Multicultural Interactions in International Trading: State-Owned Company Employees' Perspectives

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Abstract

In the context of international business activity in open market trade areas, multicultural interaction among customers overseas and state-owned company employees has become increasingly common place. The ASEAN Free Trade Area, established in 2015, has encouraged an open market wherein meetings and transactions among people with different backgrounds occur. This paper focuses on the engagement between customers from diverse backgrounds and employees of state-owned companies. Employing a qualitative approach anchored in a case study, we examined multicultural interactions, presenting a vibrant marketplace where individuals from various nations converge to exchange goods and services. This study draws upon data from observations of the 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 highlight cultural sensitivity in communication and global translingual communication strategies. In detail, the paper reveals employees' diverse experiences as they navigate interactions with overseas customers in the field of international trade. These findings summarize various insights, highlighting cross-cultural encounters' challenges, opportunities and dynamics. By explaining interactions and employees' vantage point of their experience, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the interactions between diverse interests in global markets, thereby offering valuable implications for those involved.

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Introduction

Since the implementation of 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. 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. However, despite the open market's opportunities, communication barriers persist due to language differences. The demands society that must face in entering the era of the free market include preparing every employee with a reliable resource, especially in communications (Jaya & Aristiawan, 2023). However, international export-import activities generally have classic obstacles, such as low quality of human resources (HR), weak ability to master foreign languages, and low awareness of honed skills in mastering English or other languages. Piller and Lising (2014) argued that when language proficiency is not a recruitment criterion with limited English language proficiency, there are only limited opportunities to practice language at work. Considering social and economic factors in its spread, the main reason for the dominance of English lies in its extraordinary applicability in all spheres of human activity. The connected world is mediated through varieties of English spoken in many parts of the world (Grigoryeva & Zakirova, 2022).

The rise of English as a language of global communication has impacted the language ideology and practices worldwide (Hafizha et al., 2023). English is vital in connecting and engaging people within the global community in the increasingly opened borders (Indriani et al., 2021). 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). English is an apt symbol for the themes of globalization, and it is in line with the opinion Sengkey et al. (2020) that understanding English is essential for all trade, investment, and business aspects.

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 (Canagarajah, 2018). In the docking area, not all employees in charge of this section have qualified English skills. However, Master loaders are often become the front liners who interact and welcome foreign ships directly in buying and selling transactions of company products despite the fact that they are not employees in the marketing, sales or public relations departments.

Based on this phenomenon, research on the multicultural interaction between Indonesian employees and international customers in trading exchanges with countries on the Asian and European continents, such as China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, Canada and other European countries. Even though the trend of English is increasing in Indonesia, scientific research publications on this issue still need to be expanded. This article discusses the phenomenon of international trade in one of the state-owned companies in Indonesia, exploring the interactions between company employees and international

customers. It aims to address the following question: How do the interaction of Indonesian workers contribute to the successful communication in international trading exchanges with customers from diverse backgrounds?

Literature Review

Multicultural interaction

Multicultural interaction can occur in various contexts, including workplaces, communities, and trading exchanges where people from different cultural backgrounds collaborate, communicate, and engage. The definition of multicultural interaction by Liu (2020) concerns the works that are explicitly about multicultural societies or are implicitly multicultural in the sense of inscribing readers from other cultures inside their cultural dynamics. As human beings Wang and Hu (2022) stated that we often meet with many people with various language backgrounds. In this context, multicultural interaction unfolds as a dynamic process where traders, buyers, sellers, and intermediaries from varied cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds converge to engage in commercial transactions. Multicultural interaction permeates various facets of the trading process within the dynamic landscape of trading exchanges (Yuguang, 2022). From negotiation and communication to decision-making and problem-solving, individuals navigate the complexities of cultural diversity while striving to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

As it is commonly understood, there are several obstacles when interacting with people with different backgrounds. Engaging people from multicultural backgrounds is complicated because this interaction is their personal experience (Im et al., 2022). It also stated that heightened cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural communication skills, and a profound understanding of cultural nuances are necessary to navigate multicultural dynamics and build trust among stakeholders effectively. Understanding and respecting each other's cultures and communication styles is essential to make these exchanges successful and build trust among everyone involved. So, trading exchanges extend beyond the confines of traditional face-to-face interactions to encompass virtual platforms and digital communication channels. In today's globalized marketplace, traders leverage technology to engage with partners and counterparts across borders. Effective multicultural interaction does require skills. Effective multicultural interaction in trading exchanges necessitates proficiency in digital communication tools as stated Lei (2022), adaptability to diverse communication styles, and a keen awareness of cultural differences.

Translingual practices

In the contemporary world characterized by transnational mobility, translingual practice has become the norm in interactions among people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Silvhiany, 2019). The notion of translingual practice suggests that incorporating English into global interactions while blending it with speakers' native languages and cultural values facilitates the development of diverse negotiation approaches. These approaches aid speakers in understanding different English variants and establishing novel conventions, enabling

individuals to integrate various local languages alongside English in global settings (Im et al., 2022). Translingual approach focuses on the mixtures of linguistic features within one or more languages (Canagarajah, 2018). It is building a bridge between the language abilities a person has and can have. Therefore, every translingual writer has the freedom to express their language in multiple verbal systems.

Translingual looks deeper at understanding the production, circulation, and reception of always-mobile texts and draws from diverse languages, symbol systems, and communication modalities (Huang, 2021). Furthermore, it is better to try for competence in a repertoire of codes and discourses (Hawkins, 2018). The phenomenon of translingual communication as the international status of English affects all actors in the global marketplace, meaning it takes precedence over form (Theodoropoulou, 2020). Moreover, Canagarajah (2018) have also stressed, the globalization of English has blurred the boundaries between nativeness and non-nativeness, particularly in the marketplace, as long as competency is sufficient to avoid misunderstanding and hindrance to business goals. Moreover, Duff (2019) has argued that languages have three aspects: communication, identity, and culture. Advances in computer and mobile technology have not only blurred the boundaries of countries around the globe but also changed modes of communication, such as transnational and translingual communication, using multimodal resources (Canagarajah, 2021).

English is the most common communication medium among speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in this new era (Sapriati et al., 2021). These designations capture communicative interactions among diverse English speakers who strive to achieve alignment as they engage in mutually understandable conversation among their standard language varieties. Enhance mutual comprehension between a company and its stakeholders, boost job opportunities, foster a more inclusive environment by embracing diverse talents among staff, enhance community engagement efforts, bolster corporate image, and extend market reach across various segments of stakeholders (Föbker, 2019).

Cultural sensitivity

As human beings, we often meet with many people with various language backgrounds. It means each of them has a unique rule, and we tend to follow the language rules of that person; with this tendency, our language is also increasingly diverse. As we engage with these individuals, we naturally adapt our language usage to align with their linguistic framework, thereby enriching the diversity of our linguistic repertoire. Language interaction most often implicates face-to-face interactions among speakers (Syam et al., 2023). This phenomenon of language interaction predominantly unfolds in face-to-face encounters, where speakers navigate the dynamic interplay of linguistic and cultural nuances. Cultural sensitivity is vital to our globalized world, where people from diverse backgrounds come together and interact daily. In our increasingly globalized world, characterized by the convergence of individuals from myriad cultural backgrounds, cultural sensitivity is a paramount imperative (Yu, 2023).

Understanding cultural sensitivities is essential to foster positive relationships, avoid misunderstandings, and promote social inclusivity. In line with the opinion Fanjanirina (2024) about Cultural sensitivity, it is an individual's effort to see beyond the tip of the iceberg and

try to understand the aspects of culture that hide but make up the base and the majority of the culture. Cultural sensitivity plays a pivotal role in effective communication across cultures (Viken et al., 2021). Each culture has its unique communication styles, norms, and gestures. Being culturally sensitive allows individuals to adapt their communication approach to ensure clear and respectful interactions. For example, in some cultures, direct eye contact may be considered rude, while in others, it is a sign of attentiveness. When a company fosters cultural sensitivity, it actively seeks input from employees of diverse backgrounds, ensuring that decisions are not biased and that everyone's voice can be heard clearly.

Cultural sensitivity in today's interconnected global economy is essential. Understanding business partners' cultural norms and practices is critical for building trust and fostering good relationships. By being culturally sensitive, businesses can navigate cultural differences and adapt their strategies accordingly, leading to fruitful collaborations. Business communication professionals must become competent in diversity and cultural issues to become an active and integral part of the global business environment Duff (2019) in a globalized world where people from various cultures interact daily, cultural sensitivity is crucial for effective communication and collaboration. By being culturally sensitive, we can build trust and establish meaningful connections, fostering a sense of unity among diverse communities. Becoming culturally aware of one's cultural norms and of other's cultural norms is the initial step toward understanding the differences among cultures and using one's understanding to better communicate and interact within a new culture (Grigoryeva & Zakirova, 2022).

Methodology

This study involved qualitative research using Ethnographic data analysis. According to Creswell and Poth (2018) qualitative research was a method for gaining an in-depth understanding of a case, including the participants, events, activities, processes, and individuals. The case study approach focused on PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja's employees serving as Master Loaders in the port for foreign ships. This case represented the flows of multicultural interactions between Indonesian workers and international customers, which challenged language practices in international trading. According to Miles et al. (2014) stated that qualitative researchers typically study a relatively small number of individuals or situations. They preserved the individuality of each in the analyses rather than collecting data from large samples and aggregating the data across individuals or situation (Saldana, 2016).

Research design, site, and participants

The study employed the Etnography study. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated *Ethnography* is the study of specific groupings within the context of social activities, symbols, material sources, and the unique interpretations characteristic of humans. The participants of this research were employees of PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja with various position levels. Participants for this study are selected based on their direct involvement with the subject matter, ensuring relevance to the research objectives. The selection includes a diverse range of employees at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang, varying in English proficiency, roles, and lengths of employment, to capture a wide array of experiences and perspectives. Purposeful sampling chooses

individuals most likely to provide rich, relevant, and diverse data, including trained and untrained employees in communication skills. The number of participants interviewed for the research was seven people from PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja as follows:

Table 1. *The participants*

No	Participants	Positions
1	Xa1	Supervisor
2	Xb2	Assistant supervisor
3	Xc3	Senior operator
4	Xd4	Senior operator
5	Xe5	Senior operator
6	Xf6	Senior operator
7	Xg7	Master loading

Data collection

The primary data of this study was obtained from observation and interviews. The data were collected by observing detailed phenomena and soliciting participants' perceptions to support the data. Over a span of five weeks, a total of seven one-hour observations were conducted at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang to study communication dynamics between employees and international customers. The preparation involved defining observation goals, securing necessary permissions, and selecting a diverse group of participants. Detailed notes and, where permitted, video/audio recordings were used for data collection. Then, we conducted the research instrument. We gathered data on The Multicultural Interaction of State-Owned Company Employees in International Trading Exchanges. The method for data collection involved in-depth interviews, supported by Rutledge and Hogg (2020), which described in-depth interviews as a qualitative research technique used to conduct detailed interviews with a small number of participants. In interviews at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang, 36 questions were asked to 7 employees. The questions, specifically designed for this study, were developed based on research objectives and a literature review. Interviews were scheduled at convenient times. Each interview began with an introduction and consent process, followed by detailed questioning and opportunities for participants to elaborate. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed to identify recurring themes and unique insights, with a follow-up session conducted to validate interpretations.

Data analysis procedures

I applied thematic analysis to analyze the multicultural interaction among state-owned company employees and international customers in international trading exchanges. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This TA allowed researchers to see and understand collective or shared meanings and experiences. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview. There were several procedures for analyzing the data, followed in an orderly manner. I adopted the data analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), which states that (1) familiarizing yourself with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing potential themes, (5)

defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Therefore, the data from the interview was transcribed to identify categories based on the answers to the interview questions. By referring Braun and Clarke (2021) steps in doing thematic analysis. Following the coding process, the researchers organized it into themes. The coding process follows Saldana's two cycles of data analytical process (Saldana, 2016).

Findings

The results of this study discuss the interaction between Indonesian workers and international customers in international trading exchanges with customers from diverse backgrounds. The observation and interview were conducted by observing employees and the work environment during activities. These components were crucial for individuals to navigate and thrive in diverse and multicultural environments. The following table describes the results of the coding schemes:

Table 2. The result of coding categories from the multicultural interaction of state-owned company employees in International Trading Exchanges.

Table 2. *Topics needs*

Categories	Themes	Codes
Cultural sensivity in communication.	Cultural differences	Cultural awareness and sensivity Respect cultural diversity
Global translingual communication strategies	Communication styles and norms Translingual strategy	Language barrier Non – verbal communication Translation and interpretation Utilization of communication aids
	Global connectivity	The use of international language
		Adaptation to diverse linguistic preferences

Table 2. Show the result of thematic analysis from this research
Through integrating cultural sensitivity and translingual strategy into their interactions, individuals and organizations created inclusive environments where diversity was valued, respected, and celebrated. This holistic approach fostered positive relationships, enhanced collaboration, and promoted mutual understanding, ultimately contributing to the success and sustainability of multicultural interaction. The data was analyzed using thematic analysis and categorized into two primary themes. The first focused on cultural sensitivity, and the second finding was about translingual strategy. The descriptions of the findings are explained as follows:

Cultural awareness and sensitivity

Cultural awareness encompasses a variety of variables crucial for effective communication in diverse environments, especially in the work environment. Cultural awareness refers to understanding different cultural practices, beliefs, values, norms, and behaviours. It involves recognizing and respecting the diversity of cultures within or across various societies worldwide. It entails actively understanding and appreciating how culture influences individuals' perspectives, communication styles, and interactions. This awareness allows individuals to demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences, avoid misunderstandings or conflicts, and foster meaningful connections with people from diverse backgrounds. Cultural awareness promotes inclusivity, empathy, and mutual respect in multicultural environments.

The recognition and understanding of cultural differences in communication styles and the ability to adapt communication strategies to the surrounding environment were evident. The interview with Xf6 as the employee was conducted face-to-face based on their preferences. The purpose of the interview was to address, "Have you ever experienced a situation where you felt that other people underestimated your ability to communicate in English? Explain the moment." As the findings from the interview affirmed, the employee recognized the importance of understanding the culture of customers from various countries. This cultural awareness was considered essential in shaping effective communication strategies.

> "While assisting export ships from Vietnam, we noticed the crew members were friendly and polite. However, when we spoke to them in English, they seemed confused, so we had to make extra effort to ensure they understood. After docking, they initially avoided eye contact when we tried talking to them onboard, which made us feel unappreciated and underestimated. However, we realized that their culture may have different communication customs. So, we need to respect their way of communicating." (Xf6, October 2023,)

So, XF6's interview highlighted the importance of recognizing and understanding cultural differences in communication styles. While assisting export ships from Vietnam, Xf6 observed confusion among crew members when communicating in English. Despite initial feelings of being unappreciated and underestimated due to differences in communication customs, Xf6 emphasized respecting diverse cultural backgrounds to shape effective communication strategies.

Respect cultural diversity

Based on the observation during the leaning of the Vietnamese ship M/V QUANG MINH VI at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja's pier, we found that employees recognized the importance of understanding and respecting the culture of customers from various countries, emphasizing the role of cultural diversity in establishing a positive communication approach. Additionally, they believed it could increase respect, understanding, and harmony in interactions between

people from different cultures. This observation highlighted the importance of recognizing and accommodating individual comfort levels and cultural differences in cross-cultural interactions.

> "The Vietnamese ship M/V QUANG MINH 6 crews are relatively friendly but need to be more confident when speaking English. When the employees try to talk to them in English, they often look away or get busy with something else, so keeping eye contact is challenging. This happens because they need to figure out their English skills or because they need to be used to communicating this way. So, understanding and respecting their comfort levels and cultural differences." (Field Note, November 2023)

In short, the observations during the leaning of the Vietnamese ship M/V QUANG MINH 6 at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja's pier underscored the employees' recognition of the importance of understanding and respecting the culture of customers from various countries. They emphasized the role of cultural awareness in establishing positive communication approaches, highlighting its potential to foster respect, understanding, and harmony in cross-cultural interactions. The observation also emphasized recognizing and accommodating individual comfort levels and cultural differences in effective communication.

The difficulties encountered in communication due to differences in language proficiency or comprehension have led, leading to confusion and misunderstandings. This involved understanding and appreciating the diverse cultures, habits, and practices that shaped an individual's identity and experiences. These findings were based on the following interview answers.

> "Customers may react differently based on our ability to communicate in English. When communicating with Latin American people, their accent and level of English are higher than Indonesians; they frequently ask us to repeat ourselves and say they do not understand what we are saying. However, we can overcome misunderstandings in communicating with them." (Xd4, September 2023)

Similarly, Xg7 claimed that the language barrier includes recognizing every individual's inherent dignity and value, regardless of their cultural background. Xg7 said,

> "Customer reactions look varied when they and we do not understand each other because of differences in dialect and culture in different communication styles; for example, differences in dialects and communication styles, such as pronouncing "zero" as "zilo" or "Silo" by Chinese speakers can lead to confusion. However, cultural differences in communication styles are not an obstacle for us when communicating with them so that the intended message is conveyed well." (Xg7, October 2023)

On the other hand, the interview responses highlighted communication challenges due to differences in language proficiency or comprehension. Xg7 emphasized the difficulties faced when communicating with Latin American customers due to accent and language barriers but highlighted the ability to overcome misunderstandings. Similarly, Xg7 addressed the language barrier, emphasizing the importance of recognizing individuals' inherent dignity and value

despite cultural differences. Both interviews underscored the importance of adapting communication strategies to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, ensuring effective message delivery.

Non – verbal communication

Cultural sensitivity in effective communication, especially in diverse and multicultural settings, encompassed an understanding and appreciation of various cultural nuances, including body language cues such as eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures, which could significantly impact the interpretation of messages across different cultures. Xe5 added that when we built cultural sensitivity, we strived to approach interactions openly, recognizing the unique perspectives, values, and norms influencing a person's behaviour and communication style. He said,

> "Our English level can be categorized as basic to intermediate. Sometimes, customers are not proficient in English, so we must adapt to communicate with them. When explaining something, we use Google Translate if we use body or sign language and they still do not understand. They finally understand what we mean by entering the words we mean and translating them into their language". (Xe5, September 2023)

Additionally, the observation during the process of docking the ship at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja's pier showed:

> "Employees use gestures to communicate with crew ship members who cannot speak English while docking the ship. They employ non-verbal communication techniques, including pointing directions, waving their hands, and directing body parts in the intended direction to convey the intended message. Additionally, employees utilize Google Translate to ensure that customers receive their aims and objectives well." (Field Note, November 2023)

In conclusion, effective communication in diverse settings involves cultural sensitivity, understanding cultural nuances, and appreciating diverse perspectives. X5 highlighted the need to adapt communication methods, including body language and translation tools like Google Translate when language proficiency was limited. Observations during ship docking at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja's pier further emphasized non-verbal communication techniques and technology, such as gestures and Google Translate, to ensure clear communication with crew members who did not speak English. These findings underscored the importance of flexibility and innovation in overcoming language barriers and fostering effective cross-cultural communication.

Translation and interpretation

To obtain the data on translingual strategies, we referred to approaches or techniques to facilitate communication across different languages or language varieties. Translation and interpretation were essential communication components, particularly in multilingual settings where individuals spoke different languages. Translation deals with written communication, while interpretation deals with spoken communication. The employee answered the findings from the interview. Here is his opinion:

> "During the interaction, I communicated with Chinese who had limited English proficiency and spoke in a dialect that needed to be more challenging to comprehend. I proactively employed Google Translate to facilitate communication and bridge this language barrier. I translated our conversation from Bahasa to Mandarin using the tool and promptly displayed the translated text to them, ensuring mutual understanding of the message conveyed." (Xc3, September 2023)

In summary, Xc3's experience highlighted the importance of translation tools like Google Translate in overcoming language barriers. When faced with communication challenges due to limited English proficiency and dialect differences with Chinese individuals, Xc3 proactively used Google Translate to facilitate mutual understanding and underscored the significance of leveraging technology to communicate effectively across language variations.

Utilization of communication aids

Employees utilized Google Translate to ensure effective communication with crew ship members who spoke non-English. This strategy involved translating messages from one language to another. The use of communication aids like translation apps or language dictionaries was observed. These strategies allowed individuals to navigate multilingual situations by translating messages from multiple languages into their speech or writing. So, it was in line with the result of the observation:

> "The PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang employees had trouble communicating with a ship from an ASEAN country about loading times. They could not speak each other's languages. So, they used Google Translate to understand each other. It shows how adaptable and resourceful they are in solving communication problems. With tools like Google Translate, they can work smoothly with customers from different backgrounds." (Field Note, July 2023)

So, PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang employees demonstrated adaptability and resourcefulness in overcoming language barriers during interactions with a ship from an ASEAN country. Utilizing tools like Google Translate ensured effective communication despite language differences, highlighting the importance of such strategies in facilitating smooth collaboration with customers from diverse backgrounds.

The use of international languages

Transnational strategy in communication was indeed about connecting with people globally, but it involved more than just using English as the international language. PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang often employed language-relevant approaches to their target markets to ensure their messages resonated effectively. At the policy level, PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang may have implemented language training programs or initiatives to enhance employees' proficiency in English and other relevant languages. By investing in language development among their workforce, the company ensured that employees could effectively communicate with overseas customers, fostering stronger relationships and driving business growth in international markets. This finding was from the interview while docking the ship at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja's pier.

> "Employees communicate using English and must understand the language even though they are not proficient. All activities regarding product trading with overseas customers are carried out using English." (Xb2, September 2024)

Companies dealing with international clients or partners might have required employees to communicate in languages other than their native language. It might have involved using a common business language, such as English, or providing translation services. This finding was from the following interview answer by Xa1:

> "The strategy that we use when communicating with foreign customers is to employ standard and simple English. Using this language can minimize misunderstandings between us, even though the customers come from different countries and cultural backgrounds. At least they understand and comprehend the common or commonly used language." (Xa1, October 2023)

In short, Employees at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang emphasized the importance of language-relevant approaches in transnational communication strategies. They invested in language development programs to enhance employee proficiency in English and other relevant languages, facilitating effective communication with overseas customers and fostering stronger relationships. Additionally, interviews with employees like Xb2 and Xa1 highlighted the necessity of employing standard and simple English when communicating with international clients, minimizing misunderstandings and ensuring comprehension across diverse cultural backgrounds. These findings underscored the significance of language proficiency and effective communication in international business dealings.

Adaptation to diverse linguistic preferences

Adaptation to diverse linguistic preferences meant being able to change how they communicated to fit the languages people spoke. The adaptation encompassed the ability to flexibly modify communication to align with the linguistic backgrounds of the individuals involved. This strategic adjustment became particularly salient when engaging with diverse customers. Here is the employee's opinion:

"When engaging with customers from Malaysia, our standard practice involves resorting to the Malay language when English communication proves challenging for them. This linguistic adaptation facilitates smoother interactions and ensures a more seamless and practical exchange between both parties." (Xf6, October 2023).

So, adapting to diverse linguistic preferences requires adapting communication methods to accommodate the individual's language. This strategic flexibility was critical, especially when interacting with a diverse customer base. By implementing language adaptations, such as using Malay when English communication was difficult for customers from Malaysia, interactions became smoother and exchanges more influential, ultimately increasing customer satisfaction and facilitating successful interactions.

Discussion

The findings from the interview and observation at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang reveal a complex interplay of factors surrounding cultural awareness, language barriers, and non-verbal communication in multilingual interactions. Firstly, employees recognize the importance of understanding and respecting the cultural differences of customers from various countries. This cultural awareness is crucial in shaping effective communication strategies and fostering positive interactions. In line with opinion from Fanjanirina (2024) culture profoundly impacts attitudes and is a challenging concept to fully grasp. It involves recognising, appreciating, and respecting the values, beliefs, practices, and customs of various cultures. Employees acknowledge that cultural diversity can influence communication styles and comfort levels, underscoring the need for adaptability and sensitivity in cross-cultural interactions. Similarly, becoming culturally aware of one's cultural norms and other's cultural norms is the initial step toward understanding the differences among cultures and being able to use one's understanding to better communicate and interact within a new culture (Grigoryeva & Zakirova, 2022).

Moreover, language barriers emerge as a significant challenge in communication, particularly when differences in language proficiency or comprehension leads to confusion and misunderstandings. It is in line with Viken et al. (2021) opinion that cultural sensitivity plays a pivotal role in effective communication across cultures. Similarly, Chen and Hu (2023) argued that it emphasizes the belief that cultural sensitivity can enhance respect, understanding, and harmony in cross-cultural interactions. The Employees note that customers from different linguistic backgrounds may react differently based on their English proficiency and accent. For instance, interactions with Latin American customers may require repeated explanations due to differences in accent and language comprehension. However, employees demonstrate an ability to overcome these challenges through patience and effective communication strategies, such as using Google Translate to facilitate understanding.

This study also highlights that non-verbal communication is vital in bridging cultural gaps and effectively conveying messages in diverse settings (Zhao, 2022). Employees employ body language cues, such as eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures, to supplement verbal communication and ensure clarity. Fanjanirina (2024) found out that culturally sensitive firms are more willing to adapt to cultural differences in their partners' businesses. Language

interaction most often implicates face-to-face interactions among groups of speakers. By appreciating and better understanding their partners' cultures, they are more likely to behave appropriately towards customers. During the docking process, the observation highlights using non-verbal techniques, such as pointing directions and waving hands, to communicate with crew members who cannot speak English. Additionally, using digital tools like Google Translate further enhances communication and ensures that objectives are well-received by customers.

Overall, the results underline the complexity of multilingual interactions and the importance of cultural sensitivity, language proficiency, and non-verbal communication in facilitating effective communication across diverse cultural contexts. Employees at PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang demonstrate a nuanced understanding of these factors and employ various strategies to navigate challenges and foster positive relationships with customers from different cultural backgrounds for relationships in multicultural contexts. Therefore, Duff (2019) opinion about business communication is that professionals must become competent in diversity and cultural issues to become an active and integral part of the global business environment.

The results regarding translingual strategies, translation, interpretation, and adaptation to diverse linguistic preferences shed light on the intricate dynamics of communication in multilingual settings. Firstly, translation and interpretation emerge as indispensable tools for facilitating communication across different languages or language varieties. While translation primarily deals with written communication and interpretation with spoken communication, both are essential components in bridging language barriers. It aligns with opinion Dube (2019), which posits that language encompasses three fundamental aspects: communication, identity, and culture. This effectiveness can be achieved using a common business language such as English or by providing translation services to accommodate clients from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Employees' proactive use of tools like Google Translate exemplifies how communication aids ensure mutual understanding with individuals who speak different languages or dialects, thereby highlighting the adaptability and resourcefulness required to navigate multilingual interactions effectively.

Also, the use of international languages, such as English, as a standard business language underscores the transnational nature of communication in globalized contexts. Translingual practice has become the norm in interactions among people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Silvhiany, 2019). However, effective communication goes beyond merely relying on English as the international language. Companies like PT Pupuk Sriwidjaja Palembang recognize the importance of adopting language-relevant approaches tailored to their target markets. By investing in language training programs and initiatives, they equip their workforce with the necessary language skills to communicate effectively with overseas customers, driving business growth and fostering stronger relationships in international markets.

Additionally, adaptation to diverse linguistic preferences entails flexibly modifying communication strategies to align with the linguistic backgrounds of the individual emphasized that every translingual communication that from multicultural settings may reflect diverse semiotic resources, such as oral and written. This strategic adjustment becomes crucial when engaging with a diverse customer base, as demonstrated by the practice of resorting to

the Malay language when English communication proves challenging for customers from Malaysia. By adapting to the linguistic preferences of their counterparts, employees facilitate smoother interactions and ensure a more seamless exchange of information.

Overall, the results underline the complexity of communication in a multicultural environment and highlight the importance of employing translingual strategies, utilizing translation and interpretation effectively, and adapting communication approaches to diverse linguistic preferences. So, some recommendations are tailored explicitly towards overcoming barriers in English communication within the company. First is Language Training Programs: Provide English language training programs for employees whose first language may be something other than English. These programs can help improve their proficiency and confidence in communicating effectively in English. Second is the utilization of translation and interpretation services. Invest in translation and interpretation services to facilitate communication between employees of different languages. It can help ensure that everyone understands essential information and instructions accurately. Third is providing communication tools and resources. Offer communication tools and resources, such as bilingual dictionaries or language learning apps, to support employees in improving their English language skills and overcoming language barriers. The last is creating a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable asking for clarification or assistance when they encounter language barriers. By implementing these recommendations, the company can address barriers to English communication, promote effective communication across diverse linguistic backgrounds, create a more inclusive, thriving work environment and foster stronger customer relationships. The findings of this study have significant implications for various stakeholders. The researchers can build upon this work by exploring communication strategies in different industries and regions, comparing various techniques, and examining the long-term impact of language training on employee performance and customer satisfaction.

Conclusion

The results of the distribution encompassing 11 factors to determine needs unequivocally indicate that students necessitate the incorporation of all these factors into the process of learning critical reading in English. The comprehensive list of eleven factors indispensable for effective learning comprises learning objectives, topic needs, teaching material requirements, assessment criteria, PJBL syntax requisites, hybrid learning essentials, social system prerequisites, reaction principle necessities, support system imperatives, learning impact essentials, and impact-accompanying learning requirements. Among the 63 statements disseminated to students, it is evident that 26 statements fall under the "highly necessary" category, while 30 statements are deemed "necessary". Furthermore, three statements are categorized as "only necessary", and four statements as "less necessary". Consequently, a total of 56 statements are deemed requisite by students for implementation within the PJBL model for English critical reading through hybrid learning.

Exploring vibrant dynamics in international trade, the successful interactions between global customers and employees of a state-owned company in international trading exchanges. Based on the study's findings, the interactions between Indonesian workers at PT Pupuk

Sriwijaya Palembang and their international customers reveal a diverse and adaptable communication approach within a multicultural work environment. The employees emphasize the importance of English language proficiency in their professional responsibilities, recognizing the significance of continuous English language learning through various methods, which the company should facilitate for all levels of employee positions responsible for direct interaction with international customers. The company is encouraged to facilitate this learning for all employees interacting directly with international customers. The PPU & Special Docks department, in particular, excels in its responsibilities, including facilitating international sales and purchases that significantly contribute to the company's profits. It has achieved above-average customer satisfaction, as shown by the Customer Satisfaction Survey. Employees demonstrate flexibility and adaptability in interacting with customers from various countries by employing non-verbal communication strategies and tools like Google Translate to overcome language barriers. Cultural awareness is essential for these employees, enabling them to effectively implement positive communication strategies and navigate cross-cultural interactions. This research underscores the importance of language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative problem-solving in fostering effective communication and booming international trade relationships. Therefore, Continuous English language training programs should be implemented for all employees interacting with international customers, complemented by cultural competency workshops to educate staff about the norms and practices of key international markets. Cross-departmental collaboration and the sharing of best practices will promote a cohesive and culturally aware workforce. By focusing on these areas, the company can enhance customer satisfaction, improve communication strategies, and strengthen its position in the international market.

The research highlights the vital role of proficient communication skills, cultural sensitivity, and adaptive strategies in fostering successful international trade relationships. The study confirms that continuous language learning and cultural awareness are indispensable for employees interacting with global clients. The insights gained emphasize the necessity for structured training programs and the strategic use of technology to bridge communication gaps. These elements collectively contribute to improved customer satisfaction and enhanced business performance, particularly in departments like PPU and Special Docks. Future research should expand on this study by exploring communication strategies in various industries and cultural contexts to generalize the findings. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of language training and cultural competency programs on employee performance and customer satisfaction. Additionally, examining the role of emerging technologies, such as AI-driven translation tools, in facilitating international communication could offer valuable perspectives on future communication dynamics in global trade.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

There is no potential conflict apparent that was reported bt the authors

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