Bridging Higher Education and Industrial Needs

Here Comes the Specialist!

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Abstract

In an intercultural setting, it is timely to say that there is a crucial need to bridge the dimensions of professional discourses such as the engineering discourses, the business discourses and the legislative discourses. While various approaches are used to investigate intercultural communication, genre analysts believe that the use of specialist informants is beneficial to provide important information on the targeted discourse community. This paper reports one such possibility to extract reliable information related to the needs of written communication. Data was extracted using a set of interview questions manoeuvred based on Munby's CNP model. The findings highlighted the extent of workplace intercultural communication involving, particularly, the English language written skills.

Keywords: *Specialist Informants; Target Situation Analysis (TSA); Needs Analysis; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); Genre Analysis; Discourse Community*

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1. Introduction

According to Bhatia (1994), it is not enough for English for Specific Purposes (ESP) professionals to look at language trying to bridge the gap between language and the professions. In order to align teaching needs with the industry's needs, the ESP professionals need to make significant inroads in the world of professions, especially in the form of relevant ESP study output. Informants are used with the purpose of interpreting and validating the data or findings that the linguist has reached in his description. This is also the case in genre analysis:

> *"the analyst double checks his findings against reactions from a specialist informant, who, generally, is a practising member of the disciplinary culture in which the genre is routinely used. The specialist reaction confirms his findings, brings validity to his insights and adds psychological reality to his analysis. It is an important aspect of genre analysis, if one wishes to bring in relevant explanation rather than mere description in one's analysis"*

(Bhatia, 1993: 34)

Johns (1993) emphasized on the need of locally-based study particularly into the area of ESP teachings. In favour with Johns (1993), researchers in this particular area need to be expanded further till it reaches the ultimate destination of individuals trailing the path. Thus, addressing the mismatch and finding suitable solutions to the problems with ESP teachings and learning. In order to highlight the mismatch in a selected industry, the present study was conducted using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted with specialist informants from the selected industry. The study was conducted with the aim to identify and highlight the written communication skills required by the Quality, Health, Safety and Environment (hereafter, QHSE) engineers from the petroleum industry in Malaysia.

The mismatch and unemployment

In 2012, Ibrahim (2012) reported in an online daily website that in the year 2011, local universities, university colleges and polytechnics in Malaysia produced some 184, 581 graduates out of which 44, 391

or 24 percent were unemployed. Among others, bad command of written English and poor communication skills were quoted as the reasons why the graduates were unemployed (Ibrahim, 2012). The importance of written communication skills have been highlighted by studies conducted in various industries, including the petroleum engineering (*to be inserted after review*, 2012), the chemical industry (Hafizoah Kassim and Fatimah Ali, 2010), business (Leong, 2001), manufacturing (Ainol Haryati Ibrahim, 1993; Hadina Habil, 2003), and government sector (*to be inserted after review*, 2004).

According to Zubaidah Awang et al. (2006), one reason for the high rate of unemployment among engineering graduates is the disengagement between the curriculum requirements of higher learning institutions and industry needs, with the requirements of the industries not reflected in higher learning education. In universities, graduates are taught to write study papers and specific subject-related assignments, but these activities do not reflect the demands of on-the-job writing tasks. In a keynote address during a Malaysian Employers' Federation (MEF) conference, Former Human Resource Minister, Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn (Fong, 2004) stated the problem of skills mismatch is due to lack of coordination between the industry's projections of their human resource requirements and planning on the part of education providers in the country.

ESP, learners' needs and the written communication

A fundamental philosophy of ESP is to cater to specific needs of learners (Robinson, 1991). In Malaysia, the petroleum industry provides a ground for exploring along the line of sociolinguistics and genre analysis. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996:5), the written discourse is a much recent invention compared to the spoken discourse. Unlike the spoken language which coextended with the history of species, written language has a documented history of more than 6000 years (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996:5).

Previous study on written communication has highlighted that written abilities are learned and not naturally acquired as spoken abilities. As Grabe and Kaplan (1996) put it, writing is a technology, a set of skills which must be practiced and learned through experience. This definition of writing explains why students, especially from the English as a second language (ESL) setting, encounter problems when writing in complex situations. The English language writing demands on ESL learners for example, may not be the same with that of the native speakers of English language as the structural rhetorical organization of the language may not be as important to the native speakers as it is to the non-native speakers (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). For the native speakers, the structural rhetorical organization of the language is acquired naturally and effortlessly. However, non-native speakers of English need to be aware of the structural rhetorical organization and the linguistic conventions of the written communication in order to be able to understand and produce a written communicative event.

In Malaysia, English is taught and used as a second language and is a fundamental requirement for career advancement. As mastering English requires mastering the spoken and written aspects of the language, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses have been integrated into various curricula in the country. Since the 1990s, there has been increased emphasis of learning English especially due to the demands of globalization and internationalization (de Haan, 2014; Kerklaan et al., 2008; Khairi Izwan Abdullah, 2001). English language is taught not only to meet academic needs of students in higher learning institutions but also to meet specific occupational needs in industry (Khairi Izwan Abdullah, 2001).

Bridging the Gap - A Needs Analysis

For practical reason, ESP has developed its own methodology relying much on authenticity of language requirements. The main concerns of ESP have always been with needs analysis, text analysis and to prepare learners to communicate effectively within their work perspectives (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Strevens, 1988; Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). Learners' needs have been used to predetermine the content of domain-specific courses designs where the main purpose of learning the language is to accommodate the specific content being taught. However, it is insufficient to rely on an

approach that focuses on the learners' needs of specific subject-based instructions in the academic setting alone. More has to be done by ESP practitioners.

One of the most reliable methods of needs assessment would be to conduct a target needs analysis where efforts were made to analyze the target situations in which the learners would use the language (Khairi

Izwan Abdullah, 2002). The most well-known model of needs analysis is the one developed by Munby (1978) called the Communication Needs Processor or CNP for short. Munby's (1978) CNP model extracts and reflects what Hutchinson and Waters (1987) say about extracting what the learner needs to know in order to function effectively in the target situation. Thus, a target situation analysis is used to determine the needs of ESP teaching including the necessity or the requirement of the industries, the lacks and the wants of the learners. A target situation analysis is different from a present situation analysis in terms that it focuses on future needs of learners. Present situation analysis, on the other hand, is related to identifying present and current level of competence of the learners (Aimoldina, 2010).

The specialist informants

An important part of the procedure in a target situation analysis is to identify and use specialist informants to provide information on the target community. Selinker (1979), in a conference paper, pressed for the use of specialist informants in order to understand input data from disciplines where the researcher may not be familiar with or has limited expertise. In the paper, Selinker (1979) suggested nine areas where a specialist informant may be able to assist the researcher;

- Technical terminology
- Common language words used technically
- Relative strength of claims made by language users
- Contextual paraphrases
- Grammatical choice
- Modal words
- Rhetorical structure
- Punctuation structure
- Connectives

The method of approaching a specialist informant was enhanced by Tarone et al. (1981) where they included a subject-specialist into their investigation of astro-physics journal articles. However, the most extensive inclusion of a specialist informant into a study was by Bhatia (1982) where a researcher worked with a senior parliamentary counsel for almost three years. The specialist informant was responsible for drafting the British Housing Act 1980, which Bhatia (1982) compiled as corpus and analysed for his doctoral study. The use of specialist informants in a study serves as a validating tool (Bhatia, 1982).

On the other hand, consulting a specialist informant is rather a challenge itself. It takes time, effort and common understanding regarding the purpose of the study being conducted. In contrast to this, the use a specialist informant in a study may be beneficial and accommodating in terms of providing validity and reliability to the findings. Keeping this in mind, the researcher must have a good grasp of data he is looking for and should always be prepared to refine and reframe his questions within the information given by the specialist informant (Bhatia, 2014). This paper describes the use of specialist informants from a selected industry in Malaysia, in order to highlight the fundamental written language needs of prospective engineers. The specialist informants are from Malaysian's petroleum industry and had provided reliable information related to a corpus-based genre analysis conducted on selected written communication being used in the industry (*to be inserted after review*, 2014). According to Bhatia (1993:34), the information provided by specialist informants tends to "bring validity to the insights gained and adds psychological reality to the genre analysis conducted". The information is provided by a

practicing member of the disciplinary culture where the genre is being used. In the corpus-based genre analysis conducted, feedback received from the selected specialist informants were used to validate the findings from the genre analysis and also to support the creation of a related framework (*to be inserted after review*, 2014).

2. Methodology

Sampling method

For the reason of accessibility to data and cost effective measures taken into consideration, convenience sampling method was deemed suitable to gather the required information for the semi-structured interviews. Based on the findings of a study related to sampling and generalizability in developmental study, Hultsch et al. (2002:357) concluded that structured samples of convenience produced results that are consistent with those generated by random sampling of the same population.

As a case study, the sample chosen for the semi-structured interviews is small and is chosen to fulfil the fundamental purpose of this particular study (Creswell, 2003). The aim is to explore the written communicative events produced by engineers in a specific division of the petroleum industry in Malaysia. Overall, there are twenty-five engineers in the QHSE departments of the three companies, coded as A, B and C. In Company A, there are 10 engineers reporting to a senior manager and a general manager. In Company B, there are 7 engineers, a senior manager and a general manager, while in Company B there are 8 engineers with one senior manager and a general manager. The department head is a general manager who is the person in-charge of the overall compliance to the Quality, Health, Safety and Environmental (QHSE) procedures of the industry. According to the need of the study, the theoretical population, or generally termed as the population of this study, is the engineers working in the QHSE departments of the petroleum industry in Malaysia while the accessible population or the sub-population of this study is the engineers employed by company A, B and C and are attached to the QHSE departments of the companies. Thus, the sampling frame used for the present study is from the accessible population.

The interviews were conducted with three senior managers and three engineers from the QHSE departments of the three companies; A, B and C. The senior managers were chosen for the interviews due to the fact that they were responsible for the approval and allocation of the work procedures according to various work stations in the companies. The engineers were chosen for the interviews as they were responsible for preparing the work procedures and it was necessary to understand their cognitive selection of linguistic features when the written documents were prepared. Table 1 shows the profiles of the participants chosen for the semi-structured interviews. In order to protect participants' identity, the particulars of the participants for the interviews conducted are not arranged according to any specific arrangement. The participants' age is within the range of 29 to 49, with working experiences ranging from within the range of 8 to 16 years. The participants are having first degrees and diplomas in various disciplines, from chemical engineering, electrical engineering to diploma in safety and health. Adhering to the issues of ethics, the participants were promised confidentiality and anonymity of their identities in the settings. The coding schemes used throughout this study did not match any particular participant. It is necessary to define the population and the sub-population used in this particular study (Bordens & Abbott, 2008: 158). In order to sustain confidentiality, all the respondents for the interviews were given codes using 'SPIN' for specialist informants, followed by the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6, for example SPIN1 refers to the first specialist informant, SPIN2 refers to the second specialist informants and so on. The codes used do not determine the superiority of the participants in their workplace.

Tables 1: *The Profiles of the participants for the semi-structured interviews*

CODING	AGE*	WORK EXPERIENCE*	FIRST DEGREE/DIPLOMA**
SPIN1 **SPIN2**	30 46	8 14	Degree in Chemical Engineering Diploma in Electrical Engineering
SPIN3 **SPIN4**	37 29	15 7	Degree in Chemical Engineering Diploma in Safety and Health
SPIN5 **SPIN6**	49 30	16 10	Degree in Electrical Engineering Diploma in Electrical Engineering

*Age and experience are given in years.

**First degree and diploma refers to the area of studies taken by the participants in a degree/diploma course.

Using a non-random sampling frame (Bordens & Abbott, 2008:162), the purposive sampling method (Trochim, 2006) was applied to select the specialist informants for the interviews. Having the specific purpose of gaining information related to the use of the identified moves in the genre analysis, this study sought the assistance of six experts (*n = 6*) with knowledge related to the preparation and use of the work procedures. The expert sampling method (Trochim, 2006) is used because it would be the best way to elicit the views of persons, who have specific expertise in their specific areas, and to provide evidence for the validity of the genre analysis.

The semi-structured interviews

In order to answer the study questions in this study, some parameters from the CNP model (Munby, 1978) namely from the parameters of *Interaction, Instrumentality, Target level and Communicative key* were adapted and modified. Table 2 shows the constructs of the semi-structured interview questions used during the interviews. However, the interview questions were not restricted to the parameters of the CNP Model. Modifications were made in order to gather the necessary information from the respondents, especially information related to the extent of the use of the identified moves in the genre.

Table 2: *The Construct of the Semi-Structured Interview Questions*

Parameters from CNP Model	Adapted semi-structured Interview Question
Interaction	1. Who are the participants communicating within the work procedures?
Instrumentality	2. What are the strategies used by the authors of the work procedures when preparing the work procedures? 3. Are the strategies (referring to the moves identified in the move analysis) exclusive to the author when he or she is preparing the document?
Target level	4. What is the level of knowledge required in order to prepare the document according to the company's goals? 5. What is the level of command of the written English language expected from the author of the work procedure?
Communicative key	6. While preparing the written work procedures, what are the keys that need to be understood or produced by the author? 7. For each of the identified move, what is the relevant knowledge required? 8. For each of the identified move, what is the expected outcome to be achieved?

In order to aid the depth, equality, clarity and validity of the responses elicited, attention was paid to the formality of the interviews conducted, the settings of the interviews and the approach used. All the interviews were conducted in the offices of the QSHE Senior Managers, using a formal approach, indicating the time and duration of the interviews, where the specific interview protocols were first explained to the respondents.

Clarifications were made for contradictory explanations and in-depth opinions were sought using prompts where necessary. As the interviewees requested high level of confidentiality and to remain anonymous throughout the study, the responses elicited were taken down as short notes and later was transcribed into a word document. Therefore, recording was avoided as it was deemed necessary to create a sense of confidence during the interviews and to avoid being obstructive to the nature of the work environment in the settings.

3. Data Analysis

The responses from the interviews were screened and significant themes were identified, prior to the tabulation of the identified themes, to be used to support clarification of the genre analysis. The tabulated themes were used to justify the answers to the inquiries made in the study.

All the accounts, produced by the respondents, to the semi-structured interview questions were interpreted, taken into consideration and analyzed in order to identify significant patterns of consistency and variation in them. First, the interviews' data was taken down as notes in a diary. The notes were jotted down exactly as they were given as responses to the questions asked. Then, the notes were typed into a word document and saved in the computer. Next, this was followed by the identification of similar information which was tabulated into categories of related themes. The themes were kept simple but relatively accommodative of any new or additional information gained from the data. Finally, the themes were tabulated and illustrated with quotations from the notes. During the interview sessions, it was noticed that on a few occasions, the interview questions had to be rephrased or simplified in order to allow the respondent to provide required information to the related questions and to avoid

misinterpretation of the questions asked. The probing technique was used to get additional data from the informants.

Thematic analysis

The responses from the semi-structured interview questions were analysed using the thematic approach, where four general themes were identified from the responses received during the interviews. The interview data was coded and analysed using constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The constant comparative method of identifying related themes "combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing" (Conrad et al., 1993:280). The collected data, in the form of the responses elicited from the interviews, were coded using open coding where suitable codes were assigned after reading the responses in Microsoft Word. For example, the code 'supervisor' was attributed to the responses which referred to interlocutors in the work procedures while the code 'instruction' referred to the style used by the authors to prepare the work procedures. This was then followed by the axial coding, where the connections were established between the categories derived from the open coding. To maintain trustworthiness, the data was subjected to an audit trail (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) where code-recode strategies were used while identifying suitable codes in the transcripts.

During the interview sessions, it was noticed that a single question asked tend to result in responses to more than a single code. Next, the codes were analysed and tabulated into the responding themes as shown in Table 3. The following section discusses each identified theme emerging from the responses of the interview questions asked. The discussion is supported with some examples of the responses received.

Table 3: *Tabulation of the themes from the semi-structured interview questions*

Interview Questions	Identified Theme
1. Who are the participants communicating within the work procedures?	Interaction involving the work procedure
2. What are the strategies used by the authors of the work procedures when preparing the work procedures? 3. Are the strategies (referring to the moves identified in the move analysis) exclusive to the author when he or she is preparing the document?	Strategies used when writing the work procedures
4. What is the level of knowledge required in order to prepare the document according to the company's goals?	Target level of knowledge required

5. What is the level of command of the written English language expected from the author of the work procedure?	
6. While preparing the written work procedures, what are the keys that need to be understood or produced by the author? 7. For each of the identified move, what is the relevant knowledge required? 8. For each of the identified move, what is the expected outcome to be achieved?	Communicative key required

4. Findings

In order to complement the findings of the genre analysis, it is first necessary to provide some information related to the type of people involved in preparing and using the work procedures in the companies. Thus, to enhance the overall genre analysis conducted, during the semi-structured interviews, the respondents were asked to elicit the interlocutors within the work procedures. Some of the responses received stated that the people involved in the written communication of the work procedures are mainly the engineers and the workers at the fabrication yards of the companies. For example, SPIN3 stated that"most of the participants are the workers, the welders, supervisors, fire watchers, grinders, blasters, painters, machine operators" (SPIN3).

Supporting the above statement is a response received from another specialist informant, SPIN6, who stated that"the participants in the procedures are the workers and the engineers, for example the welders who weld the parts on the yards [where] they need to follow instructions in the procedures and the engineers like us who prepare the documents" (SPIN6).

The work procedures are mainly prepared as references and used by the supervisors to explain the steps involved in the job to be performed by the workers, as stated by SPIN4; "the documents are used for reference purposes, especially for the supervisors when they explain to the field workers [and] to the people who are involve directly with the welding work" (SPIN4).

The structural linguistics analysis provided some evidence that the authors of the work procedures are expected to have a sufficient level of structural knowledge when preparing the work procedures. This is supported by a response elicited by SPIN6 stating that "it is very important [where] all the sentences must be correct [or] the worker will not understand what I am trying to tell if the sentence is not correct". The importance of having sufficient linguistics knowledge was further emphasised since the work procedures are subjected to auditing and should "follow ISO standards" (SPIN6) set by the auditing body.The following section discusses the themes that emerged from the data analysed. The findings are supported with illustrative quotes from the specialist informants' responses during the interviews.

Interaction involving the work procedure

The first theme which emerged from the responses is related to the involvement of the participants in the work procedures. A semi-structured question was asked to indicate the interlocutors communicating within the work procedures.

Basically, the work procedures are prepared as guidelines for the general workers at the sites. However, the finding shows that interlocutors in the communication events of the work procedures include the welders, fire watchers, grinders, machine operators, site supervisors and engineers. Examples of responses highlighting the interactions within the work procedures are;

> "...most of the participants are the workers… the welders, supervisors, fire watchers… the grinders, blasters, painters… machine operators etc… we have many types of workers on the yard"

(SPIN1)

"…the participants in the procedures are the workers and the engineers… for example… the welders who weld the parts on the yards… they need to follow instructions in the procedures… and the engineers like us who prepare the documents" (SPIN3)

"…the documents are used for reference purpose… especially for the supervisors when they explain to the field workers like… to the people who are involve directly with the welding work… and the people who are doing the grinding work on the ships… the supervisors are responsible to explain the content of the work procedures"

(SPIN4)

These documents play crucial roles, where each document highlights the safety measures to be taken while conducting the on-site jobs of the industry. The workers are guided by the step-by-step job explanations and elaborations written and documented in the work procedures. Thus, it is important for the authors of the work procedures to use writing strategies that are able to indicate clear instructions to be read, understood and followed by those who are communicating within the documents.

Strategies used when writing the work procedures

The second theme that was identified from the series of interviews with the senior managers and the engineers involved in the preparation of the work procedures is the strategies used when writing the work procedures. Two semi-structured interview questions were asked to identify the strategies used when writing the procedures. The first interview question asked about the types of strategies used by the authors of the work procedures when preparing the work procedures.

The findings show that most authors use simple and straight forward style of writing, leaving little to no space of ambiguities. SPIN1, for example, stated that the "strategies [used] depends on individual who is writing the procedure [some] prefer to use simple and straight forward type of writing.". The authors prefer to go "direct to the point" (SPIN1) and "be very specific about what we want to write" (SPIN1). The authors seem to prefer short but precise writing strategies and often avoid long and lengthy elaborations of the procedures to be performed for each task.

The findings also showed that most authors tend to "write according to the requirements" (SPIN4), as each company has its own rules and regulations when it comes to preparing these documents, and must "must follow certain format like" (SPIN4) and "must have the objectives written down clearly and… (pause) and also must write in detail all the steps of the procedure" (SPIN4).

Generally, the work procedures are prepared using simple sentences and many technical words that is exclusive to the specific discourse community. Information provided by SPIN4 supported this;

"…well that depends… normally we use simple sentences but we also use complex wordings…(pause) more technical words… (pause) that people like you may not understand… (pause) we are taught to describe the procedure very precisely… (pause) very specific that any worker can understand the meaning and can do exactly as written"

(SPIN4)

Further describing the strategies used, SPIN4 stated that "we are taught to describe the procedure very precisely". From the response elicited by SPIN4, it was found that the authors of the written communication often attend short courses to learn the strategies of writing these documents prior to the actual production of the written work procedures. SPIN4 claimed that'

"we are taught to write the procedures, normally we attend a day or two days short courses to learn on how to write the documents, where we gather in groups to discuss how to write the procedures then we have to come back and teach our colleagues, normally we have briefings".

On the question related to applying the same strategy of writing among the authors, SPIN4 stated that there are usually some differences in writing styles being used by the authors as "after the training or the short course... we will come back to our own departments and start writing the procedures according to the need of our own department" (SPIN4). However, according to SPIN4, the authors tend to use the same or similar writing styles but with some differences "in the words we use" (SPIN4).

Referring to the language used by the authors, SPIN6 stated that "normally I use basic English… sometimes I need to put some definitions and words that many outsiders will not understand, I will write direct to the point sometimes can take many sentences to write one step… we must write very clearly because we guide the workers to do the job" (SPIN6).

The second interview question asked was: Are the strategies (referring to the moves identified in the move analysis) exclusive to the author when he or she is preparing the document? Examples of responses received were;

> *"...well it depends on the author actually… whether they want to use their own style to write or just follow how their friends are writing… but I am sure that when they write the engineers are aware of their very own way of writing… they are experienced and have done this earlier… so writing should not be a problem to them… they must be capable of preparing such documents because it is part of their job requirement"* (SPIN4)

> *"...yes, the strategies of writing is up to the individual… how she or he want to write is up to them… but if we write wrongly then the auditing people will point out the mistakes and… we correct them… normally the senior manager will check the documents first"*

(SPIN5)

Unlike other respondents, SPIN5 also claimed to be using his own specific writing style stating "I write using my own style and normally we are guided by some standards like ISO standards and the company's requirement but we have to write it in our own words because it is our job to prepare the documents for the workers in the yard" (SPIN5). Supporting this, SPIN6 stated that "the strategies depend on the writer, if the writer wants to use simple English or high standard of English, it all depend on the writer" (SPIN6). The use of simple sentences by the authors of the written communicative events in the work procedures is rather obvious as claimed by most of the respondents. This may be due to the level of English language knowledge of the authors.

Target level of knowledge required

The third theme identified is related to the level of knowledge required by the authors of the work procedures. Two semi-structured interview questions were asked to highlight the target level of knowledge required from the authors when writing the procedures. Responding to the first question which addresses the level of knowledge required in order to prepare the document according to the company's goals, some of the responses received were;

> *"very high level… they must know most of the standard requirements… if it is related to QHSE… the author must be well verse with the standards and the requirements and have sufficient knowledge to write the procedures"* (SPIN1)

> *"of course, must have a high level of knowledge… (pause) only then we can prepare the procedures… (pause) the procedures are very important… (pause) without the knowledge no one can write them"*

(SPIN2)

A high level of English language knowledge is required of the authors of the written work procedure. This is in line with "the standard requirements" (SPIN1) and "the author must be well verse with the standards and the requirements and have sufficient knowledge to write the procedures" (SPIN1). The requirement of a good command of English language may be due to the nature of the industry where most of the clients are from countries where English language is the international language of business-oriented procedures.

On the level of command of written English language expected from the authors, most of the specialist informants agreed that a good command of written English is important to produce the work procedures. SPIN1 stated that "very high command of English is required as you know we are always dealing with clients from oversea, so the English must be very good" (SPIN1). The importance of the documents was highlighted by SPIN1 as "the documents are important, that is why the clients are here to see how we do our work in the yard" (SPIN1).

The information provided also suggested that in case an author is not having sufficient knowledge and command of written English, he or she may face difficulties relating to job competency as stated by one of the respondents "if you cannot write good English then this job is not for you" (SPIN4), where "without such skills or ability may disqualified him to perform the task" (SPIN4).

Emphasis on good command of written English is also indicated as important due to the fact that "every day we have clients from overseas and they want to see our documents, so we have to show them that we are good" (SPIN4). The knowledge required by the authors is reflected by their abilities to use certain communicative keys which are exclusively used in the communicative events associated generally to the discourse community of the petroleum industry, and specifically to the discourse community of the QHSE department, specifically.

Communicative key required

The fourth theme identified is related to the use of specific communicative keys required in order to write the work procedures. Three semi-structured interview questions were asked to highlight the

communicative keys used by the authors when writing the procedures. The first interview question asked required the respondents to provide information regarding the types of the communicative keys that are most needed to be understood or produced by the authors.

Conforming to the specific objectives of the QHSE departments, the authors are mandated with the task of producing work procedures that are clear and comprehensible to the readers, who are the end-users of the documents. The task of preparing the written work procedures requires the authors to identify and use specific technical terms suitable for the exact on-site jobs such as scaffolding, blasting, painting, welding and polishing.

The main objectives of the work procedures have to be stated clearly, as confirmed by SPIN1 that "the communicative keys that the authors must understand will be the objectives of the procedures… able to state the scopes covered… write down the steps clearly and… state the responsibilities of the persons involved" (SPIN1). The inclusion of the specific communicative keys requires the authors "to understand and state the purpose of the procedures, the scope covered, the references used, the definitions of terms, the person responsible for each and every task" (SPIN4). It also important to "attach the required appendix together with the procedure" (SPIN4).

The responses also suggested that the authors should be "able to outline the proper steps of the procedures" (SPIN4) indicating the importance of the authors knowing the exact procedures involved in performing a single on-site task and be able to "write down clear step by step instructions for others to follow" (SPIN4), where it is necessary for the authors to "know how to describe the steps in a very clear statement" (SPIN4).

The second interview question responding to this theme asked about the relevant knowledge required in order to prepare the work procedure. The data gathered from this particular semi-structured question suggested that the authors of the written documents to be competent and knowledgeable of various procedures. The authors need "to have enough knowledge of what we are writing in the work procedures" (SPIN1). Additionally, the authors are expected "to know the main objective or the requirement of the procedure in the first place… know what to explain…how to describe the whole process involved in the task written in the procedure" (SPIN1). To achieve this, "the author can get the information from related manuals, the company provide these manuals so it is not difficult for the authors to get the required information" (SPIN3).

Regarding the expected outcome to be achieved from the strategies used when writing, data elicited suggested that the authors expected to "fulfil our main objectives for writing these procedures, for example when we write about scaffolding or handling of the lifting trucks, we expect others to be able to do the job properly, without mistakes" (SPIN1). This is crucial because "the procedure that we write is to make sure there is no mistake when doing the job or else it can cause major accidents" (SPIN1), thus providing evidence on the dependability of the on-site workers on the written work procedures, since any misinterpretation or ambiguity may lead to serious life-threatening consequences.

When asked the authors' expectation from those who read the procedures, the specialist informants stated that after reading the "step by step guidelines" (SPIN1) of the job in the written work procedure, the

workers are expected "to do the jobs without having any difficulties, they must understand the procedures, only then they can work in the yard" (SPIN2).

5. Discussion

The thematic analysis of the responses received from the specialist informants highlighted four important themes related to the intercultural communication occurring in the selected discourse community. The identified themes are;

> *Theme 1:* ***Interaction involving the work procedure***
>
> *Theme 2:* ***Strategies used when writing the work procedures***
>
> *Theme 3:* ***Target level of knowledge required***
>
> *Theme 4:* ***Communicative key required,***

For first theme: ***Interaction involving the work procedure***, the respondents provided input on the interaction occurring within the work procedures. From the responses received, it is understood that basically the work procedures are prepared to provide working guidelines to the interlocutors in the communicative events. Participants in the written communication are engineers, supervisors, welders, grinders, painters, blasters and machine operators. These communicators are required to understand and follow the instructions stated in the written procedures. According to the respondents, the written documents serve as references and are important.

The second theme: ***Strategies used when writing the work procedures***, is investigated using semistructured questions such as; *What are the strategies used by the authors of the work procedures when preparing the work procedures?* and *Are the strategies exclusive to the author when he or she is preparing the document*? Responses received suggested that the written communication is prepared using simple and short sentences which are "direct to the point" and are specifically stated. According to one of the specialist informants, the written communication has to be prepared according to the requirements of the companies which have their own rules and formats. The documents are prepared to achieve certain goals and objectives and are very detailed. It can be concluded here that the written communication is highly technical and is goal-oriented.

Responses received for the third theme: ***Target level of knowledge required***, suggested that the authors of the written communication are required to possess a good level of linguistics knowledge and should be aware of the "standard requirements". It is also highlighted that without such knowledge, the authors may find it difficult to prepare the written documents. Referring to English language knowledge, the specialist informants stated that it is crucial for the authors to have good command of the language as they (the authors) are always dealing with international clients.

For the fourth theme: ***Communicative key required***, it was highlighted that some of the important communicative keys include the ability to mention the objectives of the procedures, to state the scope covered by the procedures and the ability to clearly write the steps involved in each of the procedure.

The specialist informants have provided the main study with some very crucial information regarding the importance of the written communication. The Malaysian petroleum industry mirrors an array of intercultural settings where Malaysia, being a multicultural country with Islamic religion as its official religion and English being its official language, it is often a common practise to use English language in the workplaces of the nation. The petroleum industry reflects intercultural setting through the employment of individuals from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Mainly, in this industry, one will find majority ethnicity groups of Malays, Indians, Chinese and others such as Punjabis, Buddhist, Japanese, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis or even English employees. In the intercultural settings of the multinational industry, it was found that the interlocutors in a written communication play important roles as performers of the actions stated. The descriptive nature of the written communicative event (the work procedures), requires the authors to have specific and fundamental linguistics knowledge, without which the main purpose of the written communicative event may not be achieved.

Overall, the identified themes contributed to the effectiveness of the specific written communication. The workers at the fabrication yards of the companies and the engineers who prepare the work procedures are

the main communicators within the written communicative event; the work procedures. The communication is transmitted via a written document called the *work procedure*. General implications made from the semi-structured interviews included;

1. The interaction occurring within the work procedures is mainly involving the QHSE engineers, supervisors and the workers working on the yards.

2. The written strategies (moves) used are exclusively determined by the authors of the work procedures.

3. The written strategies (moves) used by the authors are guided by the companies' specific goals and requirements.

4. The authors are free to apply their own individual style of writing.

5. A good level of grammatical knowledge and ability to write clear and precise instructions in the work procedures are expected from the authors of the work procedures.

6. The target level of knowledge required by the companies is reflected in the writings produced by the QHSE engineers.

7. The communicative keys required to be mastered by the authors are determined and set by the companies' goals and requirements.

8. The communicative keys are indicative of the content of the work procedures.

Findings from the semi-structured interviews were used to validate the findings from a bigger study project consisting of a move analysis and a structural linguistics analysis. The communicators exhibit content knowledge through the preparation of the written communication. The use of specialist informants have contributed to the understanding of the specific nature of the written work procedures used as guidelines to conduct various on-site jobs at the selected settings. Understanding the fundamental role of the written work procedures helped the researchers to identify the important linguistics elements required by the engineers (authors) who are engaged in preparing the written documents.

6. Conclusion

As proposed by the New Rhetorical study (Connor, 2004), specialist informants' views should be regarded as reliable and important feedback analysis conducted. According to Bhatia (1993:29) investigation of structural strategies used in a genre falls within the third level of linguistic analysis which is the structural interpretation of a genre. The structural interpretation of the text-genre highlights the cognitive aspects of language organization (Bhatia, 1993:29). Bhatia (1993:19) placed the cognitive aspects of language organization under the psycholinguistic orientation (Bhatia, 1993: 19) as it reveals the cognitive structuring of the texts. The writer tends to concentrate on tactical aspects of genre construction highlighting individual strategic choices made to execute his or her intention (Bhatia, 1993:19).

The selected strategies used by the author of the written work procedures reflects the author's purpose of writing the genre, identifying what goes on in his or her mind while writing the specific text. Generally, the strategies do not change the "…essential communicative purpose of the genre" (Bhatia, 1993:20). However, the strategies used identify and highlight the social-cultural context in which the genre is prepared. Thus, it can be concluded that the originality of the strategies used is reader focused. "Who is the reader?" and "What is the message to be communicated?" are the two main questions in the writer's mind when generating the strategies used in the texts.

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