: Okay, let me check.

A website has been created for foreign students recently. Previously, the frontline administrative staff had to spend a lot of time on advising the students on what they needed to do for passport and visa application before the website was developed. There was insufficient information for the foreign students to refer to. In the interview, M5 stated:

I will give them advice because last time, there was no website and the students do not have sufficient information on the things that they needed to do. However, now there is website, so if they don’t understand we will refer them to the website although it’s very new.

Dealing with language difficulties

The administrative staff also used several methods to deal with the foreign students’ language barriers. For instance, they would ask the foreign students’ friends to translate English to their mother tongue or refer them to their seniors. Sometimes when the students could not understand the information they wanted to convey, they would use alternatives to fulfil the purpose of the communication. An example of such was M4 who referred the foreign students to the website or requested the student to bring a friend who understands English for translation purpose. She explained in the interview:

I will ask another student, who can speak Arabic to translate for the foreign students. I will ask them to bring their friends, who can speak English, so we can interact with them better. This is due to the language barrier that we have. They always misunderstand what we said to them. For example, “Applicant’s name” does not mean “dependent’s name”. I will also ask them to refer to the websites, which is another source of information.

It was observed that the frontline administrative staff used several intercultural communication strategies to interact with the foreign students. Sometimes those strategies did not fulfil the purpose of communication. Then they shifted their speech patterns to accommodate the needs for each situation.

The following section discusses the findings about the foreign students’ reaction towards the intercultural communication strategies.
Reaction of foreign students towards the intercultural communication strategies

Showing friendly behaviour
There was a situation when M6 gave S2 a waiting number which students normally have to take on their own. She thanked M6 in a friendly manner because of the kind gesture shown to her. In situations when frontline administrative staff could not provide the assistance needed, the students would reply politely. They appreciated the administrative staff’s effort to help them. Sometimes, the administrative staff also asked if students needed help, but they would answer “No” politely with a smile as they knew what they were supposed to do. Most of the time, the foreign students reciprocated the frontline administrative staff’s friendliness by greeting them politely and replying in the national language. Such a conversation is shown below:

S2: Terima kasih banyak-banyak (Thank you very much)
M6: Sama banyak-banyak (You are most welcomed)

Obeying instructions
Instruction was given to foreign students that they were not allowed to leave the country during the first year of their study to avoid the termination of their student visa. The foreign students were expected to follow the stipulated regulation. There was an incident when M2 confirmed with S3 whether he had gone out of Malaysia during the first semester. The conversation below shows that S3 obeyed the regulation:

M2: Course that you register. This is your first semester?
S3: Yes, this is my first semester
M2: Did you go out of Malaysia?
S3: No

Showing happiness
The foreign students also reacted by showing happiness. This reaction includes showing a sign of relief, showing appreciation, showing satisfaction towards the frontline administrative staff, repeating the statements of the administrative staff happily or completing the statement made by the administrative staff happily because they understood what was asked by the administrative staff.

The foreign students showed a sign of relief after receiving their passports. All of them had to go to the centre at least three times: to apply, to submit application forms and to collect their passports. After receiving the help given by the administrative staff, they felt really relieved to receive their passports. The foreign students also felt relieved because they did not have time to keep coming to the centre due to transportation problem, family or work commitments. There was a situation when S5 expressed her relief of getting her visa after going to the centre back and forth. In the interview, she stated:

I feel so relieved. I could not come on time because I have work to do, but finally, I have my visa.

Remaining calm
The foreign students reacted by remaining calm. This reaction included not feeling angry but trying to interpret the messages conveyed by the administrative staff. S1 stated that she would not feel angry because she could not understand the culture in Malaysia.
However, she knew that the frontline administrative staff had tried their best to help her. In the interview, she said:

I feel it is okay because I understand they don’t understand our cultures. Different culture means different manner of respecting each other. I will not be angry, but become calm and not being panicked or stressed because they tried to understand me. I think they are very good. It is hard for them to treat each other politely.

*Feeling confused*

Normally, two administrative officers were positioned at the frontline desk in each centre. Sometimes when they used too many intercultural communication strategies at the same time such as speaking slowly and clearly, asking for clarification, and frequently checking for understanding, the foreign students reacted by showing a confused look. The foreign students, who had difficulty in understanding information, sought clarifications from another administrative officer. In another instance, students would show the messages they received on their mobile devices to the administrative officer because they did not understand the meaning. They also displayed agitated behaviour because they were confused.

An example of a situation happened after M5 gave S6 specific instructions to get to Centre A. S6 wanted to confirm whether he received the information correctly; hence, he asked M6 for more clarifications. Another foreign student, who heard the conversation, helped M6 to give S6 specific directions.

In another scenario, S3 mentioned that because of miscommunication, he could not understand what was mentioned by M3; hence, he asked further questions. There was confusion because high-context communication transacted between M3 and S3. Initially, M3 did not employ any intercultural communication strategies in the conversation. Then M3 tried to speak slowly and clearly, but when S3 kept asking questions persistently, he refused to entertain. This was mentioned in S3 interview response.

Frankly speaking, foreign students in general face many communication problems because of their inability to understand the staff in their dealing. The staff speak in a fast way which is different from that of a native speaker of English either because of the lack of grammar or the overuse of abbreviations. The other problem is related to their reaction of misunderstanding; most of them lose his/her temper or refuse to speak especially when you try to ask a question.

Most foreign students reacted positively towards the intercultural communication strategies used by the frontline administrative staff. They tried to cooperate with the administrative staff to understand the information conveyed by them. Although the strategies and the foreign students’ reaction did not resonate at times, the foreign students tried to accommodate to the strategies. However, there were a few of them, who reacted negatively because they did not try to understand that the problem of misunderstanding was due to cultural differences. Therefore, the encounters were not very pleasant at times.

The next section discusses the findings about the effects of high-context communication towards the foreign students. High-context communication causes the foreign students either to understand the information transmitted or not to understand at an acceptable level.
Effects of high-context communication

Understanding the information transmitted at an acceptable level

High-context communication is important for the foreign students to reduce annoyance or irritation. Some of the students could understand when high-context communication was addressed pertaining to certain issues. Most of the senior students already knew the procedures; thus, if high-context communication was used, they would not feel lost. This was observed when the senior students came to settle their forms that they had to fill up for every year of study.

High-context communication was only used in certain contexts. In a situation, M1 mentioned that only relevant details were given to the students who already knew what to do. This was stated in the interview. According to her:

The information is transmitted little by little using high-context communication, so students, who are interested to know can contact who and who.

Not understanding the information transmitted

From the observation, high-context communication was too indirect and ambiguous that most of the time the foreign students would not understand what was conveyed to them. Students also felt confused when information given was vague. Students would not understand the information if high-context communication was used. One example of such situation was when a supervisor of a student came to help his student to interact with the frontline administrative officer regarding the certification of passport before she could be registered as a postgraduate student. The information given by the centre was not direct; therefore, she had to bring her supervisor to confirm what was needed for passport certification.

S4 stated that foreign students usually do not have good command of English; thus, they would get confused most of the time when information was transmitted to them. This was stated in his interview response:

Foreign students are weak in grammar and vocabularies, therefore, it is difficult for them to understand or communicate directly without help.

The last section discusses the findings about the effects of low-context communication towards the foreign students. Low-context communication causes the foreign students either to fully understand the information transmitted or understand the information transmitted at an acceptable level.

Effects of low-context communication

Fully understanding the information transmitted

Low-context communication is direct and precise. Most of the time, low-context communication is needed because students refer to detailed information to avoid confusion. M3 mentioned that the information given should be specific to enable the foreign students to understand what they needed to do. Their English is not that good and they only understand very basic words in English. The frontline administrative staff also requested for a mobile phone to ease the communication with the students for passport collection. He explained in the interview:
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When Interacting With Foreign Students

Their English is very limited and not that good. This is due to their culture and behaviour. I will use simple and not complicated words and be straightforward. We actually requested for a small mobile phone, so that it is easier for us to send notifications to the foreign students to collect their passports.

Understanding the information transmitted at an acceptable level
Although low-context communication was used many times, some students did not fully understand the information transmitted. Foreign students should understand basic terms such as registration slips, applicant’s name and dependent’s name, and the frontline administrative staff had to explain to them most of the time. This might be due to language barrier because they did not understand the information given in English. Sometimes the foreign students refused to follow proper procedures because they wanted their visas and passports as soon as possible.

Although low-context communication was used, some of the foreign students only understood the information in an acceptable level. M2 illustrated that even when the information was clearly given to them, they still did not understand it. She stated this in the interview:

They don’t understand what I said. Even if the checklist is provided, they still can’t follow instructions well. Even after the third time, they will ask the same question again and again.

High-context communication and low-context communication are essential for foreign students. This means that if urgent information needs to be conveyed, low-context communication which is precise and direct is used. However, if the information is about matters that are clear-cut to the foreign students, high-context communication is used.

CONCLUSION
The findings provide useful insights into the strategies that could be used to ensure good service by frontline administrative staff when dealing with foreign students. The study may shed light on the importance of cultural awareness for service providers. It was observed that the frontline administrative staff used convergence strategy to interact effectively with the foreign students to reduce social differences. Most of the foreign students reacted positively towards the intercultural communication strategies used by the staff. The findings on the foreign students’ reactions are similar to Phang’s (2002) study where the students used emotion-focused strategies, namely acceptance and self-control, to overcome communication difficulties. High-context and low-context communications are normally used to enable the message to be transmitted successfully.

Further steps could be taken to heighten the awareness of intercultural communication strategies. University authorities could design cultural awareness training programmes to provide frontline administrative staff with skills such as flexibility and openness towards new situations (Osland & Bird, 2000). These skills can then be used to turn a previously weak situation, such as having no clues about the behaviour of others into a strong situation like overcoming individuals’ cultural differences. Integrated language-culture training could be offered to enhance intercultural communication skills of frontline professionals. This can reduce misunderstandings and positively influence team performance.
Based on the findings of the study, a few suggestions for future studies are provided. More case studies could be conducted at centres to find out the importance of integrating culturally experienced individuals in a team to improve intercultural communication (Hubbard, 2004). Emphasis on the role of language in cross-cultural behaviour warrants further investigation. Future researchers could also develop specific communication strategies for practitioners who have to deal with foreigners and also for culturally-experienced practitioners who encounter unpredictable intercultural communication situations to minimise communication problems.

REFERENCES


