

**LITERACY PRACTICES IN MULTICULTURAL TRADING EXCHANGES
OF STATE-OWNED COMPANY EMPLOYEES**

A THESIS

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FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND TEACHING SCIENCES

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DECLARATION

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Certify that the thesis entitled “Literacy Practices in Multicultural Trading Exchanges of State-Owned Company Employees” is my work, and I did not do any plagiarism or inappropriate quotation against the ethics and rules commended by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Indonesia Number 17, 2010 regarding plagiarism in higher education. Therefore, I deserve to face court if I am found to have plagiarized this work.

Palembang, July 2024

The Undersigned,



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MOTTO

Come out, speak for yourself 'cause you are the leader of your life. You are the voice of your own. I believed in myself and that's why I'm standing here

- *Catriona Gray, Miss Universe 2019* -

DEDICATION

This thesis is sincerely dedicated to:

My beloved parents, Bpk Saprul Zawawi & Ibu Mariyon
Who always give me the best prayer and their encouragement at all times.
Thank you for being a part of my life and for loving me endlessly

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Palembang, July 2024

The writer,



Nanda Nadya

LITERACY PRACTICES IN MULTICULTURAL TRADING EXCHANGES OF STATE-OWNED COMPANY EMPLOYEES

ABSTRACT

Multicultural interaction between overseas customers and state-owned company employees has become increasingly commonplace in the context of international business activities within open market trade areas. Establishing the ASEAN Free Trade Area in 2015 has fostered an open market environment, facilitating meetings and transactions among people from diverse backgrounds. This paper examines the engagement between customers from various cultural backgrounds and employees of state-owned companies. Utilizing a qualitative approach anchored in a case study, we explored these multicultural interactions, highlighting a vibrant marketplace where individuals from different nations converge to exchange goods and services. Data for this study was collected through observations of interactions and in-depth interviews with seven employees working in the docking area. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of this study underscore the importance of language learning experiences, language competence, language practice in multicultural interactions, the impact of English language skills on employee career advancement. The results indicate that proficiency in English significantly enhances employees' ability to engage effectively in multicultural settings, thereby positively influencing their career trajectories. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of multicultural interactions in international business and the pivotal role of language skills in facilitating these exchanges.

Keywords: learning experience, language interaction, communication strategies and employees' perception

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents (1) background, (2) problems of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, and (4) the significance of the study.

1.1 The Background of the Study

Since implementing the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 2015, trading exchanges between countries have been more intensified as the national borders are open for the members to exchange goods and services that represent an agreement to establish a free trade area in Southeast Asia. AFTA aims to increase investment, labour information, and technology exchange flows between developed and developing countries in the Southeast Asian region. It is in line with Yuguang (2022) opinion that the open market can be interpreted as a meeting and transaction to buy services and goods offered between sellers and buyers from various countries with different backgrounds. The open market is one of Indonesia's opportunities in the ASEAN free trade area. It is an opportunity for people in the era of globalization, known as the free market, which demands that everyone equip themselves with reliable resources, especially in communication. However, there are barriers to communication between people from different backgrounds in cross-country trade. The obstacles will become a demand in society, as stated by Aristiawan (2023) the era of the free market requires every person to prepare themselves with a reliable resource, especially in communications. Although, many Indonesians still have not mastered foreign languages, especially English, to communicate in cross-border trade activities.

The rise of English as a language of global communication has impacted the language ideology and practices worldwide (Hafizha et al., 2023). Mastering a foreign language individually, especially English, is a must to increase professionalism in communication and make the information conveyed easier to understand. This

statement is supported by Sengkey et al. (2020) that effective communication fosters better understanding and collaboration, which is essential for successful business transactions and international relations. In international trading exchanges, communication between countries presents opportunities for multicultural trade and collaboration. People realize that the more they need to enter the global world, the more they have to find ways to effectively participate in transnational social spaces, which require the navigation of multiple languages and literacies (Silvhiany, 2019). However, many Indonesian people still think that English needs to be more critical in business; because many consider it only for educational purposes, such as a subject at school/university or for continuing education overseas. Therefore, it is expected to find people, especially company employees in Indonesia, who must be made aware of the importance of English as an international communication tool.

Based on international trade activities at one of the state-owned companies as the first fertilizer producer in Indonesia, this study examined how trading that involved multilingual and multicultural interactions reflect a transnational space wherein understanding of cultural differences and translingual practices became the means to be participative. In fact, international export-import activities often face obstacles, such as the low quality of Human Resources (HR) in mastering English or other foreign languages. The main hindrance is the need for more awareness regarding the necessity of possessing foreign language skills as an essential ability for every individual. Duff (2019) highlights that English is a communication tool that conveys accurate information that both parties can understand. Understanding English is pivotal for success in all trade, investment, and business aspects.

The English language has an indispensable role in mastering communication and engaging directly. As a means of global communication, English must be actively controlled orally and in writing (Grigoryeva & Zakirova, 2022). Considering international trade activities at a state-owned company in Indonesia, which produces products sold abroad, it becomes crucial to enhance human resources quality among company employees tasked with direct communication with foreign parties. As one of

Indonesia's pioneering fertilizer producers in Palembang, South Sumatra, this company has established itself as a leader in fertilizer sales. However, it was observed that not all employees in this department possess proficient English skills. Nevertheless, despite limited English communication abilities, sales activities of Bulk Urea Fertilizer and Liquid Ammonia continue to rely on a field communication style or non-verbal communication, comprehensible only from the transportation process's initiation to the products' loading onto the ship throughout working hours.

Based on the statement above, the buying and selling process continues even though the communication between employees and crew are not complete and correctly in English. However, they employ a field communication style with body language while loading products onto ships. This language serves as a means of communication between employees and crew, ensuring the trading process continues. Given the observed phenomenon, it can serve as the research focus on company employees responsible for foreign trading exchanges. This research aims to identify the interactions by state-owned company employees in multicultural trading exchanges, to determine how employees prepare themselves to navigate trading exchanges with multicultural backgrounds, to analyze the language interaction between Indonesian workers and global customers from diverse language and cultural backgrounds, and to analyze the social communicative patterns of master loading interactions in the transnational context. This research discusses the phenomenon of literacy practices in multicultural trading exchanges of state-owned company employees in international trading exchanges. It aims to address the following questions.

Some studies have researched literacy practices in multicultural interaction in international trading exchanges. The writer highlighted several studies used as references, such as those for second language learning Strömmer (2015) conducted in Finland. This study's main objective was to examine language learning opportunities in a cleaning job, which is a typical entry-level job for immigrants. An ethnographic case study approach is taken to investigate examples of the conditions that allow or prevent language learning for the focal participant. This sub-Saharan man works as a

cleaner in Finland. This case illustrates on a micro-scale the impact of the new economy on a worker in a company that has outsourced its cleaning services. Another study Canagarajah (2018), conducted in a mid-western US university, explores their competence for professional communication in their workplace. Though they acknowledge a lack of advanced grammatical proficiency in English, they state they are successful in professional communication. Though they acknowledge a lack of advanced grammatical proficiency in English, they state they are successful in professional communication.

Their success results from using diverse semiotic resources beyond language and the strategic alignment of semiotic resources with spatial and social ecologies in their communication. Then Aristiawan (2023), Intercultural communication on trading transactions at the Pringgarata traditional market. According to the article, communication is a process of expression between humans, which expresses thoughts or feelings to others by using language as a channel. In the buyer and seller interaction process, the ability to communicate (communicative competence), based on the speaker's cultural system, can support the success of work in the informal sector—then (Wang & Hu, 2022). This study was conducted in Taiwan. This study aims to explain the development of the information age and the continuous strengthening of the trend of global economic integration. International business activities have become increasingly frequent, and cross-cultural communication among business personnel has also played a considerable role. The importance of cross-cultural communication in international business activities is based on theoretical research on cross-cultural business communication. Given the differences in language, social history, and way of thinking in cross-cultural business communication.

The referenced studies provide valuable insights into language learning in entry-level jobs, professional communication in academia, intercultural communication in traditional markets, and theoretical aspects of cross-cultural business communication. Canagarajah (2018) explores professional communication competence in a mid-western US university, demonstrating successful communication through diverse

semiotic resources despite limited grammatical proficiency. Aristiawan (2023) focuses on intercultural communication in trading transactions at a traditional market, emphasizing the role of communicative competence based on cultural systems in the informal sector. Wang and Hu (2022) discuss the importance of cross-cultural communication in international business, considering differences in language, social history, and ways of thinking. However, there needs to be more in the context of state-owned companies with unique organizational structures, policies, and cultural dynamics. To fill this gap, research on "Literacy Practices in Multicultural Trading Exchanges of State-Owned Company Employees" should investigate the specific literacy practices of state-owned companies engaged in multicultural trading exchanges. It should explore how the unique context of state-owned companies influences these literacy practices and intercultural communication. It is crucial to identify the challenges employees face in these interactions and the strategies they use to overcome them. Additionally, analyzing how organizational policies and structures impact literacy practices and multicultural communication will provide a comprehensive understanding.

Although slightly different from the research conducted by Wang and Hu (2022), that research confirms the importance of cross-cultural communication in international business, considering differences in language, social history, and ways of thinking. Besides that, This research uniquely focuses on state-owned companies, an area previously unexplored in depth, examining how their organizational structures, policies, and cultural dynamics influence literacy practices and intercultural communication. By investigating the context of multicultural trading exchanges, the study highlights the complexities and nuances of these interactions, providing a fresh perspective often overlooked in broader communication strategies. It also delves into employees' practical challenges and strategies to overcome them, offering valuable insights for researchers and practitioners. This research bridges the significant contributions to intercultural communication, organizational studies, and literacy practices.

The research on literacy practices in multicultural trading exchange has several educational implications. It can inform curriculum development in business, communication, and intercultural studies by integrating case studies from state-owned companies to illustrate the complexities of multicultural trading exchanges. Intercultural communication training programs can be designed to focus on practical strategies for effective communication in multicultural settings, addressing the unique challenges faced by employees in state-owned companies. Language learning programs can emphasize the importance of diverse semiotic resources and strategic communication. Professional development workshops for current employees and managers can enhance literacy practices and intercultural communication skills. Educational institutions can collaborate with state-owned companies to develop policies and training programs that support the literacy practices of employees, ensuring that educational content is relevant and aligned with workforce needs. The findings can inspire further academic research and help educators create real-world scenarios and simulations for students, enhancing their readiness for multicultural work environments.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

1. How do language interactions between Indonesian workers and international customers look like?
2. How do the communicators (employees and international customers) employ the communicative strategies in communication?
3. What are the Indonesian employees' perceptions regarding the multilingual interactions?

1.3 The Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the language interactions between Indonesian workers and international customers.
2. To find out the communicative strategies the communicators (Indonesian workers and international customers) employ in communication.
3. To find out the Indonesian employees' perception regarding the multilingual interactions.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

From this study, people who read This research will realize the critical importance of possessing the ability to communicate in a foreign language, mainly English, in the context of international business. By emphasizing this necessity, the study seeks to advocate for enhancing foreign language skills among company employees who directly engage with global customers. To achieve this goal, the research proposes implementing in-house training programs tailored for the employees of PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja. Such initiatives will improve the workforce's linguistic capabilities and enhance their effectiveness in multicultural trading exchanges. By doing so, the company can ensure more efficient and clear communication, fostering better business relationships and facilitating smoother transactions in the global market. This study's findings will be valuable for PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja and similar organizations. It will provide actionable insights into the benefits and strategies for developing robust foreign language proficiency within their teams.

1.5 The Limitation of the Study

This research has limitations of the study for making this research more clear. According to Phair (2022), research limitations are, at the most superficial level, the study's weakness based on factors often outside of our control as researchers. These factors could include limited time, access to funding, equipment, data, or participants. This limitation was significant because it limited the study the researcher wanted to

focus on in order to conduct the research. This study focused on literacy practices in multicultural trading exchanges of state-owned company employees who work in the PPU and Dermaga Khusus departments. In this case, the author focused on Literacy Practices. The researcher identified the challenges faced by state-owned company employees in multicultural trading exchanges, how the employees prepared themselves to face the trading exchanges with multicultural backgrounds, analyzed the language interaction between Indonesian workers and the global customer perspective from different language and cultural backgrounds, and analyzed the social communicative patterns of master loading's interaction in the transnational context.

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