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COMMUNICATION AND INTERPERSONAL
DYNAMICS IN VIRTUAL TEAM MEETINGS:
AN APPLIED LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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PhD

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

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**Communication and Interpersonal Dynamics in
Virtual Team Meetings:
An Applied Linguistic Perspective**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Yu Wing Man, Carol

Communication and Interpersonal Dynamics in Virtual Team Meetings: An Applied Linguistic Perspective

ABSTRACT

Much has been written about the rapid spread of global businesses around the world and the changing nature of work where employees work in an ever-increasing number of multi-national companies (MNCs) in teams across geographical, linguistic and cultural boundaries. This trend is enabled by technological advances where virtual teamwork is fast becoming the norm (Pauleen, 2004). Due to the outbreak of Covid-19, this emerging work form, has become a ‘must’ rather than an alternative in organisations nowadays (Bailey & Breslin, 2021; Caligiuri et al., 2020; Cooley, 2020; Jasmine, 2019; Newman & Ford, 2021; Salari & Shairkhoda, 2020; Whillans, Perlow & Turek, 2021). However, the impact of new technology, and the fact that many global virtual work teams consist of participants from different cultural backgrounds, who are second English language (L2) rather than first English language (L1) speakers puts unique pressure on effective business communication (Forey & Lockwood, 2007; Friginal, 2007; Hood & Forey, 2008). As virtual team meetings (VTMs) are the prime site where virtual team members ‘meet’ and discuss business related issues, the present study aims to investigate the interactions between virtual work-team members in virtual business meetings via teleconferencing.

This study contains three main sections: The first section explores and discusses virtual team members’ perceptions and experiences regarding virtual business meetings based on interview data, and the foci are on the challenges that they face during teleconferencing, and the strategies they employ to tackle these challenges in order to facilitate effective communication in virtual business meetings.

The second section investigates authentic interactions in virtual meetings using Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Coupland et al., 1988; Giles, 1973; Giles & Powesland, 1975; Giles & Smith, 1979) as the theoretical and analytical framework. CAT posits that communication effectiveness and interlocutors’ satisfaction can be optimised with appropriate levels of accommodation by applying one or more of five communicative strategies: Approximation, Interpretability, Discourse Management, Interpersonal Control and Emotional

Expressions. Virtual team members' employment of CAT strategies together with any salient communicative behaviours in virtual team meetings are analysed and discussed. This section also discusses how immediate meeting contexts can influence their employment of CAT strategies.

The third section incorporates the software Discursis as an addition to the qualitative analysis of CAT strategies in order to discuss its potential to enhance the qualitative analysis of virtual business meetings. This is possible because Discursis is able to generate visual and chronological representations of interlocutors' communication exchanges, speech patterns and engagement episodes. How CAT strategies are represented and can be mapped onto Discursis visual plots are also explored.

The findings of the current study suggest that VTM participants generally have issues on meeting deficiencies, the virtual environment, language issues and team diversity. Nevertheless, it is found that virtual team members are also aware of the challenging environments in virtual settings and take on a pro-active role in overcoming the challenges. By analysing VTM discourse with CAT framework, VTM participants are found to make use of a wide range of linguistic resources during VTMs to achieve various meeting goals. A CAT strategy coding scheme as well as a modified version of CAT framework that fits the virtual team meeting environments have also been developed and proposed in the current study. The applicability of Discursis to analysing VTM interactions has also been discussed. The current study suggests that Discursis's strengths in visualizing turn mechanics, turn-taking and turn-allocation patterns as well as conceptual relevance between turns are particularly useful in analysing Discourse Management in the CAT framework which has its focus on interactants' engagement level in a discourse as well as the exchange processes.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| ABSTRACT | i |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| LIST OF TABLES | vii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | viii |
| TRANSCRIPTION KEYS | viii |
| CHAPTER ONE Introduction | |
| 1.1 Background of the Study | 1 |
| 1.2 Objectives of the Present Study | 4 |
| 1.3 Rationale | 4 |
| 1.3.1 Why using CAT as a Theoretical and Analytical Framework? | 4 |
| 1.3.2 Why conducting Thematic Analyses on Interview Data? | 8 |
| 1.3.3 Why applying Discursis to analyse VTM Data? | 9 |
| 1.4 Research Questions | 9 |
| 1.5 Multi-Analytical Approaches | 10 |
| 1.6 Organisation of Thesis | 11 |
| CHAPTER TWO Literature Review | |
| 2.1 Virtual Team | 12 |
| 2.1.1 What is a Virtual Team | 12 |
| 2.1.2 Interculturalism in Globalised Virtual Teams | 14 |
| 2.1.3 The Notion of Trust in Virtual Teams | 21 |
| 2.1.4 Communication in Virtual Teams | 22 |
| 2.1.5 Linguistic Studies in the (Virtual) Workplace | 24 |
| 2.2 Business Meetings | 27 |
| 2.2.1 The Genre of Business Meetings | 29 |
| 2.2.2 Variables of Business Meetings | 31 |
| 2.3 Relational Talk in the Workplace | 37 |
| 2.3.1 Relational Practices | 39 |
| 2.3.2 Studies of Small Talk | 40 |
| 2.3.3 Studies of Humour | 41 |
| CHAPTER THREE Theoretical Framework | |
| 3.1 Communication Accommodation Theory | 44 |
| 3.2 Development of Communication Accommodation Theory | 44 |
| 3.3 Motives for Communication Accommodation | 46 |
| 3.4 Constraints on Communication Adjustments | 49 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3.4.1 Communicative Repertoire | 50 |
| 3.4.2 Physiological Constraints | 51 |
| 3.4.3 Communication Medium | 51 |
| 3.5 Principles of Communication Accommodation Theory | 52 |
| 3.6 Strategies of Communication Accommodation Theory | 54 |
| 3.6.1 Approximation | 55 |
| 3.6.2 Interpretability | 56 |
| 3.6.3 Discourse Management | 56 |
| 3.6.4 Interpersonal Control | 57 |
| 3.6.5 Emotional Expressions | 57 |
| CHAPTER FOUR Methodology | |
| 4.1 Organisation Contexts | 59 |
| 4.2 Data Collection | 61 |
| 4.2.1 Questionnaires | 62 |
| 4.2.2 Interviews | 65 |
| 4.2.3 Authentic Virtual Team Meetings | 66 |
| 4.3 Data Processing | 69 |
| 4.3.1 Transcribing and Coding Interview Data | 69 |
| 4.3.2 Transcribing VTM Data and Coding of Communication Accommodation Strategies | 72 |
| 4.3.3 Applying Discursis to analyse VTM Data | 73 |
| CHAPTER FIVE Thematic Analysis on VTM Participants' Experiences | |
| 5.1 Challenges encountered by VTM Participants in BrazIT | 75 |
| 5.1.1 Meeting Deficiencies | 76 |
| 5.1.2 Virtual Environment | 79 |
| 5.1.3 Language | 83 |
| 5.1.4 Team Diversity | 85 |
| 5.2 Strategies adopted by VTM Participants in BrazIT to tackle Challenges | 87 |
| 5.2.1 Meeting Behaviours | 88 |
| 5.2.2 Language | 91 |
| 5.2.3 Team Diversity | 94 |
| 5.2.4 Establishment of Interpersonal Relationships | 98 |
| CHAPTER SIX Communication Accommodation Strategies in Virtual Team Meetings | |
| 6.1 Introduction | 103 |
| 6.1.1 Approximation | 103 |
| 6.1.2 Interpretability | 116 |
| 6.1.3 Discourse Management | 140 |
| 6.1.4 Interpersonal Control | 176 |
| 6.1.5 Emotional Expressions | 195 |

| | | |
|--|--|-----|
| 6.2 | Communication Accommodation Strategies in Seven Virtual Team Meetings | 207 |
| 6.2.1 | CAT Strategies in VTM A1 | 207 |
| 6.2.2 | CAT Strategies in VTM A2 | 212 |
| 6.2.3 | CAT Strategies in VTM B1 | 218 |
| 6.2.4 | CAT Strategies in VTM B2 | 224 |
| 6.2.5 | CAT Strategies in VTM B3 | 228 |
| 6.2.6 | CAT Strategies in VTM B4 | 233 |
| 6.2.7 | CAT Strategies in VTM B5 | 238 |
| CHAPTER SEVEN Applying Discursis to Virtual Team Meetings | | |
| 7.1 | Introduction | 246 |
| 7.2 | Interpreting a Discursis Plot | 247 |
| 7.3 | Level of Engagement between VTM Participants | 251 |
| CHAPTER EIGHT Discussion | | |
| 8.1 | Thematic Analysis on VTM Participants' Experiences | 257 |
| 8.1.1 | Answers to Research Question 1a: What are the Challenges faced by VTM Participants? | 258 |
| 8.1.2 | Answers to Research Question 1b: What are the Strategies adopted by VTM Participants to tackle VTM Challenges? | 261 |
| 8.2 | Discourse Analysis of VTM Transcripts | 262 |
| 8.2.1 | Answers to Research Question 2a: To what extend do VTM Participants employ CAT Strategies in VTMs? | 262 |
| 8.2.2 | Answers to Research Question 2b: To what extend do Contextual Factors affect Employment of CAT strategies? | 267 |
| 8.3 | Applying Discursis to enhance Qualitative Analysis | 273 |
| 8.3.1 | Answers to Research Question 3a: How does Discursis enhance Qualitative Discourse Analysis of VTMs? | 274 |
| 8.3.2 | Answers to Research Question 3b: How are CAT strategies visually represented on Discursis Plots? | 275 |
| CHAPTER NINE Conclusion | | |
| 9.1 | Main Findings | 279 |
| 9.2 | Research Implications | 281 |
| 9.3 | Limitations of the Present Study | 283 |
| 9.4 | Directions for Future Research | 285 |
| REFERENCES | | 287 |
| APPENDICES | | 307 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 2.1 Structural aspects of business meetings adapted from Handford (2010) | 36 |
| Table 3.1 Principles of Communication Accommodation Theory | 52 |
| Table 4.1 Questionnaire respondents and their demographic details | 64 |
| Table 4.2 Interview participants and duration of interviews | 66 |
| Table 4.3 Overview of seven VTM contexts | 68 |
| Table 5.1 Themes and subthemes of VTM challenges encountered by interviewees | 75 |
| Table 5.2 Language related challenges encountered by interviewees | 83 |
| Table 5.3 Themes and subthemes of VTM strategies adopted by interviewees | 88 |
| Table 6.1 Examples of check questions in VTM data | 134 |
| Table 6.2 Usage of check questions in VTM data | 135 |
| Table 6.3 Interpretability strategies and respective communicative behaviours in VTM | 139 |
| Table 6.4 Structural aspects of business meetings adapted from Handford (2010) | 141 |
| Table 6.5 Activities in VTM pre-meeting stage (Stage pre-1) | 142 |
| Table 6.6 Pre-meeting stage in VTM B4 | 144 |
| Table 6.7 Organisation of turn-taking system in conversation and its applicability to VTM | 153 |
| Table 6.8 Turn and speech time allocation of VTM A1 | 158 |
| Table 6.9 Turn and speech time allocation of VTM B3 | 159 |
| Table 6.10 Turn allocation in VTM A2 | 162 |
| Table 6.11 Turn allocation in VTM B1 | 163 |
| Table 6.12 Turn allocation in VTM B2 | 164 |
| Table 6.13 Turn allocation in VTM B4 | 165 |
| Table 6.14 Turn allocation in VTM B5 | 167 |
| Table 6.15 Context of VTM A1 | 207 |
| Table 6.16 CAT strategies in VTM A1 | 210 |
| Table 6.17 Context of VTM A2 | 212 |
| Table 6.18 CAT strategies in VTM A2 | 217 |
| Table 6.19 Context of VTM B1 | 218 |
| Table 6.20 CAT strategies in VTM B1 | 223 |
| Table 6.21 Context of VTM B2 | 224 |
| Table 6.22 CAT strategies in VTM B2 | 228 |
| Table 6.23 Context of VTM B3 | 228 |
| Table 6.24 Number of turns, total and average turn durations of VTM B3 participants (in seconds) | 230 |
| Table 6.25 CAT strategies in VTM B3 | 233 |
| Table 6.26 Context of VTM B4 | 233 |
| Table 6.27 CAT strategies in VTM B4 | 238 |
| Table 6.28 Context of VTM B5 | 238 |
| Table 6.29 CAT strategies in VTM B5 | 244 |
| Table 8.1 Themes and subthemes of VTM challenges encountered by interviewees | 259 |
| Table 8.2 Themes and subthemes of VTM strategies adopted by interviewees | 260 |
| Table 8.3 Communication Accommodation Strategies in virtual team meetings | 263 |
| Table 8.4 Correlations between VTM immediate interaction situation factors and CAT strategies | 269 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 1.1 Communication Accommodation Theory as a General Theory of Intergroup Communication | 6 |
| Figure 7.1. Discursis Plot of VTM A1 | 247 |
| Figure 7.2. A section of Discursis plot of VTM B2 which indicates repetitions of concepts between turns | 250 |
| Figure 7.3. Comparison between high and low engagement Discursis plots | 251 |
| Figure 7.4. A section of Discursis plot of VTM A2 | 253 |
| Figure 7.5. A section of Discursis plot of VTM B4 | 255 |
| Figure 8.1. Challenges of virtual work teams | 257 |
| Figure 8.2. Communication Accommodation Theory as a General Theory of Intergroup Communication | 268 |
| Figure 8.3. Communication Accommodation Theory in VTM setting | 272 |

TRANSCRIPTION KEYS

| | |
|------------|--|
| ::: | Lengthening of the sound |
| (XXX) | Intelligible speech |
| (.) | Short pause (up to 1.0 second) |
| (3.0) | Pause (in second) |
| ? | Rising intonation |
| [| The point of overlap onset |
|] | The point at which the overlap terminates |
| - | Cut off |
| (()) | Extra-textual information |
| [...] | Section or transcript omitted |
| // | Speaker self-interruption |
| [Laughs] | Paralinguistic features in square brackets |
| Yes | Bold indicates emphatic stress |

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Globalisation and technology advancement have enabled people around the world to work more closely without the constraints of time and distance, thus a new form of collaboration, namely the ‘Virtual team’, has emerged. Dulebohn and Hoch (2017) have defined virtual teams as “work arrangements where team members are geographically dispersed, have limited face-to-face contact, and work interdependently through the use of electronic communication media to achieve common goals” (p. 569). Virtual teamwork has been growing rapidly and successfully during the last decade and it has become an essential work form all over the world due to the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2019 (Bailey & Breslin, 2021; Caligiuri et al., 2020; Cooley, 2020; Jasmine, 2019; Newman & Ford, 2021; Salari & Shaikhoda, 2020; Whillans, Perlow & Turek, 2021). This emerging work form, as Pauleen (2004) claims, has become a ‘must’ rather than an alternative in organisations nowadays. Due to its importance in the modern global work environment, it has attracted considerable scholarly attention. Much research has been conducted within the fields of business communication, human resources, organisational behaviour, the life cycle of virtual team projects, as well as focusing on other variables within virtual teamwork such as technology use, leadership, intercultural issues and management skills (Darics, 2010b; Dekker, Rutte & Van den Berg, 2008; Harzing, Köster & Magner, 2011; Hertel, Geister & Konradt, 2005; Wittenburg et al., 2006). Within this kind of virtual environment, language and communication can be seen as fundamental tools for work and are relied heavily upon by virtual team members in order to achieve their goals and meet deadlines. Although the above-mentioned fields have received academic exploration, relatively little is known about the language use in virtual team communication from an applied linguistics perspective. As Darics (2010b) points out, “the language use within virtual teams has only

received scant attention” (p. 130). This view is also shared by Klitmøller and Lauring (2013) who claim that:

It is surprising that only little research exists on language in virtual settings since variations in language could explain why some global teams using rich media for communication might not have a high degree of knowledge sharing effectiveness. Also, language variations and communication in English as a second language is more often the case than not in virtual teams. (p. 400)

In view of this, Lockwood and Forey (2016) conducted a study in a multinational Australian bank which holds regular virtual meetings with members across Asia. Their study identifies various problems including micromanagement, lack of trust, confused accountabilities stemming from lack of clear direction, and poor relationship building in the virtual team. It appears as though virtual meetings will become the norm in multinational companies (MNC), more research needs to be conducted from an applied linguistics perspective. This study aims to address this issue by analysing naturally occurring data obtained in two multinational companies and discuss the questions of what and how communication happens in the virtual work environment, focusing especially on virtual team meetings (VTMs), and explore how leadership is enacted and how interpersonal relationship is construed through language. By analysing the use of language, which is a primordial site for meaning making in these meetings, we can get insights into the choices made by speakers related to relationship building, power and engagement of the multicultural and multilingual participants who converse through English in these virtual team meetings.

This study is concerned with how computer-mediated discourse (CMD), with specific reference to teleconferencing, is used in MNC, where English might be the first language for perhaps the on-shore managers, but may not be the first language for the on or off-shored workforce. With the development of business, knowledge and information technology

outsourcing, employees worldwide can expect that their work teams will comprise members from different geographical locations working in different time zones. This has huge implications for work team communication because most workplace communication will be done virtually without face-to-face interaction. As stated above, the language of VTMs is likely to be English, which has become the language of international business over the last decade (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2013; Charles & Marschan-Piekkari, 2002). Given that English will, for the most part, be the employees' second language and that they will need to communicate virtually, there are risks of miscommunication. In fact, many businesses complain that both the quality of work and timeliness of project completions are jeopardised by having to meet virtually (Lockwood, 2015).

Apart from the language issues discussed above, another attribute to globalised virtual teams evolves around the multiculturalism of the team composition. Ladegaard and Jenks (2015) refer to the modern globalised workplace as "a site where the notion of a connected and disconnected world is perhaps the most evident" (p. 2). Globalised virtual teams (GVTs) are usually highly intercultural as they are composed of team members with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as multiple identities and personal attributes. Team members are required to collaborate via electronic communication media and achieve common goals for the benefits of the corporations they work for, but often they have never met each other in real life and thus, no interpersonal relationship can be developed prior to the formation of virtual work teams.

Global virtual teams not only have to deal with the 'disconnections' that are brought about by globalisation, the 'virtualness' of the team may also affect the interpersonal dynamics and pose new communication challenges within such teams. Daim et al. (2012), Dekker, Rutte & Van den Berg (2008) and Shenkar (2011) have all explored intercultural differences across

globalised workspaces and conclude that management knowledge and skills are key in managing virtual teams across cultures. This specific nature of globalised virtual teams may explain why social categorisations based on intercultural differences can often be found in such contexts and as an underlying factor which can cause communication breakdown in virtual teams (Armstrong & Cole, 2002; Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Cramton, 2001). It has then become clear that there is also a need to investigate the language use and how it influences and is influenced by intergroup and intercultural identities in virtual team meeting settings.

1.2 Objectives of the Present Study

This study has the following overarching objectives:

1. To investigate the emerging discourse of virtual team meetings (VTMs) in authentic contexts
2. To interview key stakeholders about their perceptions, their experiences and their practices in VTMs.
3. To conduct a discourse analytic study using authentic VTM data to supplement existing knowledge on VTMs, and conceptualise an analytical framework for VTMs by using Communication Accommodation Theory.
4. To explore the potential use of Computer aided Qualitative Discourse Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to enhance qualitative discourse analysis of VTM data.

1.3 Rationale

1.3.1 Why using CAT as a Theoretical and Analytical Framework?

Given that business meetings are highly goal and transactional-oriented and team members have high motivation to achieve team goals, it can be assumed that their motivation for communicative adjustments is high so as to facilitate the transactional as well as relational

purposes of team meetings. Studies on interactional adaptation generally agree that communication adjustments from interlocutors are fundamental in any exchanges across different domains. Enfield and Levinson (2006) even claim that communicative adjustment is what makes social interaction possible at all.

A suitable theoretical and analytical framework needs to be adopted in order to understand how VTM participants communicatively adjust to each other to achieve team goals. The theory that informs the present study is Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Coupland et al., 1988; Giles, 1973; Giles & Powesland, 1975; Giles & Smith, 1979). Communication Accommodation Theory examines motives, motivation, attitudes and identity issues that influence people's language use and how they adjust to each other's communication styles and needs in interactions. The theory also posits that communication conveys not only referential function but also social and relational function, which are parallel to the transactional and relational goals of meetings. With reference to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), CAT suggests that speakers can create and maintain a positive self-identity, manage social distance and display their attitudes towards individual and group membership by regulating their communicative behaviours and strategies within interactions. These principles of CAT are of high relevance to the current study, which aims to investigate the communicative behaviours of the VTM participants, the motivation behind the communicative behaviours and how their behaviours are influenced by contextual and situational factors. Given the intercultural nature of globalised virtual team meetings, CAT is also considered to be a highly appropriate framework for the current study as it "problematizes issues of miscommunication and sociopsychological processes in communication, CAT is especially relevant to the study of intercultural communication and represents an alternative to the approach of communication effectiveness" (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005, p. 132).

Communication Accommodation Theory also serves as an analytical framework as it proposes five distinctive strategies, namely Approximation, Interpretability, Discourse Management, Interpersonal Control and Emotional Expressions, which attend to different communication needs of interlocutors. These five strategies provide a framework for analysing communicative and linguistic behaviours associated with them and the motivations behind them.

The model of Communication Accommodation Theory of Intergroup Communication proposed by Gallois, Ogay and Giles (2005, p. 135) is presented in Figure 1.1 below:

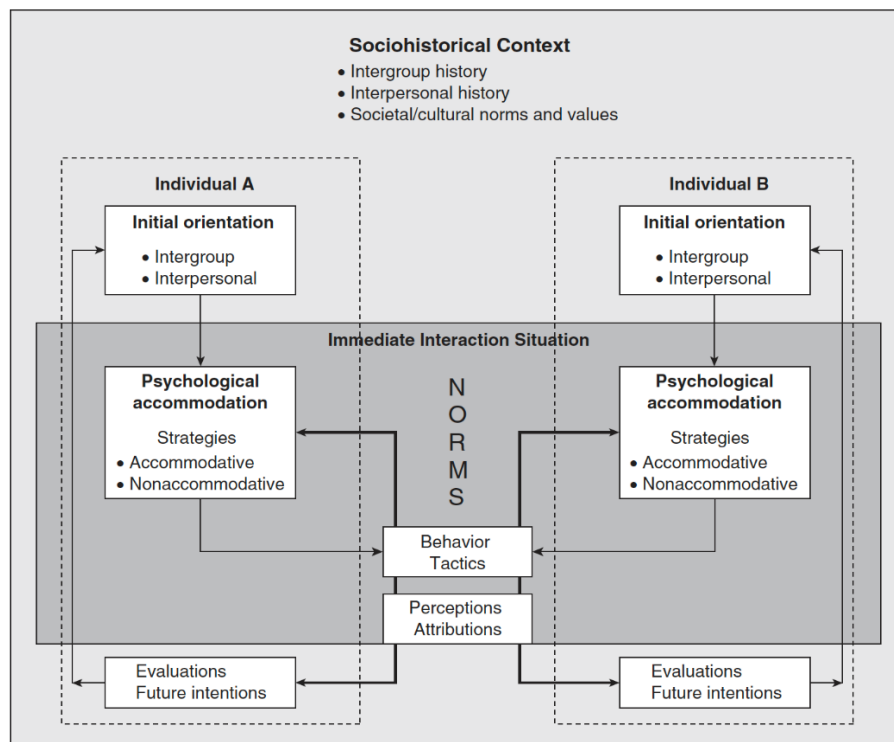


Figure 1.1 Communication Accommodation Theory as a General Theory of Intergroup Communication (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005, p. 135)

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, intergroup and interpersonal relationships are theorised and situated in the sociohistorical context with societal/cultural norms and values embedded within, which influence the individual's initial orientation towards the other individual/group. The

Immediate interaction situation is governed by norms in that particular situation and this can impact the psychological accommodative stance of an individual and the CAT strategies employed in that encounter. An individual's accommodative stance and employment of relevant accommodation strategies would then influence whether he/she is perceived positively or negatively by the other speaker, which can further influence future communication intentions.

CAT is a multifunctional and robust theory (Gallois et al., 1995) that focuses on both interpersonal and intergroup communication with the ability to address cultural variables in the latter. CAT accounts for individuals' knowledge, perceptions, motivations and skills as initial individual orientation is foregrounded by sociohistorical context. It also emphasises the influential power of situational factors and their impact on speaker's psychological accommodation stance and strategies adopted in interactions. Finally, it also predicts what speakers can take out of an interaction and their intentions for future encounters.

Applying this model in the VTM setting would suggest globalised team members are brought together as a team, and they may bring along different cultural norms and values with them. This would inform their initial orientations towards other meeting counterparts. Immediate interaction situation in VTM contexts would be the virtual team meeting. Just as it is the case with traditional meetings, norms also exist in virtual meeting environment. Interpersonal/intergroup relationships, together with social and situational norms can all influence an individual's accommodative stance and his/her use of accommodative strategies during VTMs. Their behaviour tactics would then be judged and perceived by other meeting participants as accommodative or non-accommodative. Their perceptions will eventually determine their intentions for future communication.

1.3.2 Why conducting Thematic Analyses on Interview Data?

As stated in the previous section, CAT emphasises how sociohistorical context influences the individual's initial orientation towards intergroup/interpersonal relationship, as well as how immediate interaction situation impacts the individual's psychological accommodation stance, which would in turn affect their deployment of accommodation strategies and affect the overall outcome of the communication process. It is therefore crucial for this study to conduct interviews with VTM participants and ask them about their perceptions and experiences with VTMs. Through analysing interview data, important issues such as VTM participants' intergroup history, interpersonal history and societal/cultural norms and values can be discovered. They can provide explanations as to how and why certain CAT strategies are employed in the actual VTM exchanges.

Thematic Analysis (TA) is the process of identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data, and it is employed as a method to analyse interview data with VTM participants in the current study. TA, as stated by Braun and Clarke (2012):

[...] is a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set. Through focusing on meaning across a data set. TA allows the research to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences [...] TA is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about and of making sense of those commonalities. (p. 57)

Braun and Clarke (2012) provide an approachable 6-phase analytical framework for thematic analysis which is also adopted in the current study. The goal of carrying out TA analysis on VTM participants interview data is to identify patterns and theme when they talk about their perceptions and experiences with VTMs, which can reveal underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies.

1.3.3 Why applying Discursis to analyse VTM Data?

Discursis software is a visual text analytic tool developed by Daniel Angus from the University of Queensland and it is designed to analyse the temporal aspects of communication exchanges through the visualisation of recurrence plotting. Several recent studies adopting CAT as their analytical and theoretical framework have also included Discursis to further strengthen the analysis. Discursis has been effectively implemented to CAT analysis in healthcare contexts (Angus et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2015; Chevalier et al., 2018; Watson et al., 2015) because of its ability to illustrate discourse patterns, turn-taking mechanics, turn-taking and allocating patterns as well as conceptual consistency and speakers engagement patterns, which are prime areas for investigation in Discourse Management strategies in the CAT framework. Its ability to identify topic and conceptual repetition may also be associated with Approximation strategy, although the researcher needs to ‘drill down’ to the transcripts to determine the motivation of such behaviour before associating it with any particular CAT strategy. This is why Angus et al. (2012) stress that the aim of Discursis is to enhance the qualitative analysis of an exchange, instead of replacing qualitative discourse analysis with Discursis.

While Discursis has been effectively implemented in CAT analyses in other contexts, its application to VTM contexts is not yet explored. Given discourse management plays a vital role in meeting managements, it would then be interesting to explore how Discursis can be applied in the studies of meetings/VTM mechanics.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve the overarching objectives of the current study, more specific Research Questions have been formularised. This study seeks to answer the following Research Questions:

1. Thematic analysis of interview data
 - 1a) What are the challenges faced by VTM participants?
 - 1b) What are the strategies adopted by VTM participants to tackle VTM issues?

2. Discourse analysis of VTM transcripts
 - 2a) To what extent do VTM participants employ CAT strategies in VTMs?
 - 2b) To what extent do situational and contextual factors affect VTM participants' employment of CAT strategies?

3. Application of Discursis to enhance qualitative study
 - 3a) What can Discursis analysis add to the qualitative discourse analysis of VTMs?
 - 3b) How are CAT strategies visually represented on Discursis plots?

1.5 Multi-Analytical Approaches

Multi-analytical approaches are adopted to address the research questions for the present study:

1. Site visits, observations, questionnaires and interviews were conducted at one of the research sites to allow myself to submerge in the authentic context

2. Twelve interviews were conducted with the VTMs stakeholders to investigate their experiences, practices and perceptions of VTMs

3. Communication Accommodation Theory is chosen to be the theoretical as well as analytical framework that informs the discourse analysis of the VTM data

4. The Visual analytical tool Discursis is used to complement the discourse analysis of VTM data

1.6 Organisation of Thesis

Following the Introductory Chapter, Chapter Two presents the literature relevant to the present study, with specific foci on the context of virtual work teams, the intergroup dynamics that are influenced by the multicultural backgrounds of VTM participants, as well as the linguistic issues that are commonly found in virtual work teams. Key concepts and studies on business meeting are also discussed in this chapter. Chapter Three is concerned with the theoretical framework of Communication Accommodation Theory: its development, theoretical construct, principles as well as CAT strategies are presented. Chapter Four is the Methodology Chapter which explains the contexts of the research sites as well as the analytical procedures adopted in the present study. It is then followed by Chapter Five, which presents the interview findings through a thematic analysis of interview data and discusses the challenges faced by the VTM participants, as well as the strategies adopted by them to overcome the challenges. Chapter Six presents the VTM discourse analysis findings using CAT as a framework. Five CAT strategies are discussed and exemplified with authentic VTM data. The contextual influences on respective VTMs are also discussed. Chapter Seven presents the findings with the application of Discursis to VTM data. How Discursis can be utilised to enhance qualitative discourse analysis as well as its mapping onto CAT strategies are presented. Chapter Eight serves as a Discussion Chapter which presents the major findings of the current research. The last chapter is the Conclusion Chapter in which research implications, limitations of current research as well as areas for future research are presented.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Virtual Team

2.1.1 What is a Virtual Team

Globalisation and technology advancement have enabled people around the world to work more closely without the constraints of time and distance, thus a new form of collaboration, namely the ‘Virtual team’, has emerged. Dulebohn and Hoch (2017) have defined virtual teams as “work arrangements where team members are geographically dispersed, have limited face-to-face contact, and work interdependently through the use of electronic communication media to achieve common goals” (p. 569). Lockwood and Forey (2016) included a temporal dimension in their definition and stated: virtual teams “[...] are geographically dispersed work teams enabled by technologies allowing for both synchronous and asynchronous communication” (p. 2). Wakefield, Leidner & Garrison’s (2008) definition of virtual teams is more solution-oriented as it states that virtual teams utilise technology-mediated communication exclusively to compensate for geographic distance, organisational boundaries, and/or time constraints. While many virtual teams are situated in the same country, it is also evident that organisations, especially multinational organisations nowadays, increasingly communicate virtually using computer-mediated discourse (CMD) with their offshore teams to get their work done for cost and efficiency purposes.

The main reasons that contribute to the existence and development of virtual teams are globalisation and technology advancement, which allow networking and collaborations more easily between distributed expertise across the world (Ilgen et al., 2005; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Mathieu et al., 2008). This emerging work form allows maximisation of team expertise

as it connects workers with different knowledge despite time and location differences. It also enables team members to work around the clock by using different time zones. Virtual teams can also be cost-effective as they reduce travelling and relocation fees. Companies can also save cost by employing expertise in other countries through business process outsourcing (BPO).

A recent US study (RW Culture Wizard, 2016) found that 85% of the 1,372 business respondents from eighty countries involved worked on virtual teams, and 48% reported that over half of their virtual team members were of other national cultures. This phenomenon has been growing in importance rapidly since the global pandemic outbreak in 2019, with cities and offices shut down around the world which has forced people to work from home to keep social distance. Virtual work teams and virtual meetings have become the new normal. While this new form of collaboration might bring various advantages (such as convenience, cost-saving, expertise sharing etc.) to the organisations, it also poses new challenges to team members, team leaders as well as to the organisations from a communication perspective. Several disadvantages have been highlighted in the literature such as: communication problems among team members; low team engagement; low sense of trust; power struggles between team members, and leadership problems (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Cascio & Shurygailo, 2003; Martin & Hammer, 1989). Most of the disadvantages highlighted above stem from intergroup conflicts in intercultural settings.

Globalised virtual teams are usually highly intercultural as they are composed by team members who possess diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds as well as multiple identities and personal attributes. Team members are required to collaborate via electronic communication media and achieve common goals for the benefits of the corporations, but often

they have never met each other in real life and thus, no interpersonal relationship can be developed prior to the formation of virtual work teams. The specific nature of globalised virtual teams may explain why social categorisation can often be found in such contexts and as an underlying factor which can cause communication breakdown in virtual teams.

Unsurprisingly, studies in leadership skills and trust dominate the current literature on virtual team management (see for example, Badrinarayanan & Arnett, 2008; Chutnik & Grzesik, 2009; Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Kayworth & Leidner, 2002), where the importance of communication is alluded to, but only within the consideration of management skills and technologies available. Other studies have explored how virtual team management changes over the ‘life cycle’ of the project and relates particularly to the management activities of preparation, launching, performance management, team development and disbanding the team (see, for example, Hertel, Geister & Konradt, 2005). Walsh (2011) makes the point that leaders in a virtual team context are required to be more vigilant, purposeful and intentional particularly as they relate to mitigating differences in culture, time, language and geography, and in using effective and efficient leadership practices such as chairing meetings and in leveraging technology to build workspaces that surpass real ones.

2.1.2 Interculturalism in Globalised Virtual Teams

Ladegaard and Jenks (2015) refer to the modern globalised workplace as “a site where the notion of a connected and disconnected world is perhaps the most evident” (p. 2). Global virtual teams (GVTs) not only have to deal with the ‘disconnections’ that are brought about by globalisation (such as different cultural norms as well as linguistic diversity), the ‘virtualness’ of the team may also affect the interpersonal dynamics and pose new communication challenges within such teams. Daim et al. (2012), Dekker, Rutte & Van den Berg (2008) and

Shenkar (2001) have all explored intercultural differences across globalised workspaces and conclude that management knowledge and skills are key in managing virtual team workers across cultures although the studies differ as to the extent to which intercultural differences are claimed to be the reasons for communication failure. For example, Shenkar (ibid) critiques the way that cultural distance (CD) constructs are used in international business studies and proposes replacing 'distance' with 'friction' as the underlying metaphor for cultural differences. By this he means that cultures come into regular contact in a business context, and it is therefore of interest to examine how these cultures interface and interact.

Another category of literature that is relevant to the present study is research which discusses management of intercultural identity in worksites. Zaidman (2001) observes that membership of different 'cultural groups' such as ethnicity, nationality, age, gender and professional roles requires multiple and adaptive discourse systems to mark those memberships. His study of professional exchanges between Israeli and Indian businesspeople found that "local discourse systems are found to play a major role in interactions, and participants are seen occasionally to adapt their communication behaviour to reflect the discourse practices of their partners" (Zaidman, 2001, p. 409). Furthermore, Planken (2005) suggests a set of rapport management strategies, which are highly relevant to the present study, the strategies suggest a domain of 'rapport management' including discourse, domains, register, and non-verbal communication (Planken, 2005, p. 383). However, no studies to date appear to have been carried out in relation to cultural communication challenges where virtual work teams are involved in global exchange and without the benefit of face-to-face interaction.

This section will review the subgroup dynamics associated with intercultural identities, which are commonly found in globalised virtual teams, the underlying factors and psychological

processes that contribute to the subgroup division and their possible impacts on the cohesion and effectiveness of global virtual teams and their communication management.

2.1.2.1 In/out-group Dynamics

Walther (1997) emphasises the social identity and self-categorization theory of group behaviour and argues that people categorise themselves based on characteristics of others in the group. The relationship between social categorisation and social identity theory has also been discussed by Tajfel et al. (1979) in order to explain intergroup behaviours. ‘In-group’ and ‘out-group’ are two essential concepts in the theory. Tajfel et al. (1979) state that in-group bias or in-group favouritism are often found in intergroup behaviours in which the in-group has “the tendency to favor the in-group over the out-group in evaluations and behavior” (p. 281). In-group bias, as Tajfel and Turner (1986) propose, is a “remarkably omnipresent” feature in intergroup relations and consequently, discriminations which favour the in-group can be triggered by the group members’ mere awareness and perceptions of belonging to two distinctive groups (social categorisation) (p. 281).

Jackson (2014) discusses how social categorisation can result in negative outcomes in intercultural communication by stating that “Social categorization and Ethnocentrism lie at the heart of identity biases and discrimination [...] these process [...] often create barriers to successful, equitable intercultural interactions” (p. 158). Therefore, in order to understand why communication breaks down in international communication, it is important to investigate whether and to what extent social categorisation and ethnocentrism are at play in such contexts.

A number of other studies have also demonstrated the negative impacts of social categorisation and subgroup ethnocentrism on team effectiveness (Armstrong & Cole, 2002; Cohen & Bailey,

1997; Cramton, 2001). Understanding the social psychological processes of ethnocentrism and social categorisation, which result in in-group bias in intergroup behaviours, can provide insights on the presence of prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviours that are present within the subgroups in organisational contexts.

2.1.2.2 Faultlines

Another concept that is relevant to social categorisation and is often referred to in the discussion of subgroup conflicts in organisational contexts is ‘faultlines’, which can explain how and what categories are hypothetically made of by subgroup members. Lau and Murnighan, (1998) define group faultlines as “hypothetical dividing lines that may split a group into subgroups based on one or more attributes” (p. 328). “Attribute” concerns with members’ diversity within organisational groups and these attributes can be demographic (such as race, age, gender, and nationality) and non-demographic (such as personal values and personality). Lau and Murnighan (1998) propose that demographic attributes may play a bigger role in the formation of faultlines, especially at the early stage of group development mainly because of two reasons: 1) they are easier to be recognised by other members and 2) they are more difficult for members to deny.

Interestingly, a more diverse group does not necessarily entail stronger faultlines. Lau and Murnighan (1998) argue that the strength of faultlines is dependent on the alignment and correlation of group members’ attributes. For instance, a weaker faultline may be found in a work group of six people if they possess completely diverse attributes different from each other, and a stronger faultline may be found if three of them are white, young, male clerks while two of them are black, middle-aged, female directors. It would then be important and relevant to investigate the attributes (demographic and non-demographic) of group members in order to

understand the formation, and to evaluate the strength of faultlines that can be found in the group. Given the nature of globalised virtual teams, various attributes are expected to be found.

Understanding the compositional dynamics of faultlines can provide insights on how the division and categorisation of group members based on various attributes can influence the communication process among virtual team members. In addition to the demographic and non-demographic attributes mentioned above, there has been a growing concern about the role and impact of language on the effectiveness of virtual team communication and management.

Hinds, Neeley & Cramton (2014) suggest language should also be considered and added as a potential faultline dimension. They found in their study that asymmetries in English fluency of virtual team members contributed to an ‘US vs THEM’ mentality across global team members, and they argue for the central role that language plays in establishing power and identity when working virtually, and that language is a potential ‘faultline’ that can reveal power struggles, emotional regulation and behaviour. They state that:

Our findings extend theory on subgroup dynamics in global teams by adding language as a potential faultline dimension, showing how power struggles activated faultlines and were, in turn, reinforced by them and documenting emotion-regulation processes triggered by subgrouping and enacted through language-related choices and behaviours.
(p. 1)

Not only language should be considered as a potential faultline dimension, Hinds, Neeley & Cramton (2014) argue that differences of language backgrounds and language fluency can fuel language asymmetry which in turn contributes to US vs THEM dynamics. They emphasise and argue for its discursive power in shaping subgroup dynamics and its central role in the construction of power and identity in globalised virtual work teams.

2.1.2.3 Negative Out-group Stereotypes

As discussed in the above section, faultline is defined as the hypothetical division line of group members based on different attributes possessed by team. This kind of division of members can also be carried out negatively in the form of negative stereotypes and othering, which can contribute to intergroup conflicts and create negative impact on the communication process within these multinational virtual teams. According to Lippmann (1922), the 'real' world is too complex for direct acquaintance, so people create a pseudo-environment to protect them from the confusion of the 'real' world and he argued that stereotyping can serve as a cognitive simplification mechanism. In other words, stereotypes can help individuals to process information about their environment in simplified ways. Lippmann (1922) stated that: "The systems of stereotypes may be the core of our personal tradition, the defences of our position in society" (p. 63). Thus, stereotypes can be employed by individuals to rationalise their social positioning through "Stereotypes as Defence" (p. 63).

In the case of intercultural communication, negative outgroup stereotypes can be caused by ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism, as defined by Sumner (1906), is "the technical name for this view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it" (p. 12). Ethnocentrism usually consists of cognitive and emotional foundations: stereotypical and inferior image/perception of the out-group that is accompanied by strong emotional attachments to the in-group (LeVine & Campbell, 1972). While the theoretical construct of ethnocentrism is usually employed to analyse the cause of larger societal conflicts stemming from, for example, race and nations, it can also be applied to understand smaller groups in organisational contexts. With specific focus on the stereotypes of team members in globalised work teams, Ladegaard's (2011c) study argues that while stereotypes might provide positive impact on the employees' self-esteem and might enhance

in-group harmony, they also pose damaging effects in business communication contexts, as they contribute to rationalisation and justification of prejudices and inequalities, which in turn jeopardise intergroup harmony and communication effectiveness (p. 103). Daim et al. (2012) argue that the lack of constant face-to-face contacts and non-verbal cues may result in individuals building stereotypes of others based on limited information of the other group members.

In a similar vein, Webster and Wong (2008) discuss in-group favouritism and group identity across different types of teams, i.e. traditional (co-located), virtual (completely distributed) and 'semi-virtual' or hybrid (containing both local and remote members), and they stress that the lack of face-to-face interaction and nonverbal cues, as well as heavy reliance on computer-mediated communication, pose a big challenge to virtual teams, and may lead to negative impact on intergroup relationship and psychological distance in global teams. They also argue that team members usually identify more strongly with their in-group than their out-group members and thus, resulting in more trust within in-groups while creating a distrust climate between the outgroups. They conclude that it is better for multinational companies to avoid creating semi-virtual teams in which trust issue and in-group favouritism are the most evident when compared to traditional (co-located) and complete virtual work teams (completely dispersed). This view is also shared in the study conducted by Privman, Hiltz & Wang (2013) who state that partially distributed teams are more vulnerable to the US vs THEM dichotomy than fully collocated or fully distributed teams. They argue that the perception of US-THEM reduces team effectiveness and the lack of trust among team members is the manifestations of the US-THEM mentality.

2.1.3 The Notion of Trust in Virtual Teams

Unsurprisingly, studies in leadership skills and trust dominate the current literature on virtual team management (see for example, Badrinarayanan & Arnett, 2008; Chutnik & Grzesik, 2009; Gibson & Cohen, 2003; Kayworth & Leidner, 2002), where the importance of communication is alluded to, but only within the consideration of management skills and technologies available.

Trust is considered to be “the glue of the global workplace” (Kirkman et al., 2002, p. 69) and is vital for achieving intergroup harmony and communication effectiveness. Cummings & Bromiley (1996) identify trust as “a common belief among a group of individuals that another individual or group (a) makes good-faith efforts to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit or implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments, and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another, even when the opportunity is available” (p. 303).

Daim et al. (2012) discuss the notions of swift trusts and the traditional concept of trust in globalised work teams. They define swift trust as “initially based on categorical social structures, and later, on high level of actions. This is different than the traditional concepts of trust, since swift trust imports trusts instead of developing trust via interpersonal relationship” (p. 206). They conclude that it is important for a globalised virtual team to develop trust at an early stage through social communication, and this communication should be maintained in a predictable manner with substantial and timely responses which can strengthen the group’s identity.

In the setting of virtual teams, Greenberg, Greenberg & Antonucci (2007) note that it is more difficult for team members to establish high quality and interpersonal relationships with each other in virtual teams due to the lack of informal communication such as social talk, which is

vital to the formation of a collective identity, group norms as well as a sense of belonging among team members. Moreover, as globalised virtual teams are highly dispersed and the team members usually live in different countries with different time zones, this can be also be a hindrance as to why the establishment of trust may be difficult in global virtual teams because a timely response from their teammates is not always possible, and this could trigger a disruption in trust (Gibson & Cohen, 2003).

2.1.4 Communication in Virtual Teams

Communication has been highlighted by a number of scholars in the study of virtual teams. These studies have explored the importance and role of communication in wide-ranging areas such as management skills and leadership skills (Chutnik & Grzesil, 2009); technology and the richness of media in virtual communication (Klitmøller & Luring, 2013); comparisons between virtual and co-located work teams (Daim et al, 2012); comparison of traditional and virtual groups (Webster & Wong, 2008), project complexity (Hertel, Geister & Konradt, 2005); as well as the notion of trust (Chang, Hung & Hsieh, 2014; Kayworth & Leidner, 2002; Olsen & Olsen, 2012; Sarker et al, 2011). Some studies have taken a top-down approach and pointed out that communication is a key factor that leads to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a virtual team leader. For example, Kayworth and Leidner (2002) identified communication as one of the biggest challenges virtual team leaders face while trying to complete the task with the team. They propose the characteristics of effective virtual team leaders as “effective communication skills; understanding disposition; ability to achieve role clarity and to exercise authority and ability to maintain a caring yet assertive attitude toward team members” (p. 28) and assert that virtual team leaders must possess good communication skills in order to be effective. Other studies discuss communication breakdown in global virtual teams. Daim et al. (2012), for example, have identified five main factors leading to communication breakdown in global virtual teams: trust, interpersonal relations, cultural differences, leadership and

technology, while Marlow, Lacerenza & Salas's (2017) study breaks down the notion of communication into three aspects, namely communication frequency, communication quality, and communication content. The authors argue for their central roles for achieving team goals and are of particular relevance in the study of virtual team communication.

Although much emphasis has been given to the importance of communication in virtual teams, there is a lack of detailed and systematic look into the role of language and its use in virtual team communication. This is particularly important because linguistic and paralinguistic resources are the main tools which are employed by virtual team members (specifically in the case of VTMs using teleconferencing) to exchange ideas, give directions, as well as establishing interpersonal relationship and construct power and control.

To date, studies related to digital and global workplace communication have generally focussed on business process outsourcing and on a discourse analysis of customer and customer service interactions (Forey & Lam, 2013; Forey & Lockwood, 2007; Hood & Forey, 2008). The growth and development of VTM have resulted from global business changes where MNCs are spread around the world as a result of BPO, acquisition and mergers (A&M) or start-ups, but very limited studies are available that discuss the language of virtual team management (Lockwood & Forey, 2016).

Some studies (Forey & Lockwood, 2007; Friginal, 2007; Hood & Forey, 2008) have investigated the communication needs in the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry where L2 speakers of English, who work at offshored call centres in India and the Philippines, have to cater for L1 customers using telecommunication means such as phone calls. The studies found that the use of English as a lingua franca, alongside with cultural differences, have created problems in communication and power struggles and resulted in poor customer

satisfaction and reduced productivity. A study by Park (2013) also points out how the use of English and different cultural communication practices may have created inequalities and prevented a promotion for a Korean employee who works at a regional office of an MNC in Singapore, with its headquarters in Basel, Switzerland. While English is often considered to be the ‘default’ language used in most MNC, its ethical aspects should not be taken for granted or overlooked. Hinds, Neeley & Cramton (2014) also argue for the centrality of language in ascertaining power and identity when working virtually, and that language is a potential ‘faultline’ that can reveal power struggles, emotional regulation and behaviour. These studies have argued that exploring the language of business management discourse exchanges will help to reveal power and solidarity relationships and thus, will be highly relevant to the present study as the use of English as a lingua franca in MNC and its ability to shape power relations in discourse will also be pivotal.

2.1.5 Linguistic Studies in the (Virtual) Workplace

Time, distance, culture and context are all factors that have been discussed in applied linguistics related to business communication. Within applied linguistics, a large amount of work has been undertaken from a pragmatic English for specific purposes (ESP) perspective. However, most studies discuss face-to-face contexts.

Substantial linguistic research has been conducted in the workplace with wide-ranging foci. One of the large-scale research projects relevant to the current study is the New Zealand Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) based at Victoria University of Wellington. This project, led by Janet Holmes, has collected around 2,000 authentic workplace interactions including over 700 people from a diverse range of backgrounds in more than 30 different workplaces including small businesses, global corporations and semi-public organisations. A variety of themes has been identified in their data that are relevant to the current study, such as

workplace culture, management style, meetings and decisions, directives, gender and ethnicity, power and politeness and cross-cultural pragmatics (Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Marra, 2004). Of particular interest and relevance to this study is the work completed on humour in the workplace where the authors argue different types and functions of humour are created in a workplace 'community of practice' (see Wenger, 1998) at work. Humour, they argue,

Are those (utterances) identified by the analyst on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodic and discursal clues, as intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some participants. (Holmes & Marra, 2002, p. 1693)

According to Holmes and Marra (2002), humour can be divided into 'contestive' humour or 'supportive' humour and they found more contestive types of humour present in their private commercial sector (PCS) organisations' data than in that of public sector government (PSG) departments. This is relevant to the present study as the data collected is from two PCS. The LWP provides evidence and valuable insights from a linguistic perspective on the workplace, and it is of particular interest how applicable these insights are in the emerging discourse of VTM.

Handford's study (2010) of the language of business meetings is also relevant to the present study as it explores the genre of business meetings informed by corpora. The study covers a wide range of topics such as the genre, key meeting words, interpersonal language and the issues of power through turn-taking, which can be compared to the VTM data in the current study in order to identify features that are unique in virtual meetings.

Technology provides the possibility of substituting asynchronous email exchanges with synchronous texting by the use of mobile phones and/or computers. Texting through social media is also used regularly by netizens as one of the main sources of communication. Texting

allows the use of emoticons and it is seen as revolutionising the ways we interact (Verheijen, 2013). Darics' (2010b) study on politeness in computer-mediated discourse of a virtual team shows that virtual team members employ various politeness strategies in virtual settings in order to compensate for the lack of face-to-face as well as audio-visual information, and demonstrates the ways they achieve transactional and relational goals in the discourse of instant messaging. In the hospitality industry, Zhang, Erickson & Webb (2011) found that the use of emoticons and capitalizations helped relationship building between agents and customers, although this study did not address customers' perceptions of reliability. 'Chronemic cues' which refer to the strategic use of timing in communication that is often manifested as delayed or no response (Darics, 2014) also infers specific meanings in communication. Such pragmatic meaning-making is of high relevance to the present study in that onshore managers may not be aware of the impact of time delays in their responses. Time and 'wait' time for a response can often appear much longer for telephone exchanges, where face-to-face interaction does not take place, as the interlocutor is not aware of any action or reason for the delay (Hood & Forey, 2008).

These studies conducted in different contexts are relevant to the present study and suggest pragmatic meanings ascribed to CMD communication practices are often present on VTMs. Harzing, Köster & Magner (2011) and Luring & Selmer (2012) have identified the importance of English communication skills with a common corporate language supported throughout the organisation. They have identified a number of solutions to mitigate language difficulties that may threaten smooth communication at an organisational level. Klitmøller & Luring (2013) focused specifically on the impact of cultural and linguistic differences in media and knowledge sharing practices in a large Danish MNC communicating with Indian colleagues and concluded:

It is surprising that only little research exists on language in virtual settings since variations in language could explain why some global teams using rich media for communication might not have a high degree of knowledge sharing effectiveness. Also, language variations and communication in English as a second language is more often the case than not in virtual teams. (Klitmøller & Luring, 2013, p. 400)

A study conducted by Lockwood and Forey (2016) has addressed the issue of scant research available in VTM from an applied linguistics perspective. By adopting a Systemic Functional Framework, in particular Appraisal Analysis with a Critical Discourse Analysis approach, their research has demonstrated how dominance and power were enacted by an onshore manager in a VTM, and how he closed down communication among team members. The authors uncovered this by analysing his use of language in an authentic VTM. The current study wishes to extend the existing research and provide new insights into the role of language in VTM settings.

Whilst studies in business management and organisational behaviour have been proliferating in recent years regarding the shift to virtual workplace practices, it appears from the virtual team management literature that there has been limited studies focusing on language issues related to virtual team meeting (VTM) communication and little analysis of authentic data of VTMs to explore how VTM participants use linguistic resources to communicate in this new virtual environment. This is surprising given the fact that many studies acknowledge the key role of language and communication in successful VTM.

2.2 Business Meetings

Meetings are integral in business communication as this is one of the main sites for people to get things done at work. Meetings are also the site in which organisations create and maintain their organisational activities. A meeting is defined as “task-oriented and decision-making

encounters involving the cooperative effort of two parties, the Chair and the group” (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997, p. 208). In a similar vein, Boden (1994) defines a meeting as ‘a planned gathering, whether internal or external to an organization, in which the participants have some perceived (either longstanding or quite improvisatorial) of the event, which has itself some purpose of “reasons”’ (p. 84). These definitions suggest that meetings are not merely the encounters between two parties as in informal conversation, and that they are goal-oriented which requires joint effort from meeting participants who usually possess different meeting roles. Boden (1994) claims that meetings are “the interaction order of management, the occasioned expression of management-in-action, that very social action through which institutions produce and reproduce themselves” (p. 81). This view also echoes Mumby (1988) who argues that meetings “function as one of the most important and visible sites of organisational power, and of the reification of organisational hierarchy” (p. 68). Meetings are therefore considered to play a central role in the accomplishment of organisational activities.

Due to meetings’ central role in the accomplishment of organisations, research from a variety of perspectives has been conducted to understand the discourse of meetings. For instance, the discursive strategies used in the management of meetings in intracultural and intercultural settings (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997); the language use in business meetings (Handford, 2010); the realisation and instantiation of different status in meetings (Sollitt-Morris, 1996); how meeting goals are accomplished interactionally in meetings (Boden, 1994; Drew & Heritage, 1992); the use of directives in meetings (Boden, 1994; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Vine, 2004); the functions of small talk and humour as relational discursive devices in meetings (Boden, 1994; Holmes & Marra, 2002); the distribution of turns and its relation to dominance (Holmes, 1995; Sollitt-Morris, 1996); male and female management styles in business meetings (Holmes, 1995; 2006b; Holmes & Marra, 2004; Holmes & Schnurr, 2005; Ladegaard,

2011b); multicultural participations in business meetings (Poncini, 2002) and cultural identities in interactional and interorganisational meetings (Handford, 2014). These studies on business meeting discourse cover a wide range of topics and issues and serve as important references to inform the current study. Although the current study aims to investigate the communicative strategies and interpersonal dynamics in virtual contexts, VTMs still share a lot of similarities with traditional forms of business meetings.

Meetings differ from casually occurring conversation in at least three ways. Firstly, they usually have a predetermined topic or agenda. Secondly, there is usually a rather stable set of interactants and thirdly, specific turn-taking modes are usually employed in meetings (Boden, 1994). Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) characterise the turn-taking system of informal conversation as local management of turns by the participants on a turn-by-turn basis, and they propose fourteen “grossly apparent facts” (p. 700) in “any conversation” (ibid.). The applicability of Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson’s (1974) organisation of turn-taking system to VTMs is also discussed in the current study. It is found that while some of the turn-taking system rules can be observed in both informal conversations and VTMs, others may not apply in VTMs. In particular, with respect to turn order, turn size, length of conversation and topics of conversation which are largely dependent on the meeting purposes and the role of meeting chair (for a detailed discussion, please refer to section 6.1.3).

2.2.1 The Genre of Business Meetings

There are different approaches to the study of genre and sometimes they may seem conflicting. Bhatia (2004, p. 22) attempts to define genre by combining the different approaches as:

Genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalized academic or professional settings, whether defined in terms of *typification of rhetorical action*, as in Miller (1984), Bazerman (1994) and Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), *regularities*

of stages, goal-oriented processes, as in Martin, Christie and Rothery (1987), or *consistency of communicative purposes*, as in Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993).
(original italics)

Bhatia's (2004) definition of genre highlights the importance of analysing genre from multiple perspectives. Handford (2007) and Koester (2010) also argue that if genre is analysed solely based on its communicative purposes, there may be a risk of neglecting other important aspects for categorising genre such as structure or schematic patterning, which is seen as an "obligatory element" in identifying genre in the Hallidayan approach (Hasan, 1985).

Some studies have attempted to categorise organisational genres by devising taxonomies of genre, for instance, Martin and Rothery's (1981) 'six elemental genres' and Müller's (2006) eight (spoken) communicative genres in industrial organisations (based on his study on organisational communication in a multinational company with data collected in Germany, France and Spain):

1. Private conversations
2. Contact conversations
3. Presentation talks
4. Training talks
5. Evaluation (appraisal) conversations
6. Planning conversations
7. Crisis conversations
8. Analysis talks

Müller's genre categories of spoken organisational communication suggest that communicative goals are the determining factors for genre categorisations. This explains why business meetings are not considered to be a genre within Müller's genre categorisations as meetings can contain different goals. However, Handford (2007) argues that communicative goals should not be the only criterion for defining genres. Other aspects of communication such

as structural features and particular discursive strategies should also be taken into account while defining what a genre is. Therefore, business meetings should be treated as a genre as they contain specific communicative goals (depending on the goals and purposes of the meetings); distinctive structural patterns (meetings usually consists of clear openings/closings and topic transitions) as well as strategic use of discursive strategies (transactional and/or relational).

2.2.2 Variables of Business Meetings

This section will discuss various variable characteristics in business meetings, namely the formality of meetings, the internal/external distinctions of meetings and the various purposes of meeting.

2.2.2.1 Formal/Informal

A number of factors can influence the relative formality of business meetings. For instance, the size of the meeting group, the duration of meeting, the location in which the meeting is held and the composition of the meeting participants together with the styles of interactions, the relationship between meeting participants as well as the structure of meetings all play a part in influencing the formality of business meetings, as suggested by Holmes and Stubbe (2003). For comparative purposes, Holmes and Stubbe (2003, p. 60) devise various dimensions for comparing meetings:

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Large in size | Small in size (2-4) |
| Formal setting | Unplanned location |
| Starting time specified | Occurs by chance |
| Finishing time specified | Finishes 'naturally' |
| Participants specified | Open to anyone |
| Formal procedures | Informal style |
| Explicit structured agenda | 'Rolling' agenda |

Tightly integrated group

Loosely connected

Mixed gender group

Same-gender group

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) observe that large meetings tend to be more formal as compared to meetings of smaller size. However, they also emphasise that this phenomenon does not always hold true as they also observe there can be variations in terms of formality at different stages and between different parts of meetings.

Formal meetings also tend to have specific starting and finishing times with specified participants at specific locations. They also tend to follow formal meeting procedures and agendas tightly as compared to informal meetings.

Although the dimensions given above might imply dichotomous features between formal and informal meetings. However, as noted previously, there can be variations and the distinctions are not always so clear-cut. For example, a group that is small in size can also conduct the meetings in a formal setting with formal meeting procedures and vice versa. While it is still useful to make use of these dimensions to compare meetings, it is best to regard formal and informal meetings in a relative sense on a continuum rather than two distinctive dichotomies, and they can be influenced by other contextual factors such as interaction styles and relationship between meeting participants.

2.2.2.2 Internal/External Meetings

Internal meetings are concerned with meetings that take place within an organisation, may it be interdepartmental or intradepartmental. Internal meetings can be further broken down into two categories (manager-subordinates and peers) based on the status differences between

meeting participants in order to compare how the issues of power can influence the discursive patterns and strategies in internal meetings.

Handford's (2010) study on the language of business meetings, which draws on data from the Cambridge and Nottingham Business English Corpus (CANBEC), shows recurring patterns of discursive features in different kinds of internal meetings. He finds that bringing the discussion back on track and issuing directives are more common in internal manager-subordinate meetings. Internal manager-subordinate meetings also typically feature linear turn structures, especially in dyadic encounters with reviewing and planning meeting purposes. Whereas internal peers meetings tend to be decision-making in nature. Unhedged claims, interruptions, direct and bold interactional styles are also more common in internal peers meetings. This phenomenon is also reflected by one of my interviewees in the current study. This interviewee, who is one of the directors in a multinational Brazilian IT organisation, stated in the interview that he would be more upfront with other senior management but he would "tone down" language if subordinates are involved in VTMs because he does not want to be perceived as the "bad guy" by his subordinates.

External meetings are concerned with meetings between different companies and they can be contractually or non-contractually bound (Handford, 2010). Handford's study demonstrates how negotiations unfold in external contractually bound meetings, and how meeting participants employ tactical discursive strategies such as formulations of summaries and silence to "wrestle over the implementation of professional practices that will dictate the organizational norms" (p. 86). He also demonstrates how meeting participants in external non-contractually bound meetings make use of "account" (Levinson, 1983) to diffuse disagreement and gain better position during negotiation.

All of the VTMs in the current study fall into the internal meeting category: meeting participants come from the same organisation albeit some interdepartmental and some intradepartmental. Handford's (2010) categorisations and observations on internal meetings are thus useful and can inform the current study.

2.2.2.3 Goals/Purposes

Meetings can be categorised in terms of their goals or purposes. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) identified and categorised three main meeting purposes from their data set drawn from the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) which are planning, reporting and problem solving. These classifications are also identified with different temporal perspectives as shown in the list below.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) state that some earlier research on meeting goals can also be incorporated in their classifications of meeting goals. For instance, Dwyer's (1993) classifications of assigning task and requesting action/permission are associated with planning; Giving feedback and requesting information/updates are associated with reporting. Albeit Holmes and Stubbe's (2003) meeting goals classifications are broad, they claim that it is adequate for them to classify the meetings in their data set.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003)

Planning (forward-oriented)

Reporting (backward-oriented)

Problem solving (Task/present-oriented)

Dwyer (1993)

Assigning task

Requesting action/permission

Giving feedback

Requesting information/updates

Handford's (2010) study on the language of meetings suggests a more refined set of meeting goal classifications because he found that some of the external meetings could not be classified under Holmes and Stubbe's (2003) classifications. He thus proposed six main meeting goals based on his review of the literature as well as his own observations based on the CANBEC data. His classifications of meeting goals are: 1) Reviewing; 2) Planning; 3) Giving and receiving information/advice; 4) Task-/problem-oriented; 5) Buying/selling/promoting a product and 6) Negotiating. Handford (2010) also stresses that identifying meeting goals is not an easy task and can often be messy because business meetings can contain multiple purposes and some purposes can be embedded in other meeting purposes. For instance, a meeting can have both reviewing and planning functions at different stages and giving information can be part of the planning or reviewing purpose.

Handford's (2010) classification of meeting goals is adopted in the current study since it provides a more fine-grained set of classifications for identification purpose. Analysis of the VTM data set for the current study reveals that, except the function of buying/selling/promoting a product, all other five meeting goals can be identified. It is also observed that meeting goals can have direct impact on the structure as well as communicative strategies used in VTMs.

2.2.2.4 Structure

Typically, a three-phase structure can be identified in business meetings in terms of topical organisation. Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997) term this three-phase structure as 1) opening phase, 2) debating phase and 3) closing phase. The term "debating phase" suggests that the main discussion section in the meeting is of negotiative nature. However, as discussed in the previous section of meeting goals, not all meetings involve negotiation and thus, this term might not apply to all meeting contexts. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) also suggest a three-

phase structure for meetings and they term the main discussion stage as the “central development section” (p. 65), which takes on a broader perspective on how the discussion can unfold depending on the different purposes of meetings.

Generally, the VTMs in the current study fit into a three-stage meeting structure as previously proposed by scholars who have conducted research on the genre of business meetings (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). The three stages include opening of meetings, discussion of agenda items and closing the meeting, and these stages are regarded as obligatory in business meetings. Handford (2010) proposes a broader meeting structure framework that contains six stages and encapsulates the intertextual and dynamic nature of business meetings. His proposed six structural stages are:

| | | |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Pre-meeting | Stage pre-2 (optional) | Meeting preparation |
| | Stage pre-1 (optional) | Pre-meeting |
| Meeting | Stage 1 (obligatory) | Opening of meeting |
| | Stage 2 (obligatory) | Discussion of agenda/topics |
| | Stage 3 (obligatory) | Closing of meeting |
| Post-meeting | Stage 4 (optional) | Post-meeting effects |

Table 2.1 Structural aspects of business meetings adapted from Handford (2010)

Stages 1 to 3 in fact resemble the three-phase structure as proposed by other scholars (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003) and they are regarded as obligatory in any business meetings. However, stage pre-2 meeting preparing, stage pre-1 pre-meeting and stage 4 post-meeting effects are considered to be optional with stage pre-2 meeting preparing and stage 4 post-meeting effects not even readily available in meeting transcripts. Although these two stages do not happen during the actual meetings, meeting preparation stage does provide intertextual links to the meetings since meeting documents are prepared in this stage and can

have an impact on the actual meetings, whereas post-meeting effects suggest that there can be sequential intertextuality drawn out from the actual meetings.

Pre-meeting stage is also optional and is usually a stage in which meeting participants do relational and phatic communication (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997). Small talk is usually found in this stage before the meeting begins. Although it is also worth noting that not all meetings contain small talk, nor pre-meeting stages, and that small talk can also appear at different stages of meetings and are not only confined in the pre-meeting stage (Handford, 2010). Pre-meeting stage can be found in all of the VTMs in the current data set, however, observations of the pre-meeting stage in all VTMs suggest that this stage can be multifunctional. Relational and phatic communication, i.e., greetings and introducing participants found at this stage also carry transactional functions. Since VTM participants ‘meet’ virtually with the lack of face-to-face encounters, they can make use of this stage to greet each other, and at the same time, checking for participant attendance and introduce who is in presence as they cannot see each other during the meetings.

2.3 Relational Talk in the Workplace

The notions of transactional and relational talk are often brought up in the discourse study of business communication. The business meeting is where people get together (face-to-face or virtually) to talk about business and try to get work done and tasks accomplished. They are thus intrinsically transactional. Relational talk or ‘off-task’ talk has been regarded as distracting, or even “aimless” in communication, in earlier studies of phatic communication (Malinowski, 1923, reprinted 1972). However, recently, more scholars have acknowledged the importance of trust, rapport and team cohesion in the workplace. They call for the recognition of the importance and role relational talk plays as well as addressing the balance between

transactional talk and relational talk in the workplace (Coupland, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Koester, 2001; McCarthy, 2000; Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

Holmes (2000, p. 38) classifies interactional talk in business settings and situates it on a continuum:

| Core business talk | Work-related talk | Social talk | Phatic talk |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------|-------------|

Core business talk is “relevant, focused, often context-bound, on-task talk, with high information content” (Holmes, 2000, P. 36). In business meeting settings, core business talk is directly relevant to the meeting agenda. Work-related talk refers to talk that relate to work in general, but not on a particular issue set on the agenda. Social talk covers topics that are ‘off-task’ with the aim of building and nurturing relationships. Small talk in the workplace thus falls within the category of social talk. Phatic talk is atypical and context-free that contains little referential content with its main aim as being social or relational, such as greetings.

These classifications suggest that core business talk and work-related talk are transactional and goal-driven, whereas social talk and phatic talk are relational driven. However, the boundaries between these categories are not always clear-cut. Take small talk as an example; it is dynamic and fluid in nature and can shift along the continuum. Koester (2010) proposes that relational talk can be found at different levels of discourse, and it ranges from extended non-transactional talk to shorter exchanges during transactional talk (p. 97):

1. Non-transactional conversations: office gossip and small talk
2. Phatic communion: small talk at the beginning or end of transactional encounters
3. Relational episodes: small talk or office gossip occurring during the performance of a transactional task
4. Relational sequences and turns: non-obligatory task-related talk with a relational focus

Koester's (2010) identification of relational talk shows that it is not confined to any particular stage of an interaction and does not necessarily stand on its own. In fact, it can often be found within transactional talk.

2.3.1 Relational Practices

One essential area to look into while studying relational talk and its role in the workplace is relational practice. Fletcher (2001) argues that any behaviour which can improve workplace relationships would be good for the business and hence, relational practice in the workplace is relevant and intertwined with organisational objectives. Relational practices, then, not only serves its core relational function, it also serves organisational transactional goals. Holmes and Marra (2004) define relational practice as “embracing any aspect of workplace behaviour oriented to an individual's relationships with work colleagues” (p. 379). Drawing on from the LWP analysis, Holmes and Marra (2004) suggest two dimensions in which relational practice is manifested in workplace discourse: 1) Creating Team: Relational practice that orients to constructing and nurturing good workplace relationship, building solidary and rapport and 2) Damage Control: Relational Practice that orients to constructing and maintaining other's dignity by saving face, mitigating offence and potentially threatening behaviours, and to minimise conflicts. It should also be noted that the above dimensions also parallel with Brown and Levinson's (1987) concepts of positive face needs, that is people's need to feel valued, appreciated and approved; and negative face needs, that is people's desire not to be imposed upon, intruded and their autonomy should be respected. Holmes and Marra (2004) also discuss some of the discursive strategies employed in each dimension of Relational Practice in workplace discourse as follow:

Creating team: Small talk and social talk; Positive humour; Off-record approval/appreciation

Damage control: Strategies of mitigation (Covert facilitation – negotiation of consensus to minimize conflict; Mitigating humour – soften Face Threatening Act impact)

Holmes and Marra's (2004) study demonstrate that there is a wide range of relational discursive strategies which include small talk, positive humour, off-record approval, mitigation strategies. McCarthy (2000) also argues that backchannel tokens, which are widely used in heavily task-related talk, also serve social functions as they can signal positive social orientation and engagement in an interaction rather than just filling in the gaps. Two most studied relational discursive strategies: Small talk and humour in the workplace will be outlined below.

2.3.2 Studies of Small Talk

Various studies have investigated the functions of small talk in the workplace and its role in facilitating business talk. Small talk is defined by McCarthy (2000) as “non-obligatory talk in terms of task requirements” (p. 84) and it has been acknowledged by scholars that small talk contains a social function and is treated as an important element of institutional success (Tracy & Naughton, 2000) because it can reduce inherent threat in social contact, enact social cohesiveness and structure social interaction (Eggins & Slade, 2006; J. Coupland, Coupland & Robinson, 1992; J. Coupland, Robinson & Coupland, 1994; Laver, 1975; Schneider, 1988; Tannen, 1989). It has been argued that one of the major forces for the occurrence of small talk is its ability to enhance solidarity and rapport building. The importance of rapport in the workplace has also been studied by linguists and management researchers and proven to be an essential element in the building and maintenance of strong collegiality (Fletcher, 2001; Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Spencer-Oatey, 2000). While small talk in business settings is treated as ‘off-task’ and non-informative as compared to transactional, core business talk, various studies have stressed its importance in effective and successful communication. Coupland's (2000) extensive study on small talk has foregrounded its social function in a

positive light. She states that “small talk [...] cannot be segregated from the “mainstream” concerns of talk at work. It is an intrinsic part of the talk at work complex” (p. 13). In a similar vein, Holmes and Stubbe (2003) argue for the importance of small talk at work and state that small talk serves “a crucial function of talk with significant implications for ongoing and future interaction” (p. 89).

Although small talk is often employed to “do collegiality”, it is also worth noting that it is multifunctional and can also be used to signal power difference and in-group/out-group identity. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) found that it is usually the one in power to decide when and for how long small talk takes place in workplace contexts. Eggins and Slade’s (2006) analysis of the interactions that took place in a group of male factory supervisors in Australia during their lunch break shows that it is the dominate member in the group who can negotiate and determine cultural values and group norms during small talk.

2.3.3 Studies of Humour

Humour is another important area in the study of workplace communication. Humour can appear in multiple forms such as personal anecdotes, jointly constructed narratives, work-play and punning, teasing, joke telling and self-deprecation (Koester, 2010). Whether humour can be perceived as humours would depend on the contexts, such as participants and culture, but Holmes (2000) stresses that the intended humour should be perceived by at least one of the other participants as amusing. Therefore, laughter can be an important indicator for discourse analysts to interpret whether an utterance or an extended sequence of utterances can be regarded as humorous. Although she also notes that this criterion is not essential as laughter itself can have other functions too.

In terms of types of humour, collaborative humour can typically be classified as either supportive or contestive (Holmes & Marra, 2002). Supportive humour agrees with or elaborates on previous contributions whereas contestive humour disagrees or challenges earlier propositions. In terms of the functions of humour, Holmes and Stubbe (2003) found that humour can be employed to “do collegiality” and to “do power” (p. 117). Extensive research has been conducted to study the functions of humour, one of the main functions of humour correlates to relational talk in general, that is solidarity and relationship building (Hay, 2000; Holmes, 2000). Humour can also be used to signal group identity (Hay, 2000) and power (Hay, 2000; Holmes, 2000). In the workplace context, humour is acknowledged to have the ability to nurture harmonious work relationships by amusing workmates and maintaining good work relations (Holmes, 2000; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). It can also be used as a “safety valve” (Koester, 2010) to license professional challenges which are inherently face-threatening. Taylor and Bain’s (2003) study on subversive humour shows how humour is employed strategically to undermine management authority in call centres. When humour is used as a subversive strategy, it can mask off the negative messages to an equal or superior, hence, it serves as a more socially acceptable act to hide face attack acts in the workplace (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

McCarthy’s (2000) study of business interaction found that participants seem to be aware of the importance of relational talk (whether consciously or unconsciously) to ensure goal accomplishments and relationship building. Multiple examples in the current study (Chapter 6) demonstrate how relational talk is employed with transactional goals in mind. They also support the claims made by other scholars that relational talk plays an important role in goal/transaction-oriented workplace exchanges, and that more recognition of relational talk in the workplace is needed to address the balance between transactional talk and relational talk

(Coupland, 2000; Holmes, 2000; 2003; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Koester, 2001; McCarthy, 2000; Spencer-Oatey, 2000).

This chapter has explored a wide range of topics in the business communication/VTM literature and outlined concepts relevant to present study. The unique settings of virtual work teams as well as virtual team meetings give rise to several issues, such as trust building, team cohesiveness, intercultural communication as well as the impact of English as Lingua Franca in international teams. The contextual factors of VTMs also heavily influence the communication strategies (transactional and/or relational) employed by meeting participants in the VTMs. These issues will be explored in detail through the reflections by the VTM participants (Chapter 5), and through discourse analysis of the VTMs using the Communication Accommodation Theory framework (Chapter 6).

Chapter Three

Theoretical Framework

3.1 Communication Accommodation Theory

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) examines motives, motivation, attitudes and identity issues that influence people's language use and how they adjust to each other's communication styles and needs in interactions. Developed by Howard Giles (Giles, 1973; Giles & Powesland, 1975) in the 1970s, CAT was initially known as Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) which explained how and why people converge or diverge linguistically (by adjusting accent, intonations, volume, speech rate and bilingual shifts etc. in interactions) from their interlocutors through the strategy of Approximation. Subsequently, Coupland, Coupland, Giles, and Henwood (1988) took psychosocial factors into account and expanded the theory as well as proposing additional communication accommodation strategies (such as Interpretability, Discourse Management, Interpersonal Control and Emotional Expressions) so that it can be better applied to the overall communication process. CAT has also gone through several theoretical refinements and elaborations since the 1970s (Giles et al., 1987). This chapter will discuss the development of CAT, including the motives for communication accommodation, motivation as an emergent process, the constraints on communication adjustments, fundamental and elaborate principles of CAT and lastly, the strategies of CAT.

3.2 Development of Communication Accommodation Theory

According to Giles (2016), CAT development has gone through six stages since the 1970s. The first stage (around 1969) is the 'foundational phase'. During this stage, the focus of research was on accent/dialect convergence and divergence between interlocutors (Giles & Smith, 1979) and how language attitudes affect speech accommodation (Giles & Powesland, 1975). The research in the first phase led onto the second phase of development which, as Giles (2016)

argues, is the 'intergroup/contextual' phase (around 1977-). Studies in the second phase focused on why people choose to diverge or non-accommodate in certain contexts as a form of social differentiation (Giles, 1978; Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977; Giles & Johnson, 1981), a concept which is based on Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and thus, provided an explanation on communication or non-accommodation as a means to maintain interlocutors' social identities (ethnicity, age, gender, occupation) in intergroup interactions (Boggs & Giles, 1999; Choi & Giles, 2012; Fox & Giles, 1993). The third phase of development is the 'subjectivist phase' (around 1982-) in which the proposition of interlocutors' subjective stance and evaluation of the communicative events and their communicative counterparts were taken into account. It was pointed out that speakers accommodate to others according to their own beliefs and judgements on the communicative contexts and their interlocutors (usually based on stereotypes), rather than who their interlocutors actually are in any measurable objective sense (Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982). For example, a young person may use an excessively loud voice, oversimplified vocabulary and sentence structure while talking to an elderly person in an intergenerational exchange because this is what he/she *believes* the other person may need in order to communicate effectively, while this kind of overaccommodation may not be perceived positively, and can even be regarded as patronising, as the elderly person may feel he/she is regarded as less capable. This phase of CAT development also studied the social consequences that arise from such a subjectivist stance. The CAT development then smoothly transited to phase four (around 1986-) in which CAT studies focused on under- and overaccommodation in intergenerational communication and healthcare settings (Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1991; Giles, Coupland, & Wiemann, 1990) as well as the negative social consequences that may be caused by dysfunctional communication accommodation (Giles, 2013).

The fifth CAT development phase is the ‘communicative breadth’ phase (around 1988-). This is the phase where CAT started to develop into a general theory and embraced different discourse styles and nonverbal practices from the initial speech accommodation theory, which primarily focused on accommodation or non-accommodation of speech variables. Three additional communication accommodation strategies (Interpretability, Discourse Management and Interpersonal Control) were incorporated in CAT, while convergence and divergence of speech variables were then considered as Approximation strategies. The incorporation of additional communication accommodation strategies has taken a giant leap forward in CAT development; not only did it address the fact that speech variables accommodation is only one of the many ways speakers can accommodate to each other, but it also acknowledged that speakers could converge and diverge simultaneously at different communication levels and employing multiple communication accommodation strategies at the same time, depending on their motivations and the goal they want to achieve from the communicative events. The last stage of CAT development phase to date is the ‘mediating mechanism phase’ (around 2006-) which has its focus on police-civilian exchanges and how the police’s accommodation strategies during law enforcement triggers people’s emotions as well as trust (Barker et al., 2008; Choi & Giles, 2012; Gasiorek & Giles, 2012). Giles (2016) repeatedly noted that these six phases are not distinctly confined and are not mutually exclusive. They are indeed interdependent and constantly evolving and being refined.

3.3 Motives for Communication Accommodation

CAT proposes two main motives to explain why people adjust their communication in interactions (Giles, Scherer & Taylor, 1979). They are affective motive, which concerns maintaining and managing one’s (personal or social) identity during interactions, and cognitive motive, which relates to communication efficiency and comprehension.

CAT posits that communication conveys not only referential function but also social and relational function. With its focus on SIT, CAT suggests that speakers can create and maintain positive self-identity, manage social distance and display their attitudes towards individual and group membership by regulating their communicative behaviours and strategies within interactions. For instance, following on similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), if speakers wish to gain approval and social liking as well as decreasing the social distance from their counterparts, they can adopt converging and cooperative accommodation strategies to regulate their communicative style to appear more similar to their interlocutors. Conversely, speakers may adopt diverging or non-accommodative strategies to enhance his/her distinctiveness from their interlocutor, usually based on group membership. One may choose to accentuate the differences in communicative behaviour from his/her interlocutor if he/she defines the interaction as 'intergroup' more than 'interpersonal'. In such an instance, one's ingroup identity can be activated, and through accentuating his/her distinctiveness in interaction, his/her social identity can be upheld and emphasised. In the case of maintenance, a person insists on his/her speech and communicative style, regardless of the communicative behaviour of his/her counterparts (Bourhis, 1979).

Another motive for communication accommodation is cognitive. Speakers can be motivated to adjust their speech to be more intelligible, comprehensible and accessible based on their assessments of their interlocutor's communicative needs. For instance, in the case of a virtual team meeting which involves native and non-native speakers of English, native English speakers may lower the pace of their speech, decrease their vocabulary and sentence complexity and increase clarity if they think their non-native counterparts may encounter difficulties in understanding the interaction. According to Giles and Ogay (2007), convergence and accommodation as such not only helps interlocutors to gain approval from one another, it

also helps to improve communication effectiveness as it can “increase predictability of the other and hence a lowering of uncertainty, interpersonal anxiety” (p. 296).

Motivation is treated as an emergent and dynamic process in interaction which can change overtime in CAT (Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016). People engage in an interaction with an initial orientation which is determined by three main factors, namely interpersonal history, sociocultural norms and intergroup relations in CAT’s terms.

Regarding interpersonal history, speaker’s attitudes and evaluation on their interlocutors can change over time from initial contact to long term relationship, and the more positive the interpersonal history is, the more likely they are to adopt a positive interpersonal orientation and thus, the more likely they would converge toward each other. Conversely, speakers are more likely to diverge from one another if the interpersonal history and orientation is a negative one (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005). This can be exemplified by the interview data from the current study with some of my interviewees who had participated in virtual team meetings. During the interview, they recalled a negative impression towards other virtual team meeting participants from other office locations whom they had not met before as they seemed to be angry and shouting on the phone. However, as time progressed and with more opportunity to exchange views with each other, and some even got to meet their virtual team members in real life, their impression and orientation towards their meeting counterparts had changed from a negative to a positive one.

Sociocultural norms set the rules and shape interactants’ behaviours in interactions. They specify what is ‘appropriate’ in a given situation (Gallois & Callan, 1991). In the case of business meetings, the sociocultural norms determine, for example, how a subordinate should talk to his/her manager and vice versa, who has the power to regulate speech turns and decide

on discussion topics, how to raise concerns when conflicts arise etc. The issue of sociocultural norms is even more complex in virtual work teams as they are usually more culturally diverse (in terms of ethnicity, nationality and linguistic background). The geographical and social distance between virtual work team members also poses challenges for them to understand and familiarise themselves with such differences in sociocultural norms. This lack of understanding and unfamiliarity may affect their judgements on what is deemed ‘appropriate’ in other peoples’ eyes and thus, may also affect their motivation to communication adjustments.

Intergroup relations between social groups can also affect people’s initial orientation towards others and may influence their choices to converge or diverge in interactions. Research in this area primarily focuses on ethnolinguistic vitality between cultural and ethnic groups (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977) and it is discovered that interactants who had been involved in hostile intergroup relationships tend to construe communication in intergroup terms and are more motivated to diverge in intergroup communication in order to preserve and emphasise their ingroup identity.

3.4 Constraints on Communication Adjustments

As discussed in the previous sections, people involved in interactions can be motivated to accommodate out of affective and/or cognitive motives. However, to what extent they *can* adjust their communicative styles depends on their actual ability to perform such communicative behaviours. Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles (2016) propose multiple factors which can hinder speakers’ communicative adjustments in interactions, namely communicative repertoire, physiological constraints and communication medium.

3.4.1 Communicative Repertoire

Gumperz developed the notion of ‘verbal repertoire’ in the early 1960s and this notion was linked to a particular speech community and “contains all the accepted ways of formulating messages. It provides the weapons of everyday communication. Speakers choose among this arsenal in accordance with the meanings they wish to convey” (Gumperz, 1964, p. 138). In other words, speakers’ verbal repertoire allows them to choose and employ verbal features to convey meanings and construct messages. Rymes (2010) revisited Gumperz’s notion of linguistic repertoire and coined the term ‘communicative repertoire’ in order to capture other semiotic functions in meaning making, suggesting that other nonverbal and paralinguistic features should also be taken into account in one’s communicative repertoire. As communication accommodation involves adjusting one’s speech style, such adjustments would be more accessible if they occur within one’s existing communicative repertoire. Tension and stress may arise if the speaker has to accommodate outside of his/her communicative repertoire as it would imply that speakers have to adopt to a new set of communicative features in order to adjust their speech style. Gasiorek, Van de Poel and Blockmans (2015)’s study on doctor-patient interactions in a multilingual hospital found that when doctors could not accommodate to their patients linguistically, they resorted to other nonverbal means such as gestures to convey meanings, as well as switching their accommodation motive from a cognitive one to an affective one so as to cater to the social and relational needs of the patients in order to compensate for the linguistic non-accommodation. This study sheds light on the present study of virtual meeting communication in the sense that given the multilingual and multicultural backgrounds of the meeting participants whose L1 is usually not English, together with the absence of facial features, how would the VTM participants accommodate to each other if the adjustments are outside of their communicative repertoires?

3.4.2 Physiological Constraints

The second constraint on communication adjustment is a physiological one which concerns a speaker's ability to produce different speech sounds that are outside of his/her existing linguistic repertoire. Studies on second language acquisition of early and late learners have "consistently demonstrated a more or less strong negative correlation between age of onset (AO) of acquisition and ultimate attainment of second language (L2)" (Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2008, p. 482). This finding supports the idea of a biological critical period of human language acquisition (DeKeyser, 2000; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2000; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Long, 1990; Patkowski, 1980) which implies that adults can encounter more difficulties to acquire languages more efficiently as compared to children. It would also mean that it would be more difficult for most people who learn a second language late in life to achieve native-like pronunciation. This limitation can cause constraints if VTM participants wish to converge their speech to their interlocutors in terms of Approximation in order to gain social approval.

3.4.3 Communication Medium

Finally, communication medium can also cause constraints on speakers' communication adjustments. Unlike face-to-face exchanges in which speakers can employ multiple meaning-making devices such as eye-gaze, gestures, postures etc., VTM participants largely rely on their voices and verbal communication devices to convey their messages, so their dimensions on communication accommodation are constrained by their use of communication medium, which in this case is teleconferencing.

3.5 Principles of Communication Accommodation Theory

Various CAT scholars (Giles & Ogay, 2007; Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016; Gasiorek, 2016) have proposed different sets of principles of CAT over the last two decades. Their propositions will be compared and synthesized below:

| Giles & Ogay (2007: 294) | Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, (2016: 51) | Gasiorek (2016: 25-26) |
|--|---|--|
| 1) Communication is not only influenced by the participants' immediate situation, the social-historical context in which the interaction is embedded should also be taken into consideration. 2) Communication is not merely a process of exchanging information and emotions (referential communication), social identity and membership are often negotiated through the process of communication. 3) Based on stereotypes and social norms, interactants have expectations on the level of accommodation during an interaction. 4) Interactants employ various communicative strategies in interactions to signal their attitudes towards each other and their respective social | 1. Communication accommodation is a ubiquitous and fundamental aspect of social interaction that serves two major functions: first, it helps facilitate coherent interaction and, second, it allows interactants to manage social distance between one another. 2. Individuals have expectations about what constitutes appropriate and desirable accommodation in context, and these expectations are informed by the sociohistorical context of interaction, interpersonal and intergroup histories, and idiosyncratic preferences. 3. The degree and quality of individuals' accommodation in interaction is a function of both their motivation to adjust and their ability to adjust. 4. Speakers will over time increasingly accommodate to the communicative patterns they believe characteristic of their interactants, the more they wish affiliate (i.e., decrease social distance) with their interactants on either an individual or group level, or make their message more easily understood. 5. Speakers will over time increasingly non-accommodate to the communicative patterns they believed characteristic of their interactants, the more they wish disaffiliate (i.e., increase social distance) with their interactants on either an individual or group level, or make their message more difficult to understand. 6. As a function of the intentions and motives believed to underlie a speaker's communication, perceived accommodation increasingly and cumulatively decreases perceived social | 1) Communication adjustment is fundamental to interaction 2) Communication adjustment serves two functions: 1) to establish common ground such that coherent interaction can take place 2) to manage social distance between individuals, and individuals as members of groups 3) Communication adjustment may be either in response to others, or initiated by a speaker to achieve particular interactional or social ends 4) People have expectations about what constitutes 'appropriate' adjustment in context |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| groups. Interacts may choose to converge or diverge in an interaction in order to satisfy their needs to be socially included or to differentiate themselves from their counterparts. | <p>distance, enhances interactional satisfaction and positive evaluations of speakers, and facilitates mutual understanding.</p> <p>7. As a function of the intentions and motives believed to underlie a speaker's communication and the potential consequences of associated outcomes, perceived non-accommodation increasingly and cumulatively increases perceived social distance, diminishes interactional satisfaction and positive evaluations of speakers, and impedes mutual understanding.</p> | 5) Many of these adjustment processes are unconscious and automatic, though they may also be conscious and deliberate |
|---|---|---|

Table 3.1 CAT principles as proposed by Giles & Ogay (2007), Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles (2016) and Gasiorek (2016)

This table provides good overview of CAT principles proposed by various CAT scholars. As can be seen in the table above, the essence of principles of CAT proposed by Giles & Ogay (2007) can also be found in Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles (2016) and Gasiorek (2016) with more elaborations and dimensions added in the latter two. The synthesized principles of CAT are as follows:

Fundamental principles:

- 1) Communication accommodation is ubiquitous and fundamental to interaction.
- 2) Communication accommodation serves two functions: 1) to facilitate coherent interaction and 2) to manage and negotiate social identity, membership and distance between individuals and groups.
- 3) People have expectations about what constitutes 'appropriate' adjustment in context and these expectations are informed by the sociohistorical context, interpersonal and intergroup history as well as idiosyncratic preferences.
- 4) Interactants employ various communicative strategies to signal their attitudes towards each other or other social groups. They can choose to converge (to be socially included) or diverge (to differentiate) in interpersonal and/or intergroup interactions.

Elaborated principles:

- 5) Communication accommodation is dynamic rather than static. People's attitudes towards each other or other social groups can change over time and this would affect their accommodation attitudes and strategies (Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016).
- 6) Perception of accommodation: positive perception of accommodation can decrease social distance, enhance interactional satisfaction and positive evaluation of speakers and facilitate mutual understanding; negative perception of accommodation can increase social distance, impede interactional satisfaction and positive evaluation of speakers and deteriorate mutual understanding (Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016).
- 7) Assessment of accommodation: the degree and quality of accommodation rely on one's motivation as well as ability to adjust in interaction (Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016).
- 8) Communication accommodation can be initiated by a speaker or as a response to others (Gasiorek, 2016).
- 9) Communication accommodation can be conscious/deliberate or unconscious/automatic (Gasiorek, 2016).

3.6 Strategies of Communication Accommodation Theory

There are five communication accommodation strategies interactants can employ during an interaction, depending on their communicative goals in relation to their interlocutors' communication needs and characteristics. They are Approximation, Interpretability, Discourse Management, Interpersonal Control and Emotional Expressions.

3.6.1 Approximation

Approximation concerns with communication production. Interlocutors take each other's conversational needs as they actually are, or as they are perceived or stereotyped (Coupland et al., 1988; Gallois et al., 1988). The speakers can converge or adapt to the other speaker's communication style through any salient communication features such as accent, speech rate and word choices. Convergence can be further classified as upward convergence or downward convergence and this can be salient when there is a power asymmetry. Power and status variables are the main factors for such convergence. People in subordinate positions may adjust their communicative style in order to appear more similar to the one of their superiors is regarded as upward convergence. In contrast, people of higher status may alter their speech in terms of the use of colloquial and lay language in order to match the speech style of those who are in a less powerful position, and this can be regarded as downward convergence. Speakers can also diverge from their interlocutor(s) by accentuating the differences in their communicative features (divergence). Other than convergence and divergence, speakers can also maintain their own communicative style without adapting to, nor moving away from their interlocutors' communication styles (maintenance).

Although the terms convergence and divergence may suggest a dichotomous relationship, it is important to note that they should not be regarded as mutually exclusive communicative strategies. Bilous and Krauss's (1988) research on mixed and same-gender dyads has shown that convergence can occur on some variables while divergence on others may occur in the same interaction. Their findings suggest that while analysing and operationalising communication strategies, it is important to look at various behavioural variables from a holistic perspective rather than focusing on a single variable.

Apart from communicative style divergence and maintenance, non-accommodation can also be categorised as underaccommodation and overaccommodation. They are usually activated by stereotyped expectations during intergroup encounters. People often adjust their communicative style depending on how they perceive their communicative partners rather than how they actually are (Thakerar, Giles & Cheshire, 1982) and sometimes, this kind of perception may be incongruent with the reality. Erroneous expectations on the other social groups based on stereotypes may lead speakers to over-adjusting (overaccommodation), or not to adjust adequately (underaccommodation). A person who underaccommodates may be perceived by the other as noncooperative and unempathetic, while a person who overaccommodates may be perceived as behaving inappropriately or even patronizing.

3.6.2 Interpretability

Interpretability is about addressing a speaker's communication competence. Speakers employ Interpretability strategies to adjust their speech in order to make it easier (or not) for the other person to understand them. Interlocutors can slow down their speech, simplify sentence structures, adjust volumes, choosing appropriate levels of vocabulary, and asking questions to check understanding to ensure the message is conveyed and understood. Interpretability accommodation strategy is particularly apparent and often used to accommodate non-native speakers (Freed, 1981), or in intergenerational exchanges (i.e., to children (baby talk) and/or elderly) (Coupland et al., 1988).

3.6.3 Discourse Management

Discourse Management strategies are concerned with how speakers cater for others' 'macro-conversational needs' (Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016, p. 41), how interlocutors engage each other and sustain the conversation which includes behaviours such as: who makes

decisions about the discourse, how speaking turns are regulated, who and how topics are chosen etc. As Discourse Management strategy covers a wide range of tactics to manage a discourse, Coupland et al. (1988) consider Discourse Management the most central and broadest strategy in CAT strategies.

3.6.4 Interpersonal Control

Interpersonal Control concerns with role relationship between interlocutors and how much each speaker is constrained by their role in intergroup interaction. This strategy can be positive in intergroup interactions if interlocutors establish a sense of shared identity within an interaction, or if speakers are allowed to have the freedom to leave roles as they wish. It can also be negative if speakers are forced to take up certain roles through linguistic and communicative devices in an interaction.

3.6.5 Emotional Expressions

Emotional Expressions is the strategy speakers use when they recognise another's emotional needs in interactions. Accommodative Emotional Expressions can be conveyed by offering assurance and comfort (Watson et al., 2015; Williams et al., 1990).

Communication Accommodation Theory presents a robust framework that allows researchers to investigate the interplay between motivational, emotional and behavioural processes underlying communication exchanges. It acknowledges personal as well as social identity as the determining factors that govern our communication adjustments, and it is seen to be appropriate to be applied in VTM settings in which multiple personal and social identities interplay. CAT not only focuses on the motivation and production of communication adjustments, but it also acknowledges the effects and consequences that are brought about by

the perception and evaluation of communication accommodation and how they can have an effect on interactions, and this adds more depth and dimensions in understanding communication effectiveness. The multiple converging and diverging communication accommodation strategies proposed in CAT also permit us to analyse the interactional complexity in professional exchanges within virtual meeting contexts.

Chapter Four

Methodology

The present study takes an inductive approach to research. A multi-method data collection approach and the theoretical and analytical framework of Communication Accommodation Theory are applied to investigate the discourse of virtual team meetings. The multi-method data collection approach combines questionnaires, observations, interviews and discourse analysis of seven authentic VTMs in order to provide a complementary overview and insights into the context, and outline what happens and how virtual meetings are viewed and interpreted by those involved. Computer Aided Qualitative Discourse Analysis Software (CAQDAS), Discursis is also employed to complement qualitative discourse analysis of the VTM data to investigate turn-taking dynamics, conceptual content, conceptual coherence as well as speakers' engagement in an exchange.

Two organisations, BrazIT and AusBank are involved in the data collection for the present research. Site visit was conducted at BrazIT in 2019. Data collected during the site visit of BrazIT include questionnaires, observations, interviews with VTM stakeholders, collection of company documents as well as shadowing and recording of two VTMs. The remaining five VTMs were collected from AusBank in Melbourne. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 travel ban, site visit and observation at AusBank was not possible. In total, seven VTMs had been collected and transcribed for discourse analysis.

4.1 Organisation Contexts

BrazIT is a private Brazilian multinational IT service and solutions provider. The company employs more than 25,000 people in 40 countries across the world, with setup offices and sites in North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Australia and Asia with its global headquarter located in Sao Paula, Brazil, its European headquarter in Brussels and its North

American headquarter in the Detroit metro area. Their services include service desk, onshore/offshore/nearshore IT infrastructure outsourcing, digital applications and consulting services. The office from which the data was collected for this project is its Philippine branch in Manila. According to one of the participants, BrazIT's Manila office has around 1,200 employees serving mainly American clients. Therefore, Manila office runs 24 hours a day and employees and operation agents have to work in shifts to accommodate different time zones.

As with other research conducted in professional settings, getting the permission to enter the workplace is one of the most challenging steps in the data collection process. I was fortunate enough to gain access to the Philippines branch through a professor, who is a consultant for the company and for whom I have worked as Research Associate in the past. Since the professor provides language assessment and consultancy services to the company, a certain degree of work relationship and trust have been built, which made it easier for her to persuade the company to participate in the present study. Nevertheless, the persuasion and negotiation process took about 6 months and the permission to visit the site was finally granted in March 2019.

AusBank is a multinational bank based in Melbourne, Australia which has, over the last decade, progressively offshored their work to different parts of Asia, mostly into developing countries. AusBank has been offshoring a variety of Information Technology (IT) projects, back-office accounting and human resource management (HRM) functions to developing countries in Asia such as India, the Philippines and Vietnam for cost saving reasons. Management from AusBank has expressed their concerns about project deadlines being missed and the generally low morale regarding communication between the Australian and the new Asian team members. They therefore expressed interest in participating in research that aims to improve VTM

effectiveness. The connection to AusBank was also established through the professor who provides language consultancy services to the organisation.

4.2 Data Collection

Site Visit to BrazIT

The initial site visit was conducted from 11th March 2019 to 15th March 2019. I was asked to give a presentation about my research to the employees within the company on the first night of my arrival. The purpose was to explain my research rationale, the data that needed to be collected, the procedures involved in data collection, the confidentiality issues as well as ‘what’s in it for them’ to the company stakeholders including the Country Director, the Operations Director, Operations Manager, HR Manager, Recruitment Manager, Finance Manager, Facilities Manager as well as Marketing Manager.

Most of the data collected during the visit are qualitative. The data set comprises of site visit and observations, questionnaires, interviews, recordings of VTMs as well as relevant company documents. When conducting research in the workplace, and in virtual team meetings, it is essential to take account of the context (Forey & Lockwood, 2007; 2010; Lockwood, 2012). The context, i.e., the nature of the industry, organisational culture, policy, practice training, etc., will have a direct impact on the choices being made to construe the texts. Forey (2004), Louhiala-Salminen (2002) and Scollon (1995) assert that cultural issues and the way cultural differences are realised through language are highly influential within the business community. ‘Going beyond’ the text and collaborating with participants who are users of the VTM texts has become a recognised research tool within the field of applied linguistics (Poynton, 1993). Poynton (1993) also stresses the need to supplement linguistic analysis with social theory, i.e., ‘cultural factors’ need to be considered in any discussion of communication.

Five days were spent in the Manila office to observe the company setup, work patterns, VTMs, to collect company documentations (sections of employee handbook were collected during the visit) and to interview participants. It is vital to investigate company documentation and policies as they can reveal company values, changes and its strategic directions. Detailed field notes were also taken to record discussions and informal meetings. The importance of such a visit is to capture a rich description which supplements and helps the analyst interpret the documents and recordings/transcriptions collected during the study.

4.2.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were distributed to employees in the Manila office who have VTM experience through the team managers to gain a general understanding of their VTM practices as well as their demographic information. The aim of the questionnaire was to collate background information of those involved, such as age, gender, ethnicity, linguistic background, educational background, their positions, and years of experience in the company. The questionnaire also asked about their general practices and challenges they face in VTMs, as well as their perceptions of the successfulness of VTMs. The survey should provide a general picture of the extent, range, frequency, common practices, and beliefs related to VTMs.

Design of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of three main sections: Section One contains seven questions with the aim to understand respondents' general internal virtual communication practices and perceptions; Section Two contains sixteen items that inquire about the respondents' virtual team meeting practices, perceptions as well as challenges they have encountered in VTMs; Section Three asks about demographic information of the respondents such as nationality,

gender, age group, educational level, their positions in the company, their native language, as well as self-assessed English proficiency level (see Questionnaire in Appendix A).

Different types of questioning techniques have been employed to elicit a variety of answers. For example, closed-ended Likert scales were used for respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with VTMs, and open-ended questions were used in order to understand the kinds of challenges or difficulties the respondents face in VTMs.

Administering the Questionnaire

A soft copy of the questionnaire was sent to all Department Heads, who asked the employees in their teams who were involved in VTMs to fill in the questionnaire. A total of eighteen questionnaires were returned to me by the end of my site visit, sixteen questionnaires were filled in by the employees from the Manila office, and two responses were from the overseas offices (China and the US).

Respondents' Demographics

Respondents mainly work in the Human Resources Department, Operations Department and Recruitment Departments, and they occupy a range of company roles from technician, analyst, and department managers to director. In terms of gender, eight of them are female and ten of them are male. Seven respondents are in their 20s, eight are in their 30s, one in his/her 40s and one in his/her 50's. All the respondents have at least completed university diploma level with eleven completed at university graduate level. Fifteen respondents indicated that their native language is Filipino (Tagalog), two indicated Chinese and one indicated Portuguese. Respondents' demographic details are shown in Table 4.1 below:

| Respondents | Nationality | Gender | Age Group | Native Language | Education Level | Location | Department | Position | Years of Experience |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Cherry | Filipina | F | n/a | Tagalog | n/a | Manila | Human Resources | HR Manager | 7 |
| Donald | Filipino | M | 30-39 | Tagalog | Diploma | Manila | PMI | Event Management Lead | 10 |
| Anson | Filipino | M | 20-29 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | Locomote | Help Desk Technician Lead | n/a |
| CK | Filipino | M | 30-39 | Tagalog | Diploma | Manila | Operations | Service Delivery Manager | 8 |
| Amy | Filipina | F | 30-39 | Chinese | Graduate | Manila | n/a | Service Manager | 3 |
| Jackson | Filipino | M | 20-29 | Tagalog | Diploma | Manila | n/a | Help Desk Technician Lead | 3 |
| Henry | Filipino | M | 30-39 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | ENETT | Operations Specialist | 4 |
| Candice | Filipina | F | 20-29 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | ENETT | Help Desk Technician | 4 |
| Charles | Filipino | M | 30-39 | Tagalog | Diploma | Manila | PMI | Event Analyst | 3 |
| Lee | Chinese | F | 50-59 | Chinese | Graduate | Jilin | Operations | Operations Manager | 8 |
| Sarah | Brazilian | F | 30-39 | Portuguese | Graduate | North America | Recruiting | Senior Manager | 11 |
| Chloe | Filipina | F | 20-29 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | Recruitment | Team Lead | 6 |
| Ben | Filipino | M | 40-49 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | Recruitment | Recruitment Manager | 3 |
| Ken | Filipino | M | 20-29 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | Recruitment | Talent Acquisition Specialist | 4.5 |
| Kimmy | Filipina | F | 30-39 | Tagalog | Diploma | Manila | Recruitment | Talent Acquisition Specialist | 1.5 |
| Kris | Filipino | M | 30-39 | Tagalog | Diploma | Manila | Recruitment | Talent Acquisition Specialist | 6 |
| Andrew | Filipino | M | 20-29 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | Recruitment | Talent Acquisition Specialist | 2 |
| Alice | Filipina | F | 20-29 | Tagalog | Graduate | Manila | Recruitment | Talent Acquisition Specialist | 3 |

Table 4.1 Questionnaire respondents and their demographic details

Questionnaire is an effective way to collect general information addressing a specific topic within a particular group of people in a particular setting. However, the data yielded from questionnaires cannot probe deep into the issues due to the purpose of questionnaires, which usually is to gather general information on a topic(s) within a particular population. While the questionnaire data may provide valuable patterns and indications of specific areas for the researchers to focus on, questionnaire data alone are rather ‘thin’, and only allow the researcher to look into the issues at a superficial level. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the participants’ VTM experiences as well as their relations to wider cultural issues, other types of data also needed to be collected so as to yield ‘thicker’ data sets. Interview was one of the methods employed.

4.2.2 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the aim to understand the VTM contexts and other relevant issues such as language issues, intercultural communication issues, as well as issues concerning group dynamics in the VTM setting. An interview guide (Appendix B) with a set of twelve guiding questions was prepared prior to the site visit. As the name itself suggests, the guiding questions were only treated as prompts and, when appropriate, I asked the interviewees to elaborate or clarify on certain topics with follow-up questions.

Interviewee Sampling

A homogeneous sampling strategy had been adopted to select participants for interviews in order to gain an understanding and to identify common patterns of participants’ experiences and potential problems they have encountered with VTMs. The participants should have some experiences with VTMs and these VTMs should be internal (within the same company) involving counterparts from other offices outside the Philippines.

Twelve face-to-face interviews were conducted during the five-day visit. Confidentiality issues were explained, and consent was sought and forms were signed before each interview. Below is a summary of the participants' profiles. As can be seen in the table below, interview participants occupy a diverse range of company positions across different departments within the Manila office:

| Participants (Pseudonym) | Position/Department | Duration of Interview (in minutes) |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| CK | Service Delivery Manager- Operations | 47' |
| Amy | Service Manager | 36'38 |
| Charles | Event Analyst - Operations | 53'27 |
| Emily | Senior Team Leader - Operations | 36'06 |
| Fred | Senior Recruiter | 36'45 |
| Mable | Marketing/Digital Marketing Officer | 44'14 |
| Rachel | Facility Lead | 56'34 |
| Cherry | Human Resources Manager | 1'03'05 |
| Ben | Talent Acquisition Manager | 1'25'21 |
| Jane | Finance Manager | 25'19 |
| Aaron | Service Delivery Director | 29'52 |
| Group Discussion | Operations Agents | 42'02 |

Table 4.2 Interview participants and duration of interviews

4.2.3 Authentic Virtual Team Meetings

Seven authentic virtual team meetings (two obtained from BrazIT and five obtained from AusBank) comprises the data set for discourse analysis. These VTMs provide diversity in terms of meeting purposes, meeting topics as well as virtual team members compositions.

Meeting purposes of the VTMs are classified according to the classification developed by Handford (2010). His classifications of meeting purposes are:

- 1) Reviewing;
- 2) Planning;
- 3) Giving and receiving information/advice;
- 4) Task-/problem-oriented;
- 5) Buying/selling/promoting a product and
- 6) Negotiating.

These classifications of meeting purposes (except buying/selling/promoting a product) align with the purposes identified in my VTM data. It is however important to note that meeting purposes are not always so clear-cut, and meetings usually contain different purposes as shown in Table 4.3 below.

The Relationship between meeting participants is an important contextual factor in understanding business meeting discourse. Handford (2010) considers the relationship of speakers as the “most relevant contextual factor” and is “decided by considering the goal of the meeting and the institutionally sanctioned power relation between the speakers” (p. 8). In internal meetings, the relationship of participants can be categorized as ‘peers’ and ‘manager-subordinate’ which identifies the social differences as well as power relationship between meeting participants.

An overview of the seven virtual meeting contexts is illustrated in Table 4.3 below:

| Name of organisation | BrazIT | | AusBank | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| VTM | A1 | A2 | B1 | B2 | B3 | B4 | B5 |
| Nature of organisation | IT Solutions (Brazilian multinational IT company) | | Banking/Finance Australian multinational bank | | | | |
| Number of VTM participants | Two | Nine | Four | Six | Two | Nine | Three |
| Relationship of participants | Peers | Manager – subordinates | Peers | Manager – subordinates | Manager – subordinates | Manager – subordinates | Peers |
| Participants | Cherry (Filipina HR manager based in Manila) Lee (Chinese female Operations manager based in Jilin, China) | Sarah (American female, US based senior recruitment manager) Ben (Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila) Seven Filipino recruiters in Ben's team: AA Andrew May Tom Chap Alice Kimmy | Samuel (Team manager, Australian male) Lincoln (meeting facilitator, Asian male in Australia office) Samuel (Indian male based in Bangalore) Advik (Indian male based in Bangalore) | Ann (Manager Asian Female, based in Melbourne) Evak (Indian male based in Bangalore) MS2 (Australian male based in Melbourne) Jack (Australian male based in Melbourne) Thomas (Australian male based in Melbourne) Aakesh (Indian male based in Bangalore) | Oliver (Manager Australian male) Tiffany (Hong Kong female subordinate based in Hong Kong) | Noah (Manager, Australian male) Lucas (Australian male) Charlotte (Australian female) Olivia (Australian female) Mia (Australian female) Anaisha (Indian female based in Bangalore) Ava (Australian female) Grace (Australian female) Amelia (Australian female) | Angela (Female meeting chair based in Singapore) Connie (Female based in Hong Kong) Snowy (Female based in Hong Kong) |
| Purpose of meeting | Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented | Reviewing; Planning | Planning; Task-oriented (forward-oriented) | Task/problem – oriented (present and forward-oriented) | Planning (forward – oriented); Giving/receiving information | Reviewing (backward-oriented); Planning (forward-oriented) | Giving/receiving information; Task/problem-oriented (present-oriented) |
| Meeting topic | Procedural HRM | Recruitment | Technical | Procedural; Technical | Procedural | Staff Training | Instructional; Procedural |

Table 4.3 Overview of seven VTM contexts

4.3 Data Processing

This section explains how interview data were transcribed and coded (section 4.3.1), how VTM transcripts were coded with CAT strategies (section 4.3.2) and the application of Discursis to facilitate qualitative discourse analysis (section 4.3.3).

4.3.1 Transcribing and Coding Interview Data

Interview data with twelve employees from BrazIT are used for thematic analysis, which aims to investigate the challenges they encounter and strategies they adopt in VTM settings. Interviews were recorded with two digital recorders and the recorded interviews have been ‘scrubbed’ (with personal and company identifying information concealed or deleted) and transcribed verbatim for further analysis. The software Nvivo (version 12) was used to code the interview transcripts. The use of Nvivo12 ensures a convenient and efficient coding process as well as easy retrieval of transcript data. NVivo12 also allows researchers to reshape, redo, and reorganise nodes and codes structures easily during the coding and analysing process. There are at least two stages of coding: Initial coding and second-level coding (Dornyei, 2007). Initial coding codes relevant information at a descriptive level; once the respondents’ interviews have been coded, patterns and themes shall emerge which can be classified and clustered together under broader labels and categories. This is an iterative process and there are chances that coded information needs to be recoded until a finalized list of codes becomes valid. The transcripts were then re-coded according to the new list of codes and categories in order to produce a hierarchical system of codes, which would allow researchers to understand the relationships between different codes and themes.

Braun and Clarke (2012) propose a six-phase approach to thematic analysis in which Dornyei's (2007) two-stages of coding is embedded. Their six-phase approach to thematic analysis and its application to current study is outlined as below:

Phase 1: Familiarizing yourself with the data

This stage is concerned with immersing oneself in the data. Interview audio files were played several times which helped me recall the interview experience with the interviewees. Key concepts from the interviews were also noted down and were compared to the notes I took during the interviews at the Manila site.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Verbatim interview transcripts were imported to Nvivo12 for initial coding. Coding at this stage was mainly descriptive. For example, the code 'accent' was generated when interviewees expressed they had problems with understanding certain accents.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

This stage concerns with categorising the initial codes and searching for themes from them. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that theme as "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 82). Major initial themes were constructed after the categorisation of codes which include company culture, intercultural communication, language issues, VTM issues. Further categorisations of the codes under the major themes generated further subthemes.

Phase 4: Reviewing potential themes

This phase is a critical one which involves reviewing and cross-checking if there is any mismatch between interview extracts, codes and themes. At times, it can be found that the initial coding of a particular extract does not fit into the overall theme, or there is a mismatch between one code and another code under the same theme due to fuzzy code boundary and definition. In such cases, those codes would need to be reviewed, re-coded or discarded.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

While major themes may emerge during phase 3, this stage concerns with defining the specifications of the themes and ensuring they are unique from other themes. Defining names should also be given to the themes which can identify their features. For example, under one of the major themes ‘VTM issues’, further distinctive subthemes were identified such as ‘VTM contexts’, ‘challenges’, ‘strategies’, ‘suggestions’ with relatively clear boundaries between them.

Phase 6: Producing the report

This phase concerns with writing up the thematic analysis findings. Although multiple major themes concerning virtual work contexts were constructed, my particular focus is on interviewees’ real-life experiences on virtual team meetings. The challenges that they face and the strategies that they adopt to cope with the challenges provides a context for me to understand their communicative behaviours during VTMs while other themes can serve as background information for further interpretations.

4.3.2 Transcribing VTM Data and Coding of Communication Accommodation Strategies

4.3.2.1 Transcribing VTM data

All identifying information in the seven virtual team meetings has been removed and ‘scrubbed’. Pseudonyms are used to replace personal names in order to ensure confidentiality of interviewees as well as VTM participants. Paralinguistic features such as pauses, stress, and ellipsis are preserved and marked in VTM transcriptions for discourse analysis (Transcription Keys, p. viii).

ELAN (<https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan/>), an open-sourced multimedia annotation software was used to annotate the transcripts as it allows researchers to annotate turns taken by different speakers, overlapping time and duration of silence accurately (Wittenburg et al., 2006).

4.3.2.2 Coding Communication Accommodation Strategies in VTM transcripts

The coding system developed in present study is mainly based on existing established coding systems of communicative behaviours (Coupland et al., 1988; Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005; Giles, 1973; 1978; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Jones et al., 1999; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974).

The first step to coding CAT strategies in the VTM transcripts was to identify the communicative behaviours performed by the VTM participants. However, the difficulty in associating certain communicative behaviours to a particular CAT strategy is that their associations are not always distinctive and straightforward. The same behaviour can sometimes be associated with different CAT strategies depending on its motivation. For example, repetition can be regarded as an Approximation strategy if the speaker’s motive is to mirror the

speech of his/her interlocutor in order to gain social liking. Or it can be regarded as an Interpretability strategy if the motive is to attend to interlocutor's comprehension needs. It can also be regarded as Discourse Management strategy if it is used for topic continuation to maintain the coherence of the exchange and thematic development of the discourse through topic choice. Thus, it is important not to associate communicative behaviours to one definite CAT strategy without looking into the motives behind it.

4.3.3 Applying Discursis to analyse VTM Data

Discursis software is a visual text analytic tool developed by Daniel Angus from the University of Queensland. It is designed to analyse the temporal aspects of communication exchanges through the visualisation of recurrence plotting. Discursis uses the Leximancer (Smith, 2000; Smith & Humphreys, 2006) conceptual modelling algorithm to generate data-driven concepts and provides visualisation of exchanges over the entire text as well as on turn-to-turn level. Interpreting Discursis visual plots provides analysts with an overview of turn-taking dynamics, conceptual content, conceptual coherence as well as speakers' engagement in an exchange.

Importing data into Discursis for analysis is straightforward and quick. VTM transcripts needed to be saved in csv. format before they could be recognised by the software. After importing the csv. transcript data into the software, Discursis plots were immediately generated for analysis.

Discursis has been effectively implemented to CAT analysis (Angus et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2015; Chevalier et al., 2018; Watson et al., 2015) because of its strength to illustrate discourse patterns, turn-taking mechanics, turn-taking and allocating patterns as well as conceptual consistency and speakers engagement patterns, which are prime areas for investigation in

Discourse Management strategies in CAT framework. Its ability to identify topics and conceptual repetition may also be identified as Approximation strategy, although the researcher needs to ‘drill down’ to the transcripts to determine the motivation of such behaviour before associating it with any particular CAT strategy. This is why Angus et al. (2012) stress that the aim of Discursis is to enhance the qualitative analysis of an exchange instead of replacing it.

Chapter Five

Thematic Analysis on VTM Participants' Experiences

This chapter discusses findings from the thematic analysis of interview data gathered in BrazilIT on VTM participants' experiences. This chapter is divided into two sections. Section 5.1 addresses challenges encountered by VTM participants and section 5.2 discusses the strategies VTM participants employ to overcome the challenges and work for more effective VTM communication.

5.1 Challenges encountered by VTM Participants in BrazilIT

Major challenges encountered by interviewees, who have experience in virtual work teams and virtual team meetings, evolve around meeting deficiencies, virtual environment, language and team diversity. This section will discuss the major themes and their subthemes concerning VTM challenges discovered in the interview data as outlined in Table 5.1 below:

| Theme | Subtheme |
|----------------------|---|
| Meeting Deficiencies | Lack of Structure Domination/Avoidance Unnecessary Attendance |
| Virtual Environment | Technology Time Zone Differences Loss of Focus and Attention Confusion around Speaker Turns |
| Language | Productive -Lack of Expressions or Vocabulary Receptive -Accents -Misinterpretation due to Intonation -Idiomatic Expressions -Jargon -Pacing |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Team Diversity | Conflicting Norms and Practices across Regions Ethnocentrism and Prejudice |
|----------------|---|

Table 5.1 Themes and subthemes of VTM challenges encountered by interviewees

5.1.1 Meeting Deficiencies

Interviewees revealed the issues they had with VTMs which resulted in ineffective VTMs include lack of meeting agenda, domination/avoidance to speak and unnecessary attendance of certain VTM participants who are not directly relevant to the discussion topics.

5.1.1.1 Lack of Agenda

Lack of meeting agenda usually leads to lack of meeting structure. CK, service delivery manager, expressed that sometimes they got distracted or forgot discussion topics in meetings. According to him, being too familiar with other team members could also be a reason for distraction:

It gets so intense that we forget that we had one or two more topics [...] Then we jump from topic to topic and because of familiarity, sometimes we get distracted by very small comments [...] And then all of us had, oops, I forgot to raise that in the meeting (CK- Filipino Service Delivery Manager, Operations)

The problem of lack of structure relates to meeting discourse management. CK's remarks illustrate that lack of meeting structure can impact effective information and knowledge sharing within the team. CK's statement also has implications for the important role of meeting facilitator/chair: to have a clear agenda that covers the essential topics, to manage speaker turn allocation, to regulate turn-taking sequences and to keep the discussion on track.

5.1.1.2 Domination/Avoidance

According to Ben, Talent Acquisition Manager, domination, or avoiding speaking, are common phenomena found in meetings, both in real-life and virtual meetings. He revealed from his VTM experience that domination occurred when some participants belonged to the “same circle” which can lead to alienation and marginalization of other participants:

Sometimes I experience that they dominate the call. They dominate the call because majority of you guys are on the same circle. So it seems like you guys get to understand each other and then everybody’s just here to observe and take orders. So I’m just waiting for you to say “OK what do you want me to do?” (Ben – Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

It can be inferred that “they” and “you guys” in Ben’s quote refer to the upper management outside the Manila office, while “everybody” refers to Manila employees as they were “just here to observe and take orders” instead of actively participating in the meeting. It is clear to see social categorisations based on roles and nationality and the dichotomy of US vs THEM exists in VTMs. Such categorisations can contribute to intergroup conflicts and create negative impact on the communication process as well as team effectiveness within multicultural virtual teams (Brett, Behfar & Kern, 2006; Lau & Murnighan; 1998).

Apart from domination in meetings, participants avoiding speaking is also regarded as a challenge in VTMs. Aaron, Service Delivery Director, commented on the uneven contribution among VTM participants and stated that some people did not speak up in the meetings because they thought they did not need to be present in the meeting:

There are those meetings that somebody is just presenting something, dominating the entire meeting and there's not even [...] The other thing that I'm always seeing would be the invite identification [...] there are people in the meeting that they rarely talk at

all or probably they don't even talk at all. Because they don't think they need to be there to begin with (Aaron – Filipino Service Delivery Director)

While Aaron commented on the low contribution of participants from a management perspective, Emily, Senior Team Leader, shared her personal experience and reason for not speaking up in meetings:

I don't want to raise it during the meeting just because I'm not sure if I understood it correctly. So what I do is just like contact that person after the meeting, but the disadvantage is not everyone will hear it so if that information is important, they won't get the updates (Emily – Filipina Senior Team Leader)

Emily's sharing reveals that shyness and the fear of making mistakes can hinder VTM participants' contributions in meeting, even though she was aware of the negative consequences of her reluctance to speak up. Effective collaboration through information and knowledge sharing is an important factor that can influence the team's success. Virtual team members are brought together to form a team based on their knowledge and expertise and for a virtual team to perform effectively, virtual team members need to share and integrate ideas in the work team to reach new insights. Otherwise, negative consequences such as misinformation, communication failure, misunderstanding and misinterpretation of information, and inadequate information needed for decision-making can be the consequence (Alsharo, Gregg & Ramirez, 2017). Effective knowledge sharing in virtual teams requires that adequate and appropriate information is shared by team members for optimal task performance and appropriate decision-making to achieve organisation goals.

5.1.1.3 Attendance Redundancy

Aaron, service delivery director of BrazIT is a firm believer of 'less (meetings) is more' and he commented that there were too many unnecessary meetings. According to Perlow, Hadley

& Eun (2017) who interviewed hundreds of American business executives and found that they generally spend approximately 23 hours a week in meetings. Jenkins (2017) also stated that the number of meetings employees need to attend is positively associated with fatigue and stress and negatively associated with overall well-being. In the excerpt below, Aaron stated that VTMs often involved people who were merely “consumers of information” and should not need to attend the meetings:

Sometimes I see a meeting room and Skype like 20 people. And then for the most part you'd realize that other 20 people you should have just had a meeting with 6 of them. And the rest of the 14 are attendees really. That we could have just passed along notes and they still grasp the concept of why we had that meeting and what that meeting was for. So, they're consumers of information, they're not really part of the exchange (Aaron- Service Delivery Director)

5.1.2 Virtual Environment

While the previous section discusses issues around meeting structures, which can also be found in face-to-face meetings, this section discusses challenges that VTM participants encountered within the virtual environment.

5.1.2.1 Technology

When asked about the challenges they encountered in VTMs, most interviewees said technology or technical issues were the major difficulties they had with VTMs:

The only pain point is if there are network issues, technical issues, broken headsets, poor internet (CK- Filipino Service Delivery Manager- Operations)

I would say network. Normally the connection (Amy- Filipina Service Manager)

Because sometimes it's frustrating when you prior to this part of the meeting and then you feel that the technology is not working the way it should. Sometimes it affects your mood and somehow you bring that energy in the meeting (Ben-Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

Technology either from my end or their end (Cherry- Human Resources Manager)

[...] the connection, sometimes the line got interrupted so you cannot get some portion of the things that they discuss (Jane- Filipina Finance Manager)

The main technical issue that VTM participants have encountered is the network connection issue, either from their end or from their counterparts' ends. I witnessed Internet connection problems during shadowing of Cherry's VTM with her China counterpart and understand why multiple interviewees expressed internet connection as a major problem which can lead to frustration, as expressed by Ben. Apart from network issues, VTM participants also suffer from computer hardware issues, as mentioned by CK. During casual talks with VTM participants at BrazIT, I was told that cameras were not installed in most agents' computers which made video calls inaccessible to them.

5.1.2.2 Time Zone Differences

As BrazIT is highly geographically dispersed, it is difficult to coordinate members from different parts of the world for synchronous meetings. As expressed by interviewees, this results in long workdays and imbalanced energy levels from VTM participants.

If I speak to someone in the U.S. it's very early to them. It's like their first shift and then it's my last shift. So their energy is high. My energy is a bit low (Ben -Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

As much as possible here in Manila if my boss would ask me “hey can you extend because I need to catch up with you”. OK. Because I understand we work in a different time zone. In China it's OK because we work in the same time zone (Ben-Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

There are days that I have to work during the day because I have a meeting with the government and then I still have to attend the meeting. So your day kind of gets stretched [...] your day is really very long. Because you feel like okay, how long have I been working? (Cherry- Filipina Human Resources Manager)

What these colleagues are arguing is echoed by Kankanhalli, Tan and Wei (2006), who believe that physical dispersion and time zone differences in VTMs can lead to conflicts and ineffective teamwork due to mismatch in time.

5.1.2.3 Loss of Focus and Attention

Unlike face-to-face meetings in which participants can see and observe each other, visual cues do not exist in teleconferencing, which is the main type of VTM conducted in BrazIT. The lack of visual cues can lower the concentration levels of VTM participants and results in loss of focus and attention as revealed by Ben:

It's easier for me to actually talk to you when I see you rather than see like an emoji on the other line. So I'm not sometimes sure: are you listening to me or not. Sometimes I'm guilty. If the meeting is too long and there's a lot of people involved in that meeting, sometimes I tend to lose my focus and I'm just “OK I'm done with my presentation I'm done with my piece so I'm just here going through the motions but not really listen”. I'm just there because I'm expected to be in that meeting (Ben-Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

According to Ben, the duration as well as the purpose of VTMs can also affect the span of concentration of the participants. Meetings with the purpose to review and report progress seem

to be more prone to loss of concentration from VTM participants. This issue was also shared with me by another employee during a casual chat, in which he told me he was always multi-tasking and working on other tasks non-related to the meeting he was attending.

5.1.2.4 Confusing Speaker Turns

The lack of visual contact between VTM participants also causes confusion in turn-taking during VTMs. Emily said that turn-taking was especially challenging when the meeting involved big groups of participants and she suggested that participants should address a particular participant directly to take up a turn, that is, current speaker selects next (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) whereas she tended to wait for someone to take the turn if a question was asked without current speaker selecting the next:

We have challenges especially if there are more than like 10 people. Sometimes we don't know who is the one talking [...] it's just that sometimes you just felt that: oh this is the one who's talking to you so it needs to be addressed directly so they should be giving names before the start and then they should be asking on a person directly. So if it's a general question it's very hard because we are like waiting for one another to talk first. So you just have to be proactive to start the conversation (Emily-Filipina Senior Team Leader)

Another interviewee Jane, mentioned another issue that arose from absence of gestures which can signal turn-taking (Ford, 2008) and result in unintended interruptions:

When you're listening, you cannot see whether the other side has finished speaking or not. Because you don't see her moving or stop you can't see the gestures so it's still hard sometimes (Jane-Filipina Finance Manager)

5.1.3 Language

Apart from technical issues, language issues in VTMs form another major theme in the interview data and were mentioned by most of the interviewees. All of the interviewees are competent English speakers and most of them are confident with their English proficiency level, especially with Standard American English. Aaron, Service Delivery Director, shared with me that high English proficiency level among Filipinos is one of the main reasons why Manila is among one of the biggest BPO markets in the world.

However, language issues are still regarded to be challenges by interviewees. The language issues can be further categorized into two groups: productive and receptive and it can be observed that VTM participants generally encounter greater problems with reception rather than production:

| Challenges | Interviewees' comments |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Productive | |
| Lack of expressions/vocabulary | <p>Sometimes for me as I can't remember the correct English word that I want. I know Tagalog and it's best expressed in that language, but I couldn't think of the word that would be an equivalent (Cherry-Filipina Human Resources Manager)</p> <p>Maybe the range of the vocabulary because other agents tend to use different words other than the ones that we are familiar with, since English is the second language of our country (Group discussion - Operation Agents)</p> |
| Receptive | |
| Accent | Frankly I was having some difficulty understanding the Indian English at the beginning [...] as much as I want to hear what she's reporting, there was a tendency to just work on my own stuff and not listen, it was really quite difficult, her accent was really very strong (Cherry-Filipina Human Resources Manager) |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| | <p>The first one is language barrier. Because most of the participants are from different regions. So we each have our first language influence. So like the last time we have some participants from Latin America and Europe, so specifically from Poland, so their English is not that understandable. So, yeah, so we're having also troubles understanding them when they speak up. (Charles-Filipino Event Analyst)</p> |
| Misinterpretation due to intonation | <p>Sometimes they ((European counterparts)) may sound angry but on their side, they're just explaining something. So it's just like natural for them. But to other people, it sounds like they are angry. For example, when they're trying to provide or giving instructions, they give stress on certain words, or just like “you have to do this, you're not doing this right. You have to do this first before you get to that” (Charles-Filipino Event Analyst)</p> |
| Idiomatic expressions | <p>Even though English is a second language here in the Philippines, but personally, if sometimes they ((American counterparts)) use idiomatic expressions or when they speak something and it's a metaphor or a joke I think sometimes it can be a gap also because sometimes I'm not sure. Is that a joke or are you serious? Because again I don't see your expression. So are you being sarcastic or are you joking (Ben-Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)</p> |
| Jargon and acronyms | <p>Since I am a recent attendee there ((in the virtual team)), they ((Virtual work team members who are more experienced)) have their own language like acronyms that I'm not very familiar. So I ping my boss “What does this mean?” Or “did I understand it correctly?” (Rachel-Filipina Facility Lead)</p> |
| Pacing | <p>Sometimes they ((American counterparts)) speak too fast and especially if you're focusing on something there's a tendency for someone to get lost (Fred-Filipino Senior Recruiter)</p> |

Table 5.2 Language related challenges encountered by interviewees

Language issues in VTMs not only affect the transactional talk and information sharing during the meetings, they can also affect member's perception of the ability and competence of their interlocutors. Brett, Behfar and Kern's (2006) study on multicultural teams' management state that non-fluent speaking members may encounter difficulty in communication which makes it hard for other members to recognise their expertise and influence their perceptions of non-fluent members' competence. As a result, it would be the company and team's loss as they fail to recognise and utilise knowledge and expertise that are brought about by diverse members in virtual teams.

5.1.4 Team Diversity

One of the attributes of global virtual work team is team diversity as they always comprise of members with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While team diversity can contribute new knowledge to the work teams, it can also cause conflicts due to different norms and practices across different regions and in the worst case, can result in ethnocentrism and prejudice among team members. The sharing from Rose and Ben in the excerpts below illustrate how diverse backgrounds of VTM participants can pose challenges.

5.1.4.1 Conflicting Norms and Practices across Regions

Rose's story is among one of the multiple examples of the same problem in the interview data. Interviewees expressed that there were different norms and practices between the Manila site and other sites around the world, and that they had to spend a lot of effort to explain the practices in the Manila site so that their counterparts would understand why certain decisions were made in the Manila office. Conflicts may arise if such mutual understanding of different norms and practices among different regions is not reached.

Even between me and my boss ((American based in North America)), for example, he doesn't understand why there's a huge uproar when it comes to parking. Because for them, parking is given but for us it's not. Parking is a commodity here in Manila, so he doesn't understand why there's such an uproar when free parking is unavailable. So I have to explain to him. Second is, the shuttle doesn't work because of the traffic. Even if you put out the shuttle there, the employees wouldn't want to ride on it simply because they know it will get them stuck in traffic. So they would rather walk. I have to explain to him because traffic for them is quite manageable but it's not on our end (Rachel-Filipina Facility Lead)

Rachel's anecdote illustrates that VTM participants tend to take their own understanding of local contexts for granted and fail to understand how situations are in remote sites which can result in conflicts in decision-making process (Cramton & Orvis, 2003).

5.1.4.2 Ethnocentrism and Prejudice

Ben's sharing below highlights various aspects of social differences: 1) socioeconomic differences between the US and the Philippines; 2) hierarchical differences between head office and satellite offices and 3) social differences such as age and company seniority. He felt that he was somehow marginalised and not recognised because he is a young Filipino working in a satellite office in Manila and because of these, his counterparts in the US and Europe might not be willing to "listen to him because he has something to say" and that he needed to "work twice before you get their approval":

I feel that because you're part of the First World. So somehow if they speak to someone in Asia they consider you as the third world country. So you know "just do this and leave the rest to us" (Ben-Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

If I speak to someone in Europe or in the US they feel that "we're superior because we're here in the head office or at the home base. You guys are in the satellite office. So we will tell you what to do. Just do that. Give us the goods". I feel sometimes that

you have to work twice before you get their approval and also they're not [...] “let's listen to him because he has something to say”. Or let's say for example “because I've been in the company longer than you or I'm older than you, so I know better than you. So you listen to me. You learn from me and just do what I want you to do” (Ben-Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

Jackson (2014) discusses how social categorisation can result in negative outcomes in intercultural communication; she argues “Social categorization and Ethnocentrism lie at the heart of identity biases and discrimination [...] these process [...] often create barriers to successful, equitable intercultural interactions” (p. 158). A number of other studies have also demonstrated the negative impacts of social categorisation and subgroup ethnocentrism on team effectiveness (Armstrong & Cole, 2002; Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Cramton, 2001; Ladegaard, 2011c). Ladegaard's (2011c) study on stereotypes and their associated discursive strategies used by the employees in a large Danish global organisation has demonstrated how prejudice and stereotyping in business contexts can cause negative impacts on intergroup harmony and work relations. He also argues that stereotypes “appear to have potentially serious consequences for people's behaviour, and they appear to serve an important ideological function in that they are used to explain and justify the discriminatory behaviour against certain groups” (p. 103). Understanding the social psychological processes of ethnocentrism and social categorisation, which result in in-group bias in intergroup behaviours, can provide insights on the presence of prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviours that are present within multicultural groups in organisational contexts.

5.2 Strategies adopted by VTM Participants in BrazIT to tackle Challenges

Despite the various challenges VTM participants encounter in virtual meetings, they also come up with strategies to facilitate the effectiveness of VTMs. This section discusses the strategies

they adopt based on the interview data. The major themes and subthemes concerning the strategies are shown in the table below:

| Theme | Subtheme |
|---|---|
| Meeting behaviours | Preparation Small talk/Jokes Speak up |
| Language | Supplement with written documents Active listening Translation software |
| Team diversity | Open communication and Mutual Respect Sensitivity and Adaptation |
| Establishment of interpersonal relationship | Meet in person Develop friendly relationship -Conduct videoconferencing -Use of other media and social platforms |

Table 5.3 Themes and subthemes of VTM strategies adopted by interviewees

5.2.1 Meeting Behaviours

VTM participants' strategies concerning meeting behaviours include preparation, engagement in small talk and jokes as well as speaking up in meetings.

5.2.1.1 Preparation

Preparation cannot be directly observed during the VTMs but it is an important stage that happens prior to the exchange (Handford, 2010). Various activities can occur in the preparation stage such as agenda setting, informing participants, sending out agenda to participants, and preparing other intertextual references for the meeting. Thorough preparation can facilitate clarity and enhance the effectiveness of VTMs. Ben expressed his rationale and practices for meeting preparation with his Chinese counterparts:

From the onset they were very transparent [...] prior to the virtual team meeting, I have to send all my questions in advance so that during the meeting they know the questions that I'm going to show. And then they can prepare already their answers so that would give them time to organize and compose their thoughts and present it to me in English because I cannot understand Chinese. I have to prepare also that my agenda from my end based on the topic why we are having this VTM (Ben- Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

As meeting chair, Ben, not only prepares the agenda for the meeting, but he also sends the questions he would be asking to his Chinese counterparts to allow them time to organise and prepare their replies. That shows his awareness of language proficiency issues in other parts of the world because colleagues are not native speakers of English. By letting his counterparts know the topics in advance and allowing more time for them to craft their replies, these strategies can mitigate potential miscommunication caused by low English proficiency levels.

5.2.1.2 Small Talk and Jokes

Small talk and jokes can reinforce the relational context in business meetings which are mainly transactional in nature (McCarthy, 2000). Small talk is usually found in the pre-meeting stage before transactional talk begins and it serves as a way to create a positive and more personal vibe in the meetings. Amy, Service Manager, expressed in the interview that small talk can make people feel more relaxed and she also commented on how small talk develops as the virtual team matures in its lifecycle:

Normally you have a little personal discussion asking about the weather you know the usual weather, how things going etc. If it's the first time probably just how-are-you questions, but as the meeting goes days, weeks, months, probably more personal discussion could be added to the meeting. Personal jokes, probably some jokes. Yeah, something like that (Amy- Filipina Service Manager)

Amy expressed that VTM participants tend to discuss ‘safe’ topics such as the weather and a simple “how are you” in initial meetings while the teams are newly formed. But as time passes and more familiarity is gained between VTM participants, different topics for small talk would evolve and become more personal. This observation concurs with Holmes and Stubbe’s (2003) findings on typical small talk topics in initial encounters, which, they argue, serve face attending and relationship building functions. Apart from engaging in small talk for relationship building, interviewees also “do collegiality” through positive humour (Holmes, 2000; 2014) as expressed by Charles, Event Analyst:

Sometimes just to break the ice I tend to do some jokes on the phone so when I felt that the situation is tense, so I try to slip in some jokes so that to clear some air so we can both feel not that tense (Charles- Filipino Event Analyst)

Charles’s comment suggests that his use of humour is conscious and strategic. Not only can it loosen up VTM participants in serious meeting contexts, but it can also ease a tense situation by laughing together if conflicts arise between VTM participants. His use of positive humour is a relational practice and demonstrates one of the functions discussed by Holmes and Stubbe (2003): maintaining good work relations.

5.2.1.3 Speak Up

As discussed in section 5.1.1, one of the challenges Filipinos VTM participants face is avoidance to speak up during meetings. The interview data shows that the interviewees are aware of this issue and they try to counter this by encouraging their fellow co-workers and subordinates to speak up in VTMs. As illustrated by one of the agents in group discussion:

I think internally, when I say internally for Filipinos alone and I always tell this to the guys if they have things to say, speak up. In my culture again we don’t speak up well,

not because we don't know what to say, but because we're shy. We try to avoid conflict or confrontations and at the same time, we don't want to act to look stupid by asking questions (Group discussion – Operation Agents)

According to the interviewee, the reasons Filipino employees are reluctant to speak during VTMs are manifold: 1) asking a question during meetings maybe perceived as “stupid” by their counterparts, 2) Filipinos are shy and 3) Filipino “culture” is non-confrontational. His remark “not because we don't know what to say, but because we're shy” also shows that their shyness should not be associated with lack of competence. The Philippines is considered as a collectivistic society by Hofstede (1991) which he argues, typically places high values in long-term group commitment, loyalty and strong group relationship, and this may explain why the interviewee expressed that “we” (Filipinos) try to avoid conflicts and confrontation. However, such orientation can limit their opportunities to make their voices heard in multicultural VTM settings.

5.2.2 Language

Challenges encountered by interviewees regarding language issues include lack of expressions and vocabulary, unable to understand various English accents, misinterpretation of intonation, use of idiomatic expressions and jargon as well as inappropriate pacing of speech as discussed in Section 5.1.3. Strategies interviewees adopt to facilitate understanding and enhance interpretability are 1) complementing teleconferencing with other texts, 2) active listening and 3) use of translation software.

5.2.2.1 Supplement with Other Texts

VTMs are mainly conducted via teleconferencing in BrazIT which means participants rely solely on audio cues during VTMs. Information may be lost due to bad internet connection or language issues as discussed in Sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3. In order to compensate the loss and

ensure transactional information is effectively delivered, VTM participants resort to other communication channels to complement the VTMs, as expressed by Charles and CK below:

Because of the language barrier, we cannot understand each other. But most of the time we tell them if we can communicate in other means, like email or chat because we use English on those applications. So, most of the time we understand each other on that
(Charles- Filipino Event Analyst)

Charles commented that his team use email as well as text-based chat together with audio VTMs to ensure understandings among VTM participants, and he accounted for the reason for misunderstandings: language barriers among participants with multilingual backgrounds.

CK relies on checking minutes, which he referred to as the “old stuff”, to make sure he does not miss any important information during VTMs:

We still do the old stuff which is after the call or the virtual meeting. We have the minutes of the meeting sent to one another “hey did I miss anyone this is what I got.” So the conversation we get to double check and we have notes on everything (CK- Filipino Service Delivery Manager)

CK’s comment also echoes with Bhatia’s (2004) and Handford’s (2010) observations on business meetings that they tend to be highly intertextual in nature, which includes standardised references to previous meetings, to other meetings and to other texts.

5.2.2.2 Active Listening

Active listening means attending to interlocutors’ cues in utterances or behaviours which are not explicit but may contain meanings which suggest unshared ideas or concerns (Lang, Floyd & Beine, 2000). Active listening is particularly salient because VTM participants engaging in

teleconferencing rely solely on audio cues during the exchange. Charles and Rachel expressed that they paid extra attention to listening carefully during VTMs:

Usually, I tried to listen very carefully and then I'll have it on myself that this is the reason why he is acting this way (Charles- Filipino Event Analyst)

You don't get to see the faces, yeah, so you would just have to listen very carefully. If there's a drop in terms of voice, a change in tone a change and sometimes that is quite hard to get because of the connection (Rachel- Filipina Facility Lead)

Charles and Rachel's comments on active listening suggest that they listen to their interlocutors carefully, not only because they want to grasp transactional information, but also as a source to provide justifications for them to explain their interlocutors' behaviours and cues to interpret, for example, the change of intonations in the messages delivered. Facial expressions can carry vast information associated with emotions during face-to-face exchanges (Ekman & Keltner, 1997), but this is not available in teleconferencing and information concerning emotions can be lost. Thus, it is vital for VTM participants to acquire skills and be alert on picking up audio cues to ensure smooth and effective exchange during VTMs. Ekman & Keltner (1997) also note that facial expressions can vary across cultures and this should also be taken into account in multicultural VTM settings using videoconferencing.

Possessing the ability to communicate in virtual teams is a highly valued asset in VTM participants. Kirkman et al. (2002) mention in their study on challenges to virtual team success that companies used to hire employees based on their technical skills in the past, but their hiring approach has undergone changes with the emergent of virtual teams. Their interview with a company's divisional director reveals that an employee's interpersonal and communication skills are regarded to be the most important in virtual team settings, rather than technical skills.

5.2.2.3 Translation Software

Another strategy adopted by VTM participants to tackle constraints on communication due to insufficient English proficiency is the use of translation software. Cherry said in the interview that sometimes she and her Chinese counterparts would type on Skype alongside with the teleconference, and her Chinese counterparts would use translation software to translate her English messages into Chinese. When her Chinese counterparts cannot express their messages in English clearly, they would type in Chinese and Cherry would also make use of translation software to translate their Chinese messages into English:

What would happen is for the HR team this would show up in Chinese so they then would understand me [...] technology is really good, it comes out in English also sometimes for me [...] fantastic technology helps there. But number one, my challenge in terms of the China team is really the language (Cherry- Filipina Human Resource Manager)

Although Cherry perceived this solution of using translation software as “really good”, it is questionable what the standards and reliability of the translated texts are and how much information can be lost during the translation process. Nevertheless, she and her Chinese counterparts seem to be satisfied with this solution as a way to ‘solve’ the language proficiency problem between them.

5.2.3 Team Diversity

Since global virtual teams are geographically dispersed, their multicultural and multilingual nature is what sets them apart from traditional local work teams. Members of such work teams have to adjust themselves to face the challenges as well as opportunities that are entailed by team diversity. Strategies adopted by interviewees which cater to team diversity are open communication, mutual respect, sensitivity and adaptation.

5.2.3.1 Open Communication and Mutual Respect

One of the interviewees, Jean, believes that open communication and mutual respect are essential in diverse teams regardless of nationality and rank. Every member's opinions should be heard, respected and valued.

I think for one, the other side should be open for communication. They respect and value whatever your points are. Something like that, without offending the other party. So it's always a question of communication and respecting each other. Whatever I need to communicate, I communicate with them.... It's reciprocal, so whatever they let me feel it's the same way that I'm giving back to them (Jane- Filipina Finance Manager)

Research has shown that creating a safe psychological climate can help virtual team members to overcome the shortcomings of virtual work teams. Gibson and Gibbs (2006) state that a good environment for virtual teamwork is one that encourages members to speak up, to offer opportunities for them to contribute and raise questions, to engage them in information sharing, to encourage active listening, open communication and avoid judgements of others. Jane's comment concurs with Gibson and Gibbs's (2006) statement and illustrates that mutual respect is the key to open and safe communicative environment for virtual team members. Although employees at BrazIT seem to agree that mutual respect is paramount to successful virtual teamwork, there seems to be discrepancies between their beliefs and actual practices. As reflected by Ben in section 5.1.4.2, he sometimes felt that he was marginalised and not recognised by his counterparts in the US and Europe because he is a young Filipino working in a satellite office in Manila and that his voice was not being heard because of social differences between him and his American/European counterparts. This illustrates that BrazIT needs to address this problem and to create a more inclusive and equitable virtual work environment for more successful virtual teamwork.

5.2.3.2 Sensitivity and Adaptation

Multiple interviewees stressed that having a certain degree of sensitivity is important in the workplace, but they need to be more cautious in virtual contexts due to their characteristics such as unfamiliarity of team members, lack of visual cues, language barriers, and lack of contextual information in other sites. The Interview data show that VTM participants are sensitive in the ways they make jokes and how they may be perceived by members from other cultures.

I bear in mind where this person came from, what their culture is like. So that I'm aware that I should begin this type of joke, for example, about religion, about politics. So, most of the time the jokes that I tell is about work, so we can both understand, so I won't be able to touch their pride (Charles- Filipino Event Analyst)

Charles's comment on the jokes he makes in the workplace suggests that humour can be a sensitive issue in the workplace. His preference is for workplace humour that is positive and supportive and serves face-attending functions (Holmes, 1995). In the workplace context, attending to colleagues' face needs is a way to develop collegiality and solidarity as "they indicate mutual good intentions as they construct, maintain, repair or extend their collegial relationships" (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 97). He is also aware of where his interlocutors come from in order to avoid offensive and contestive jokes which can cause harm in terms of collegial relationships.

BrazIT's Service Delivery Director, Aaron, shared his experience on the interactions he had with some of the American directors in the interview excerpt below. It illustrates that his American counterparts are also sensitive and aware of the team diversity, and that they are willing to adapt and adjust their speech styles so that they would be perceived as appropriate. However, the idea of cultural difference seems to be a vague concept to them, as Aaron said,

“they (American directors) tend to think that there might be cultural difference. But they're not sure what that is”:

I know this is mostly from Americans. I mean they tend to hold your horses. I mean they tend to try to become as polite as they can and not that straightforward [...] because they tend to think that there might be cultural difference. But they're not sure what that is. And so, in an attempt to not offend people, they try to be less upfront and less straightforward than what I'm used to because I know how Americans can be very straightforward and that's not a bad thing right? I've been in one-on-one meetings with some directors in the U.S. They're managing people outside of the US, they would say that “I'm not sure what the proper approach is as I don't want to offend people”. So there is that dynamic of conversations that's happening. They tend to adjust. To address the unknown because they don't know if this is going to come across well or not (Aaron-Filipino Service Delivery Director)

Aaron's revelation illustrates that despite the 'globalised' and 'boundary-less' nature of globalised virtual teams, categorisations and stereotypes based on national cultural differences are still pertinent. First, there is Aaron's perception on how Americans are like and then there are American directors who think there should be differences between American and Filipino, although they themselves do not know what those differences are exactly and hence, they do not know how to communicate with their Filipino counterparts and tend to over-adjust their speech. Ladegaard (2007) argues that cultural assimilation resulted from globalisation is a pseudo-construct, and employees working in global corporations still use national culture stereotypes to provide orientation in their global communication.

Aaron's comment reveals that over-adjustments or over-accommodation of one's speech style, which exceeds the appropriate and optimal level, might occur because the American directors base their awareness and adaptation on their perceptions, but, Aaron argues, they do not have a sound grounding on those perceptions and hence do not know the “proper” approach to

interacting in diverse teams. Apart from adapting to their interlocutors based on cultural knowledge, interviewees also adjust the complexity of their messages so they can be understood, which would be considered as accommodating strategies to enhance interpretability in a CAT framework:

You're gonna have to redesign the way you construct your sentence to make sure that it's very understandable, and I'm doing that myself. Even e-mail conversations and I'm shooting an e-mail to say, China, no idioms no nothing. It's very plain simple English, no lines like I'm heading over to this (Aaron- Filipino Service Delivery Director)

Aaron's comment on his exchanges with his Chinese colleagues shows that the complexity of his speech would depend on his perception of his interlocutors' language proficiency and that he would accommodate accordingly.

5.2.4 Establishment of Interpersonal Relationships

One of the main challenges in virtual work teams is the lack of opportunities to establish interpersonal relationship with other team members because of geographical dispersion. Interviewees have shared the strategies they adopt to develop interpersonal relationship, including meeting in person, seeing their colleagues on camera, as well as establishing interpersonal relationships on online social platforms.

5.2.4.1 Meet in Person

Various researchers contend that initial face-to-face meetings and socialisation can help establish trust in virtual work teams (Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000). Interviewees also shared that this strategy was helpful and commented that people work better after they have met in real life:

It was in a way I would say useful because I was able to really meet them in person and get to know them on a personal level. Also, it makes me appreciate seeing the setup of their office and how would that impact your deliverables. So, when I see the actual setup of the office then I had a better understanding (Ben- Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager)

According to Ben, meeting his team in real life not only helped him to get to know his teammates and develop interpersonal relationship with them, but it also helped him to get more contextual information of other sites which would guide his decision-making process. His strategy also matches with the suggestions on information sharing in globalised virtual teams provided by Cramton and Orvis (2003). They suggest that it would be good practice for virtual team members to meet face-to-face periodically, and they should rotate the meeting locations which can help them obtain contextual information of different sites as well as social information of virtual team members. Although being able to meet their virtual teammates would be ideal, it is not possible for all virtual team members to meet their colleagues in other parts of the world due to high travel costs. So, the luxury of flying over to the other sites is mainly reserved for team managers or upper management. Aaron, Service Delivery Director of BrazIT, admits that people work better after meeting up and budgets are reserved for employees to travel and meet their teams:

I think everybody tends to work better after they've met face to face. That's why we always encourage people who are managing employees in the Philippines so they're probably working remotely like we have guys in the UK and in the US and in some other parts of Europe to come down here and see their teams. When they build their budgets, from a strategic perspective we make it a point that key people tend to travel to go to places to see their teams. That's part of how we're operating (Aaron, Filipino Service Delivery Director)

5.2.4.2 Develop Friendly Relationships

For other virtual team members who cannot travel and meet their counterparts, they have opted for alternative strategies to develop the relationship online.

Conduct videoconferencing

Most of the interviewees agree that having videoconferencing rather than teleconferencing can help them better understand their counterparts and facilitate relationship building. CK's comment below states that videoconferencing can even potentially transit a collegial relationship into a friendship which he refers to the "icing on the cake":

I normally go first so "hey you know let's turn our cameras and don't worry I'll go first", you have to do that if you want to make the relationship seamless and for all you know, you develop a friend along the way. I mean, at the end of the day, that's the icing on the cake (CK- Filipino Service Delivery Manager)

Although videoconferencing is a more preferred means to virtual communication among the interviewees, most of the VTMs conducted in BrazIT are still in the form of teleconferencing and most of the employees do not even have cameras installed on their computers. Hardware constraints alongside with bad internet connection would make videoconferencing inaccessible to some VTM participants, and it can impact relationship building in virtual work teams.

Use of other media and social platforms

CK also shared that apart from formal virtual meetings they usually have on Skype, they also use other applications such as Facebook, Viber and WhatsApp to communicate remotely with their counterparts. The advantages of using these applications are to allow him to have a 'safer', more relaxing and more informal channel for communication:

Officially we use Skype, but you know there's also Facebook, Viber, WhatsApp. We are allowed to utilize these technologies. It's usually chat. The good thing about chat is even though you don't see one another, you have emoticons. It helps convey your mood. At the same time, if it's linked to your email, you get to have a safe conversation. It's very informal, it allows us to be more relaxed when speaking to one another (CK-Filipino Service Delivery Manager)

CK's strategy echoes Darics's (2010a) study on instant messaging (IM) within virtual work teams, which shows how politeness strategies are employed in computer mediated discourse (CMD) to create informal work environment and achieve effective cooperation among team members. Another interviewee commented that he even added some of their meeting counterparts on Facebook to see how they are in their personal lives and to create a relationship that is more than just work.

We use Facebook to communicate to our counterparts. In other regions not work-related, at least to see some stuff they're doing in their personal lives. So, I think there are instances that we can communicate with them outside of work (Group Discussion – Operation Agents)

It would then be interesting to see how virtual friendship and information communication can contribute to virtual work team success. Saphiere's (1996) study found that members of highly effective virtual work teams tend to communicate with each other more in informal ways compared to the less productive teams. Her interview data show that respondents who engage in more informal conversation with other virtual team members demonstrate keener interests in other team members, more recognition of the everchanging environment which demands higher flexibility and commitment for task completion.

This chapter has discussed the multi-faceted challenges faced by VTM participants based on interview data with employees at BrazIT. The main challenges that they face with the VTM

experience are wide-ranging: technical problems, discourse management problems, language problems and cultural problems, and all of these problems can impact the effectiveness of VTMs in different ways. Interview data at BrazIT also show that the absence of visual stimuli (face-to-face meeting and videoconferencing) is one of the obstacles to relationship building and successful communication, and that people need visual stimuli to develop relationship for effective communication. This finding has implications on much of the virtual communication scenarios nowadays: people have to communicate online all the time but often without any form of visual stimuli which can hinder relationship building and effective communication.

Nevertheless, the interviewees also stated that they tried take on a pro-active role and come up with integrative solutions to try to overcome at least some of the challenges that they have encountered in VTMs. An analysis of their strategies shows that there is correspondence between their adopted strategies and communication accommodation strategies in the CAT framework. For example, to deal with the lacking meeting structure problem, the interviewees suggested better meeting preparation is key, which is a positive Discourse Management accommodation strategy, whereas supplementing with written documents to tackle misunderstanding issues is an attuning Interpretability accommodation strategy in the CAT framework. It is therefore relevant to investigate how VTM participants employ CAT strategies in VTMs and how these strategies are manifested in VTM discourse, as well as the contextual and situational factors that can impact and explain why certain CAT strategies are made. These issues will be discussed in the next chapter, CAT strategies in VTMs.

Chapter Six

Communication Accommodation Strategies in Virtual Team Meetings

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section 6.1 covers the five communication accommodation strategies employed by VTM participants in the data set. Section 6.2 covers CAT strategies employed by VTM participants in seven VTMs with the aim to investigate how VTM contexts influence VTM participants' employment of CAT strategies.

6.1 Introduction

This section discusses the five CAT strategies: approximation (Section 6.1.1), Interpretability (Section 6.1.2), Discourse Management (Section 6.1.3), Interpersonal Control (Section 6.1.4), and Emotional Expressions (Section 6.1.5) employed by VTM participants and provide examples from all seven VTMs for illustrations.

6.1.1 Approximation

Speech Approximation strategy is concerned with adjusting one's speech to be more like his/her interlocutor in terms of speech style, accent, dialect and/or other verbal or nonverbal behaviours (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005) in order to gain social liking and approval, which is informed by Similarity-Attraction Paradigm (Byrne, 1971). Similarity-Attraction Paradigm predicts that similarity on attributes such as attitudes, values and beliefs can facilitate interpersonal attraction. In the early stage of CAT development, the theory relied heavily upon the notions of similarity attraction, which suggest that one person's speech style becomes more similar to the other during the communication process which results in increase of social liking from one's interlocutor.

In contrast to most of the earlier research within the CAT paradigm, which primarily focuses on the use of Approximation as an accommodative strategy (Gallois & Giles, 1998, Gallois et al., 1995; Giles & Smith, 1979; Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982), the analysis of current VTM data set reveals that Approximation strategy is not be the most apparent communication accommodation strategy employed by various VTM participants in the VTMs. In the following section, I shall discuss why the Approximation strategy is not the most salient communication accommodation strategy employed by the VTM participants in the VTM data.

6.1.1.1 Inability to understand different English Accents

Several studies (Coupland, 1984; Giles & Ogay, 2007; Wang & Fussell, 2010; Willemyns et al., 1997) have shown how interactants adjust their accents to be more like that of their interlocutors in order to decrease social distance, and to gain social liking and approval. However, such adjustments may not be feasible in VTM contexts which involve participants whose L1 is not English.

Interview data with employees who have VTM experience at BrazIT reveal that VTM participants sometimes have difficulties in understanding each other when they converse in English due to different accents. For example, Emily expressed that she had encountered more difficulties in understanding British English accents than American English accents

US is the easiest for me. Easiest because they speak straight English even if in different states at least they're speaking straight English. For UK accent is very, very hard, especially if they have like low voice so sometimes you really need to ask them to repeat what they said (Emily, Filipina Operations Senior Team Leader – Manila office BrazIT)

Emily's statement reveals that she is more familiarised with American English, and she finds it difficult to understand British English sometimes, despite the fact that her interlocutor is also a native English speaker. The influence of American English on the Philippine variety of English has been studied extensively in the past four decades (Casambre, 1985; Gonzalez, 1982; 1990; Gonzalez & Alberca, 1978; Marasigan, 1981). The reason Emily finds American English easier to understand may be due to the heavy American English influence in the Philippines since the Americans took control of the country in the early 1900s. Mass education in English was introduced in the Philippines and English eventually became a co-official language with Tagalog. Nowadays, English is still used extensively in various discourses such as science, business, academia and politics in various government, education, and popular media settings (Friginal, 2009). The Philippines has also embraced American influences "not only in language, but also in popular culture such as music, television, and movies" (Hardy & Friginal, 2012, p. 144).

Given that BrazIT is a multinational company, employees often interact with team members from other geographical locations whose L1 is not English. Various interviewees expressed their difficulties in understanding other varieties of English accents other than Standard American English:

Indians they speak too fast and because of the accent sometimes I really cannot understand them the first time (Ben, Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager – Manila office BrazIT)

In the beginning, frankly I was having some difficulty understanding the Indian English at the beginning so as much as I want to hear what she's reporting, there was a tendency to just, you know, I would just work on my own stuff and not listen, that was at the beginning because it was really quite difficult, her accent was really very strong (Cherry, Filipina Human Resources Manager, Manila office BrazIT)

Ben and Cherry's comments treat Indian English as a whole, while in fact, there are multiple regional varieties of Indian English (for instance, Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Urdu and Punjabi, just to name a few) and they can have different levels of mother tongue influences on their spoken English. So it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how and why Ben and Cherry find their Indian interlocutors difficult to understand without knowing the regional varieties of the English spoken by their Indian interlocutors.

Various scholars attempted to study intelligibility of Indian English with particular foci on phonological descriptions (Bansal, 1969) and prosodic features such as stress, rhythm and intonation (Babu, 1971), as well as how regional varieties of Indian English impact the overall intelligibility: Pandey (1980) on Hindustani, Bansal (1970) on Uttar Pradesh; Wiltshire and Harnsberger (2006) on Gujarati and Tamil. However, these studies also received criticisms. Bansal's study of *The Intelligibility of Indian English* (1969) compared Indian English phonetics and phonology with RP (Received Pronunciation) and set a framework in which RP is the standard way to speak and which his Indian participants in the study were judged on. This framework is seen to be stigmatising Indian English and does not accord to the world context today, as reflected by Bamgbose (1998):

It used to be thought that such intelligibility was a one-way process in which non-native speakers are striving to make themselves understood by native speakers whose prerogative it was to decide what is intelligible and what is not. This attitude is shown in pejorative judgements on some varieties of non-native Englishes. (p. 10)

Apart from Indian English, interviewees at BrazIT also revealed they encountered intelligibility issues with other varieties of English:

Most of the participants are from different regions. So we each have our FLI or our first language influence. So like the last time we had some participants from Latin America

and Europe, specifically from Poland, their English is not that understandable. So, yeah, so we're having also troubles understanding them when they speak up (Charles, Filipino Event Analyst (Operations) – Manila office BrazIT)

The above reflections on the intelligibility of different English accents by the Filipino informants at BrazIT suggest that lack of exposure to various English accents may be the cause of the problem. Smith and Bisazza (1982) conducted a study on the comprehensibility of Indian English, Japanese English and American English to listeners from Hong Kong, India, The Philippines, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Hawai'i. They found that “the American speaker was easiest for the subjects [to understand], and the Indian was most difficult” (p. 265). They also found that the Japanese interviewees found the Japanese speaker most comprehensible. They then concluded that there was a positive correlation between comprehensibility and exposure:

It seems clear from this study that one's English is more comprehensible to those people who have had active exposure to it. [Nowadays,] with English being used frequently by nonnative speakers to communicate with other nonnative speakers, this study gives evidence of a need for students of English to have greater exposure to nonnative varieties of English (Smith & Bisazza, 1982, p. 269).

Their findings also explain why one of my interviewees, Emily, finds American English easier to understand due to the heavy American English influence in the Philippines as discussed earlier.

Interview data with VTM participants at BrazIT reveals the most ‘problematic’ English accents for them are Indian, British, Eastern European and Latin American. If VTM participants encounter difficulties in understanding their interlocutors based on accents, it would be even more difficult for them to adjust their accents and speech styles to match the ones of their interlocutors and this explains why adjusting one's accent as a strategy to achieve Approximation in VTMs is not the most apparent accommodation strategy in the VTM data.

6.1.1.2 Linguistic Repertoire Limitations in L2 Contexts

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Theoretical Framework), Constraints on Communication Adjustments, linguistic repertoire and physiological constraints can hinder one's accommodation ability despite of the interlocutors' motivations to adjust. So even though VTM participants may wish to adapt their speech styles to match the ones of their interlocutors, their inability to reproduce certain sounds, i.e., accommodate to different accents which are outside their linguistic repertoires, may hinder them to do so, which is also argued by Beebe and Giles (1984): "it is the tension that makes second language data unique. With native speakers and fluent bilinguals, we assume that the ability to converge is there. With second language learners, the capability may not be there" (p. 23).

Apart from accent and dialect adjustments as Approximation strategies, other scholars also investigate grammatical structure adjustment as an accommodating Approximation strategy. For example, Ladegaard's (2011a) study on speech accommodation in Sino-Western business negotiations found that Danish buyers adjusted their utterances to match the ones of the Hong Kong Chinese sellers, who constructed null-subject and/or null object utterances, which are possible in Cantonese and Putonghua but not in English and Danish. In the follow-up interview, the Danish buyer explained the reason for her adjustment was to create a positive atmosphere, by seeking approval and social liking in line with Approximation strategy within the CAT framework. However, this kind of grammatical adjustment based on one's mother tongue influence is also not apparent in my VTM data.

6.1.1.3 Inappropriate Use of Approximation Strategies and its Negative Consequences

One of the fundamental principles of CAT is that people have expectations about what constitutes 'appropriate' adjustment in context and these expectations are informed by the

sociohistorical context, interpersonal and intergroup history as well as idiosyncratic preferences, which concern with individual characteristics and/or quality (Gasiorek, 2016; Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016; Giles & Ogay, 2007). Accommodation out of people's expectations in any specific context can be regarded as inappropriate and can cause negative effects on the overall exchange. Platt and Weber's (1984) study on inappropriate accommodation strategies adopted by expatriates who wished to converge their speech into colloquial Singaporean English in order to match the one of their Singaporean employees is a case in point. Despite of the expatriates' wish to become more accepted by their employees by altering their speech styles, their effort of doing so was perceived negatively by all employees who commented on their accommodative behaviours as being amusing, irritating and annoying as they were seen to be intrusive and paternalising which also undermined employees' cognitive and professional competence.

Platt and Weber (1984) also warn native speakers that "attempts at convergence by partially adopting the other's speech patterns is a dangerous game as it may easily be mistaken for patronizing or ridiculing" (p. 138). Native speakers usually try to simplify sentence structures (radically), use basic lexicon and sometimes incorporate sound features and intonation patterns from the foreign language which they try to converge to, and this kind of "foreigner talk" may resemble features of "baby talk", which is why it can be perceived as patronising by foreigners who possess equal cognitive capacity as that of native speakers.

Platt and Weber's (1984) study has highlighted the importance of speakers' awareness of what is appropriate and acceptable within their interlocutors' speech communities, which is paramount in the success of speech convergence. Multinational virtual team meetings often consist of participants from other off-site locations whose L1 is not English, and such

awareness of what is appropriate and acceptable within other speech communities should not be assumed. Inappropriate execution of speech convergence may be harmful to the interpersonal relationship between VTM participants and thus, the overall effectiveness and satisfaction of VTMs.

6.1.1.4 Gaining Cognitive-based Trust as Approval in Virtual Work Teams

Gaining approval and social liking are regarded as the main motivations for Approximation strategy, i.e., for speakers to converge linguistically (Giles & Ogay, 2007; Wang & Fussell, 2010). However, employees cannot rely on speech accommodation solely to gain approval and social liking in the workplace. One of perhaps the most vital ways to gain such approval in the virtual workplace is to gain and build trust among team members. Numerous studies have illustrated the importance of trust, the difficulties to build trust and its correlation to team effectiveness in virtual work teams (Alsharo, Gregg & Ramirez, 2017; Ford, Piccolo & Ford, 2017; Kirkman et al., 2002; Pinjani & Palvia, 2013; Webster & Wong, 2008). Greenberg, Greenberg & Antonucci (2007) note that it is more difficult for team members to establish high quality and interpersonal relationships with each other in virtual teams due to the lack of informal communication channels such as social talk, which is vital to the formation of a collective identity, group norms as well as a sense of belonging among team members. Moreover, as globalised virtual teams are highly dispersed and the team members usually live in different countries with different time zones, this can also be a hindrance as to why the establishment of trust may be difficult in global virtual teams because a timely response from their teammates is not always possible, and this could trigger a disruption in trust (Gibson & Cohen, 2003).

Lewis and Wiegert (1985) suggest that there are two forms of interpersonal trust, namely cognitive-based trust and affective-based trust. Cognitive-based trust involves judgements and

reasonings on the trustworthiness of one's counterparts and these judgements and reasonings depend on reliability (McAllister, 1995; Rempel, Holmes & Zanna, 1985), integrity (Duarte & Snyder, 1999), competence (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995), and responsibility (Cook & Wall, 1980). Affective-based trust concerns with emotional bonds between two parties who express genuine care and concern for the others (McAllister, 1995) and it has typically been studied in the context of close social relationships such as family and friends (Boon & Holmes, 1991). In the context of virtual teams in which face-to-face interactions are absent, together with its temporary nature, close social relationships and affective-based trust are more difficult to be developed between virtual team members. Conversely, cognitive-based trust would be of greater importance between virtual team members since they are less familiar with each other in terms of social relationship and team members tend to assess each other in terms of work-related performance. Several studies argue that virtual team members rely mainly on cognitive-based trust more than affective-based trust and virtual team members base their trust decisions on their perceptions of evidence of trustworthiness instead of genuine care and concerns (Gabarro, 1978; Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2002; Meyerson, Weick & Kramer, 1996). Meyerson, Weick & Kramer. (1996) argue that work groups working in a temporary system such as virtual team typically concern more with each other's performance in their professional roles rather than developing close social relationships. Therefore, the formation and maintenance of trust rely more on the cognitive dimension than on an affective one. Kanawattanachai and Yoo (2002) also comment that the communication media of virtual teams can influence the formation of trust among virtual team members and they concur with other studies (Kiesler, Siegel & McGuire, 1984; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; Walther, 1995) that "it is more difficult to develop social relationships through computer-mediated communication due to the depersonalization effect" (p. 191).

The interview findings with employees from BrazIT in the current study have confirmed virtual team members' reliance on cognitive-based trust rather than affective-based trust in virtual work groups. Interview data with employees from BrazIT reveals that trust is mainly built based on other's ability to complete tasks, sharing of knowledge, accessibility of the team members and regularity of virtual team meetings. For example:

On task completion:

I think if it doesn't happen over time definitely it will not happen during the first call that you're going to get my trust. For me it's a process like eventually, if let's say for example if we were able to complete the task together or we were able to achieve the goal together [...] I think based on output, so based on how people, yes achieving the goals. That's where I build my trust. Because in a way I will measure you based on how you do your work (Ben, Filipino Talent Acquisition Manager – Manila Office BrazIT)

Okay the trust that I have for them, it's mostly work-related trust. They actually understood what I needed and trust that they can actually deliver it at the time, within the timeline that I need it (Mabel, Filipina Marketing/Digital Marketing Officer – Manila office BrazIT)

On sharing of knowledge:

[...] makes you also think, "what information are you going to share during that meeting?" So you have to think, "okay, will I share even the food that I eat or?" [...] So again, you kind of think also the type of information you share. So if you keep sharing trivial matters, I don't think the trust will also be developed. But if you try, if you also share some of the issues that you've really been involved in and try to get their opinion, their suggestions. It's not just a frequency but also the type of meeting because again, if we can keep just talking about like I said, trivial matters, I don't think it would be, it would develop the trust (Cherry, Filipina Human Resources Manager, Manila office BrazIT)

[...] like questions like processes etc and then you feel that they've really given you the correct information through experiences. So oh, this person knows what she's talking about. Just like that [...] able to share able to tell you that you're doing correctly (Emily, Filipina Operations Senior Team Leader – Manila office BrazIT)

On accessibility of virtual team members:

I think it's vital for each team member to have trust so we can perform our duties responsibly. So on my side, I try to be reachable as much as possible via Skype or via email. So if whenever I receive requests from them I try to attend to them as fast as I can, as soon as I can. And then when I reply to them I make sure that I provide clear and detailed instructions so they feel like: “oh I reached this person and then his or her response is just perfect, I don't have to ask for any for any additional instructions, it's all in on that specific response [...]” So they all know that once I reach out to this person I will get this type of response so I think that's one of giving or letting them know that I can be trusted (Charles, Filipino Event Analyst (Operations) – Manila office BrazIT)

On regularity of virtual team meetings:

The regular meetings having that somehow improves [...] like I said, with my bosses, this has improved because there was a time that we were meeting weekly. So the regularity of the frequency helps in terms of developing that trust (Cherry, Filipina Human Resources Manager, Manila office BrazIT)

The above interview extracts have shown that virtual team members are aware of the importance of trust in virtual work teams. Various factors such as task completion, knowledge sharing, accessibility of virtual team members and regularity of virtual team meetings can affect their cognitive-based trust decisions. These findings also accord to Henttonen and Blomqvist's (2005) study on the evolution of trust in virtual teams in which they identify sources of trust in virtual teams as timely response, open communication, taking initiatives, delivering agreed results, condensed communication and spreading critical information.

Perhaps the more congruent question to ask when trying to gain approval in the workplace is: “How can I gain trust from other virtual team members, rather than how should I adjust my speech style to match the ones of my interlocutors so I can be liked?” As illustrated in the studies mentioned above, cognitive-based trust seems to be a more direct and determining factor in team effectiveness. As for virtual team members, gaining trust and approval through task-related performance seems to be more accessible, employable and fruitful rather than speech adjustments which can be outside of their linguistic repertoires and physiological abilities.

6.1.1.5 Employment of other Accommodative Strategies rather than Approximation

The five accommodative strategies within the CAT framework acknowledge the fact that speech variables accommodation is only one of the many ways speakers can accommodate to each other. It also acknowledges that speakers can converge and diverge simultaneously at different communication levels and employ multiple communication accommodation strategies at the same time, depending on their motivations and the goal they want to achieve from the communicative events. As illustrated by Coupland et al. (1988),

accommodative talk is not necessarily talk wherein participants share any obvious speech characteristic - although we have recognized the power of approximative talk in respect to specific scalable speech dimensions such as speech rate and dialect. Rather, it is talk wherein actors achieve a high degree of fit between their typically different, but potentially attunable, behaviours (p. 28).

Speakers can attune and accommodate each other through different deployment of strategies, depending on their motivations and communicative goals. This is especially apparent when speakers cannot accommodate each other via Approximation strategy. Gasiorek, Van de Poel, and Blockmans (2015)’s study on doctor-patient interactions in a multilingual hospital found

that doctors employed other communication strategies such as gesture, using translation software, cater more for patients' emotional needs in order to compensate the lack of Approximation and linguistic accommodation. Discourse Analysis of the VTMs in the present study also shows that VTM participants make use of various other communication accommodative strategies (Interpretability, Discourse Management, Interpersonal Control and Emotional Expressions) to facilitate the effectiveness of VTMs, which will be illustrated and discussed in the remaining sections: section 6.1.2 – Interpretability; section 6.1.3 – Discourse Management; section 6.1.4 – Interpersonal Control and section 6.1.5 – Emotional Expressions.

This section has discussed the possible reasons why Approximation is not the most apparent accommodation strategy employed by VTM participants in the VTM meetings. Firstly, VTM participants whose L1 is not English may be constrained by their inability to understand different varieties of English accents. Secondly, imitating accents/dialects and producing speech styles that are similar to the ones of their interlocutors may be beyond their linguistic repertoires. Thirdly, imitation of others' speech styles and inappropriate use of Approximation accommodation strategies without sound understanding of other speech communities may elicit negative responses. Fourthly, gaining cognitive-based trust rather than affective-based trust (through Approximation strategies which are affective-based) is seen to be more effective in virtual workplace settings (Gabarro, 1978; Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2002; Meyerson, Weick & Kramer, 1996) and finally, VTM participants' preferences for using other CAT strategies to ensure effective communication in VTM contexts based on different meeting goals and purposes.

6.1.2 Interpretability

Interpretability is concerned with speakers' attendance to other's interpretive competence (Coupland et al., 1988). Studies which have investigated this communication accommodative strategy (Ayoko, Härtel & Callan, 2002; Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016; Gallois & Giles, 2015; Jones et al., 1999; Watson et al., 2015) typically focus on speech production behaviours that can aid (actual or perceived) the comprehension of hearers. These communicative behaviours include:

- Decrease complexity of speech (decrease diversity of vocabulary, avoid jargons, simplify syntax)
- Increase clarity of speech (change tempo or pitch, repetitions, explanations, clarification)
- Select 'safe' and familiar topics for others
- Check understanding with questions/tokens
- Provide summary statements

This section will discuss the Interpretability strategies employed by VTM participants across seven virtual team meetings.

6.1.2.1 Decrease Complexity of Speech

The strategy of decreasing the complexity of speech does not appear to be the most apparent Interpretability strategy used by VTM participants. In fact, the use of jargon and abbreviations is ubiquitous, and this may largely have resulted from the nature and the contexts of the meetings. All of the VTMs are internal meetings, albeit some intradepartmental and some interdepartmental; the VTM participants gather as a team virtually to discuss specific issues, or to achieve certain goals by utilising their knowledge and expertise in the area. Acronyms and jargon are commonly used in the VTMs and they do not seem to pose any challenges in

terms of interpretability. Some examples of acronyms and jargon used in the VTM data are RMS report, MRDUB (VTM A2 on talent acquisition topics); TPM, SDN, AHD (VTM B1 on operating system technical issues); system automation and validation process, Bloomberg licencing (VTM B2 – on debt collection system issues), to name a few. While these acronyms may look foreign to outsiders, the VTM participants do not appear to encounter any misunderstanding resulting from them. Numerous studies have investigated the use of ‘lay’ and ‘technical’ lexical choices in institutional settings, such as law and medicine, and have shown that such use of lexical choices embody claims to specialised knowledge and institutional identities (Korsch & Negrete, 1972; Meehan, 1981). In fact, this use of acronyms and jargon help mark ingroup identity and signal that they belong to the same community of practice (Wenger, 1998), in particular, how certain speech styles are recognised as displaying certain group membership.

Simplifying the syntax is also not an apparent Interpretability accommodation strategy in the VTM data. It may be because the VTM participants in the current data set of seven VTMs are perceived to be rather competent in English proficiency by their interlocutors. Simplifying syntax is one of the characteristics found in baby talk, foreigner talk (Freed, 1981) and intergenerational exchanges (Coupland et al., 1988). Over-accommodating by simplifying syntax may result in negative outcomes as discussed in the previous section (section 6.1.1) because it can be regarded as patronising. The verb ‘to simplify’ implies the process of changing something from complex to simple and it involves the process of change, or in CAT’s terms, adjustments and accommodation. Studies which investigate the simplification of syntax usually make comparisons of a person’s different speech styles to observe this change. For example, Jones et al. (1999) observe that Australian students simplified their syntax while talking to Chinese students as compared to their exchanges with other Australian students. However, in my VTM data, the speech styles of the VTM participants in respect to the

complexity of syntax are rather consistent throughout the meetings, and such change in adjustments cannot be readily observed within a particular virtual team meeting. The current VTM data set comprises of seven separate and independent VTMs, and it would have been useful, for the purpose of comparison, if permission could have been given to record exchanges outside the seven VTMs in order to observe how the participants talk with other native/non-native speakers. As there is no data available for comparison and no evidence of how they would talk outside the seven VTMs, such comparison of syntactic simplification within a particular VTM cannot be made.

6.1.2.2 Increase Clarity of Speech

Various communicative strategies can be found in the VTM data with the aim to increase clarity of speech and can be regarded as accommodating Interpretability strategy in CAT framework, which will be exemplified below:

Signposting, Repetition and Rephrasing

Example 6.1

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two (Cherry, Philippines HR manager located at the Manila office; Lee, China Operations manager located in Jilin, China).

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012.

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

Context: Cherry initiates the first discussion topic with Lee who recommends promotion of Bonnie (Lee's Chinese subordinate at the Jilin office, China).

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 22 | Cherry | 1 | Ok first and foremost I wanted to ask what er why was there a |
| | | 2 | need to put this request in? Do we have a risk of losing Bonnie? |
| 23 | Lee | 3 | Sorry say again? |

| | | | |
|----|--------|--------|--|
| 24 | Cherry | 4 5 | Do we have a risk of losing Bonnie? Which is why a promotion has been requested? [speaks slowly and articulates clearly] |
|----|--------|--------|--|

A number of accommodating Interpretability strategies can be identified in the short example above. Cherry's use of signposting "first and foremost" (line 1) can be regarded as a strategy to signal this is where the business talk begins, after their small talk (Turn 1 to Turn 21) in the beginning of their virtual meeting, and to inform Lee that what she is about to say would be worth paying attention to. The way in which Cherry explicitly states what she is about to say ("first and foremost") can help Lee's interpretation process. However, Lee does not hear or understand the question and asks Cherry to repeat in line 3. Cherry then slows down her speech, repeats and rephrases her questions again in lines 4 to 5. Cherry's communicative behaviours in line 1 (signposting) and line 4 and 5 (repetition and rephrasing) can be categorised as Interpretability strategies, which are her attempts to attune to Lee's communication competence as their aims are to assist Lee's understanding of what is being said.

The manager in the example below not only makes uses of signposting, but also frame markers

Example 6.2

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (four based in Melbourne, two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;

Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

Context: Ann introduces agenda items of the meeting to the team.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 23 | Ann | 1 | OK mhm::: now let me go through the meeting agenda for today |
| | | 2 | mhm:: first we'll go through the Indian leave during the month of |
| | | 3 | February in Bangalore and Melbourne then we will mhm go |
| | | 4 | through mhm the MBM department initiatives and requests (.) |
| | | 5 | Then after that we speak about the MBM validation and |
| | | 6 | investigation for equity (.) I have sent the document out which |
| | | 7 | mhm which I believe you have a chance to read through (.) I would |
| | | 8 | open for any questions and feedback that you have on this |
| | | 9 | documentation (.) mhm then any other issues and questions (.) |
| | | 10 | open for the team to discuss, now let's go through the leave during |
| | | 11 | February mhm Thomas do you want to brief me and the |
| | | 12 | Melbourne team of who is on leave during February? |

Frame Markers

Signposting is used in this example to introduce agenda items to the team (“first” - line 2, “then” - line 3, “Then after that” - line 5) by breaking the agenda into smaller sequential items, which can help other team members to understand and anticipate what the meeting is about. Ann, the manager in the example above, not only uses signposting, she also uses it together with frame markers which can provide greater clarity to other participants. Frame markers is one of the subcategories under interactional metadiscourse proposed by Hyland (2005) and it functions as announcing discourse moves in text and talk to provide the audience with greater clarity. By using frame markers such as “let me go through” (line 1), “we will go through” (lines 3 to 4), “we speak about” (line 5), “I would open” (lines 7 to 8) and “let’s go through” (line 10), Ann announces the moves she is going to take in the meeting and with the use of signposting, she also arranges the moves in sequential order to provide clarity to her team members.

Another kind of frame marker that can be found in the VTM data is the use of the cluster “make sure”. It is regarded as a frame marker because it explicitly announces the goal of the speaker and in the example below by Lincoln, the meeting facilitator.

Example 6.3

Meeting B1

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Four (two based in Melbourne, two based in Bangalore)

Participants: Samuel, team manager (Australian male, based in Melbourne)

Lincoln, meeting facilitator (Asian male, based in Melbourne)

Samesh (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Advik (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Planning, task-oriented (Australia team requests assistance on system development from India team and delivers standards as well as expectation to India team).

Context: Lincoln explains tasks that need to be done by the Indian virtual team members (Samesh and Advik) and delivers his expectations on the tasks.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 22 | Lincoln | 1 | I'll very briefly first talked about these three pieces of work and |
| | | 2 | let Samuel to give us a bit more details on these three pieces of |
| | | 3 | work and uh::: our expectation of working the infrastructure (.) |
| | | 4 | to help us (.) So for the strategy (.) the fairly simple piece of work |
| | | 5 | we we probably need someone a day a week to from a point of |
| | | 6 | view of stakeholder management uh:: schedule and reporting |
| | | 7 | management (.) It doesn't have to be a dedicated idea but because |
| | | 8 | we have other pieces of work that are going on (.) we sort of uh uh |
| | | 9 | bundle everything together as you can get one at a hundred percent |
| | | 10 | capacity (.) then we can use that person across the four projects |
| | | 11 | and we want him to bring (a certain) (percent) because (doesn't |
| | | 12 | help with) that capacity to manage that piece of work (.) So what |
| | | 13 | that piece of work requires is very close engagement preferably on |
| | | 14 | a weekly basis with Brown who's the senior architect team leader |
| | | 15 | working on this piece of work and making sure that there are nine |
| | | 16 | deliverables coming out of it (.) There are all documents that that |
| | | 17 | project they didn't really deliver anything (.) it's delivering more |
| | | 18 | strategy papers and we just need to make sure that we can put some |
| | | 19 | structure around it because there are different architects working |
| | | 20 | on some external we call it (VWC) working (.) so you know just |
| | | 21 | making sure that the cost side of thing under control helping uh |
| | | 22 | them uh making sure that the project schedule is in line with the |
| | | 23 | way the documentation as the stuff is progressing and uh:: at the |
| | | 24 | end of uh the:: project timeline by September (.) make sure the |
| | | 25 | nine pieces of work are clearly reviewed documented and signed |
| | | 26 | off alternatively there's a you know with with uh:: raise whatever |
| | | 27 | the issues are and risks in making sure that the steering the steering |
| | | 28 | committee is clearly aware of where it's sitting and what we will |
| | | 29 | achieve by September (.) So that is more uh it requires a lot of soft |

| | | | |
|--|--|----|--|
| | | 30 | skills management (.) stakeholders keeping on track with what the |
| | | 31 | uh other architects are doing (.) making sure that you know we're |
| | | 32 | well prepared for the timeline etc. (.) having a high level schedule |
| | | 33 | managing that and reporting that on a weekly basis (.) For that |
| | | 34 | piece of work because I was doing it with Brown (.) obviously it |
| | | 35 | took me a day a week would be adequate for you to help me |
| | | 36 | understand how you think uh:: if it's gonna work because a lot of |
| | | 37 | it is uh:: also spending time with Brown the architect to make sure |
| | | 38 | things that are on track (.) so it's not just sitting and doing things |
| | | 39 | but making sure that relationship management is happening |

Example 6.3 shows a part of Turn 22 in VTM B1. Lincoln, the meeting facilitator holds the floor of Turn 22 for 4 minutes and 42 seconds to deliver instructions to his Indian colleagues (Samesh and Advik) and he makes use of the cluster “make sure” nine times as in “make sure” (line 24 and 37), “making sure” (lines 15, 22, 27, 31 and 39), “we just need to make sure” (line 18), “you know, just making sure” (lines 20-21), as well as “our expectation” (line 3), which is another frame marker. They serve as an orientation to his Indian colleagues as they signal what they need to pay attention to and how the tasks are expected to be delivered.

Intertextual References

Speakers often refer to other texts while explicating their messages during meetings. The intertextual references found in the VTM data include meeting agenda, PowerPoint presentations and other written documents, and they are produced in the meeting preparation stage (Handford, 2010). Handford (2010) states that:

This [meeting preparation] stage is qualitatively different from the other stages in that it may not be accessible in the corpus transcripts, but it is fundamental to the meeting process. This stage tends to be finished some time before the next stage, but provides intertextual (Bhatia, 2004) links to the present meeting (p. 70).

Making use of intertextual references can aid comprehension by increasing clarity of speech because they can provide a guide or a structure for VTM participants to follow through. In meetings in which VTM participants have to present large amounts of data (VTM A2, for example, with its main meeting purpose for the seven Filipino team members to report their progresses to the senior manager who is based in the US), referring to the written texts (PowerPoint in VTM A2) that is shared by all VTM participants can guide them through the discussion points and data, so they would not be lost in vast amounts of information. Below are some examples of how VTM participants in different VTMs make use of intertextual references:

Example 6.4

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two (Cherry, Philippines HR manager located at Manila office; Lee, China Operations manager located in Jilin, China).

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012.

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

Context: Cherry refers to the document that was sent to her by Lee regarding Bonnie's job responsibilities prior to the meeting. Bonnie is Lee's subordinate in the Jilin office, China. Lee would like to promote Bonnie but it requires Cherry's approval since Cherry is the Human Resources manager.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|--------|--|
| 26 | Cherry | 1 2 | Okay (.) The list that you gave me in terms of Bonnie's responsibilities (.) Is she doing all those right now? |

Example 6.5

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino s recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Alice, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Ben, Filipino recruitment manager and meeting facilitator, refers to the PowerPoint slide that is shown to all VTM participants and he asks for more clarification from one of the VTM participants, Andrew:

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 22 | Ben | 1 | Um Andrew, for the list of schools erm under MRDUB (.) If you can go back to that you mentioned that they're open to the idea of inviting ourselves for the career orientation and employer information (.) What action is needed from our end? |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |

Example 6.6

Meeting B1

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Four (two based in Melbourne, two based in Bangalore)

Participants: Samuel, team manager (Australian male, based in Melbourne)

Lincoln, meeting facilitator (Asian male, based in Melbourne)

Samesh (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Advik (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Planning, task-oriented (Australia team requests assistance on system development from India team and delivers standards as well as expectation to India team)

Context: Lincoln refers to a discussion point on the agenda.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 55 | Lincoln | 1 | OK so let's// we we we we talk about four point one one mhm:: enterprise request and help which is in a lot more mature state already uh::: |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |

Example 6.7

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (four based in Melbourne, two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;

Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

Context: Ann refers to both agenda and other written documents in VTM B2.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 88 | Ann | 1 | OK mhm:: I'm just concerned about time (.) So let's move on to the next item we have in the agenda (.) We have validation and investigation for equity uh I assume you guys have already read through the documentation (.) um anyone in Bangalore happens to have a chance to go through the documentation at all? |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |
| | | 5 | |

Example 6.8

Meeting B3

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Two

Oliver, Australian male Manager

Tiffany, Hong Kong Female subordinate

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinate

Purpose of meetings: Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information

Topic of meeting: Procedures

Context: Oliver, manager and meeting facilitator, refers to a written document which was sent to him by Tiffany prior to the meeting.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 11 | Oliver | 1 | Anyway we we can// do you prefer me to print it out? Was there much change? Or we can talk through it quickly? |
| | | 2 | |

Example 6.9

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|--------|---|
| 17 | Oliver | 1 2 | So in terms of page one (.) in terms of priority mhm it's very clear we need to have the standardized process I think [...] |

Example 6.10

Meeting B5

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Three

Angela, Asian female meeting chair based in Singapore

Connie, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Snowy, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Relationship of participants: Peer

Purpose of Meeting: Giving/receiving information, task/problem-oriented (filling out form)

Topic of meeting: Instructional; Procedural

Context: Connie refers to a written document and requests clarifications from Angela, the meeting facilitator.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|-------------|--|
| 45 | Connie | 1 2 3 | Can I just stop for a second? Shall we quickly just start from some questions like one point one one point two (.) Just to clarify a few things. |

Using Multiple Strategies to Increase Clarification Simultaneously

As shown in the examples above, speakers often use more than one strategy simultaneously to increase the clarity and intelligibility of their speech. Turn 17 in meeting B3 is a good example to illustrate this point. Oliver, the Australian manager gives instructions to Tiffany, his Hong Kong subordinate in a turn that lasts for 5 minutes:

Example 6.11

Meeting B3

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Two

Oliver, Australian male Manager

Tiffany, Hong Kong Female subordinate

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinate

Purpose of meetings: Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information

Topic of meeting: Procedures

Context: Oliver gives instructions and rationales to Tiffany.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 17 | Oliver | 1 | So in terms of page one (.) in terms of priority (.) mhm it's very |
| | | 2 | clear we need to have the standardized process I think // I think |
| | | 3 | we've done a good job in Asia but now we just need to see how |
| | | 4 | we can then (1.0) Do we need to change on model to the global |
| | | 5 | standard mhm (.) That remains to be to be done obviously (.) |
| | | 6 | There is mhm you know mhm (.) get hold of some sort of tool |
| | | 7 | that we can use and that's the purpose of ((Male name 2)) meeting |
| | | 8 | in Sydney on that week (.) When we get the vendors into some of |
| | | 9 | the systems that they // they can provide to us (1.0) mhm priority |
| | | 10 | two is obviously maintain our mhm SME quality with all our |
| | | 11 | stakeholders (.) I think we're doing well (.) We just need to carry |
| | | 12 | on doing it and also bring it to the next level (.) so more business |
| | | 13 | focus (.) what we can add value instead of just a process OK? |
| | | 14 | And then number three is (.) is you know same thing in terms of |
| | | 15 | maintaining control (.) high level of control and to avoid any |
| | | 16 | major control incident OK? So those are the three priorities (.) |
| | | 17 | mhm now in terms of if we go down one by one (.) financial mhm |
| | | 18 | what we are looking at doing is obviously improving our MI data |
| | | 19 | OK? So by looking at MI data we have moved into the P&L that's |
| | | 20 | the next step (.) It's gonna be doing the P&L attribution and also |
| | | 21 | analysing the balance sheet OK? That's the first point (1.0) The |
| | | 22 | second point is challenge status quo and hold the line on any piece |
| | | 23 | of incremental work (.) so we just need to assess if there is any |
| | | 24 | piece of incremental work (.) We just need to sit back and assess |
| | | 25 | (.) Does it actually // is it actually within our scope (.) Is it to |
| | | 26 | improve our control or is it something that adds no value to us or |
| | | 27 | no value to the business and it doesn't fit with us in terms of |
| | | 28 | responsibility (.) So we need to challenge those things yeah? And |
| | | 29 | one of the good examples is like the brokerage mhm issues (.) |
| | | 30 | That happened a couple of weeks ago and we were made to |
| | | 31 | review brokerage and locate the brokerage fees or custodian fees |
| | | 32 | in this case and then we just go and challenge them and say look |
| | | 33 | I don't think we should be involved in here (.) The operation |
| | | 34 | received an invoice (.) they'll go to the traders and the traders said |
| | | 35 | OK and they pay the invoice and they book the cash flows right? |
| | | 36 | So that is not within our scope but what we need to // what we |
| | | 37 | need to be aware of is yeah they're gonna book this fee or |
| | | 38 | recognize this in the P&L and that's all we need to do right? In |
| | | 39 | terms of signing off the invoice (.) The payment is not within |
| | | 40 | finance (1.0) In terms of where we recognize those charges and if |
| | | 41 | the traders agree that he's to incur those costs then it comes to the |
| | | 42 | cost centre (.) but if he has a dispute on that one he needs to // the |
| | | 43 | traders needs to resolve that with operation with the // with the |
| | | 44 | external broker right? So we need to just think about what we do |

| | | |
|--|----|---|
| | 45 | is (.) we should be doing it and challenge the status quo (.) And |
| | 46 | then number three is what I put in is on the (standard nature) on |
| | 47 | the print-out balance sheet item (.) challenging questions any |
| | 48 | illogical or other ordinary movement so what I'm trying to get to |
| | 49 | here and I want everybody to be aware of on the P&L and later |
| | 50 | on analyzing the balance sheet is (.) Does this number make sense |
| | 51 | to us yeah? The incident on Indonesia FTP is a very good example |
| | 52 | yeah? We we looked at it we know there is a daily (.) there is a |
| | 53 | high benefit that is given to us but why? It's what we need to |
| | 54 | understand OK and by this purely going back to the () report to |
| | 55 | see how they calculated it and just base on that (1.0) I think this |
| | 56 | is mhm (.) it is not meeting the target (1.0) Someone would have |
| | 57 | to go in OK (.) We see the number (.) we have to understand how |
| | 58 | it's calculated (.) and most importantly do we understand how it's |
| | 59 | calculated and is it logical (.) is it small we have to raise it up (.) |
| | 60 | We have to challenge that OK? I think that's what we need to do |
| | 61 | (1.0) So on the financial aspect (.) mhm do you have (.) mhm do |
| | 62 | you add anything or you wanna say anything more on that? |

The various strategies Oliver employs to increase clarity in this specific turn include:

- 1) **Signposting** (lines 9 tp 10 – “priority two”; line 14 – “number there”; lines 21 to 22 – “that is the first point, the second point is”; lines 45 to 46 – “And then number three is”);
- 2) **Making intertextual reference** (line 1- “in terms of page one”);
- 3) **Providing explanations** (line 22 to line 28);
- 4) **Using frame markers** (lines 3, 11, 23, 24 – “we just need to”; lines 2, 28, 36, 44, 53, 60 – “we need to”; lines 36 to 37 – “we need to be aware”; line 45 – “we should be doing it”; line 49 – “I want everybody to be aware of”; line 57 – “we have to understand”; line 60 – “We have to challenge that” and “I think that’s what we need to do”);
- 5) **Providing example to illustrate a point** (lines 28 to 29);
- 6) **Using check questions/tokens to check understanding** (lines 35, 38, 44 – “Right?”; lines 13, 16, 19, 21, 54, 57, 60 – “Ok?”; lines 28, 51, 52 – “yeah?”).

Bell (1984) points out “the sharper the linguistic differences between codes, the larger the issue of intelligibility looms, the stronger are the pressures to accommodate to the audience” (p. 176).

His claim suggests that speaker takes the audience's linguistic repertoire into account during communication and adjusts his/her speech accordingly in order to enhance intelligibility. This can explain why Oliver in VTM B3 employs various strategies to increase intelligibility of his messages because he perceives Tiffany as a person who speaks English as a second language. His employment of various Interpretability strategies such as signposting, frame markers, making use of intertextual references as well as check questions can help him 'break down' and simplify his message, and to ensure Tiffany understands him. At the same time, his expertise and experiences as a manager can also help him deliver his message to Tiffany by providing explanations and examples while making his point.

6.1.2.3 Topic Selection

Meeting topics are largely predetermined before meetings in the meeting preparation stage (Handford, 2010). As VTM participants join meetings, they are expected to provide input to either report their progress or to discuss certain issues, so the topic selected to be discussed should be familiar to all VTM participants. Choosing discussion topics that are 'safe' and familiar with interlocutors is seen to be an accommodating Interpretability accommodative strategy as it can ensure mutual understanding of discussion topics. While there is not much freedom for VTM participants to choose discussion topics in the meeting discussion stage, there is greater freedom for them to select topics for small talk, a feature which is often found in the pre-meeting stage (Handford, 2010). Examples below illustrate how speakers chose discussion topics that are familiar to their interlocutors:

Example 6.12

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two

Cherry, Philippines HR manager

Lee, China Operations manager

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012.

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

Context: Small talk between Cherry and Lee at the opening of VTM.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|----------------|--|
| 7 | Lee | 1 | I'm working from home today |
| 8 | Cherry | 2 | Oh |
| 9 | Lee | 3 4 | We have // yeah we have snow and I have a very bad cold this morning |
| 10 | Cherry | 5 6 | Oh I hope you get well soon. How//how//how cold is it in Jilin right now? |
| 11 | Lee | 7 | Umm still minus [3 (.) minus 5 |
| 12 | Cherry | 8 9 | [Aww::: aww::: I will die there [laughs] (.) Good you are not asking me to come over during this month [laughs] |
| 13 | Lee | 10 | Yeah (laughs) |
| 14 | Cherry | 11 12 13 | Coz if you (.) I mean you already have a cold (.) So imagine someone like me coming from a very hot country going through a minus 3 ah::: That [would, that would kill me [laughs] |
| 15 | Lee | 14 | [Yeah |
| 16 | Cherry | 15 16 | Remember when I was in Dalin last November (.) I already got a cold and what was the temperature that time? |
| 17 | Lee | 17 18 | Umm now is warmer than then (.) but still have snow (.) Maybe melt after later this week (.) now is spring already [not winter |
| 18 | Cherry | 19 20 | [OK (.) Ok (.) Ok (.) but it's still cold (laughs) |
| 19 | Lee | 21 | Yeah |

Small talk is initiated by Lee in Turn 7 and she explains she has a cold and that is why she has to work from home. Cherry shows her empathy by saying “Oh I hope you will get well soon” in turn 10. She then turns the weather topic into a joke (that the cold would kill her) in turn 14 and recalls a shared experience of her visiting China (turn 16) with Lee a year ago.

This example demonstrates how Cherry's shift of strategies during the small talk stage, from showing empathy to displaying humour to recalling shared experience, helps her develop interpersonal relationship with Lee in the VTM. According to Holmes and Stubbe (2003), “Small talk is typically, but not exclusively, found at the boundaries of interaction, as well as

at the boundaries of the working day” (p. 90), and the excerpt above shows how small talk takes place in the beginning of the VTM before they discuss business topics. The topics of this small talk (the weather and Lee’s well-being) also echo Holmes and Stubbe’s (2003) findings on typical small talk topics found in workplace encounters (the weather, recent shared activities, ritual enquiries after well-being) which serve face-attending and rapport building functions. Attending to others’ face needs is crucial to develop friendship and collegiality (Holmes, 1995). In the workplace context, attending to colleagues’ face needs is a way to develop collegiality and solidarity as “they indicate mutual good intentions as they construct, maintain, repair or extend their collegial relationships” (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 97). Example 6.12 above shows that the choice of topics and the co-construction of small talk topics not only reflects Cherry’s awareness of interpretability needs for Lee (Cherry asks about the weather in Jilin, a topic which is familiar to Lee) but also helps them establish interpersonal relationship before the meeting transits to transactional business talk. This view is also expressed explicitly by Cherry, the Philippines HR manager, in the interview. During the interview, she stated that:

We kind of start with just an informal chitchat without really going straight to the [...] and I think that helps build [...] build the tone of the meeting. Because it kind of tells you: “Okay, you’re concerned.” There’s [...] it’s more like a conversation between a friend and not just a colleague (Cherry, Filipina Human Resources Manager, Manila office BrazIT)

Cherry’s comment on small talk shows that it is an intentional move before meetings commence as she believes it can help her develop interpersonal relationship with other VTM participants. Thus, the topics chosen in small talk should be socially appropriate and understood by the intended audience in order to align with their motivation, which is to establish rapport between VTM participants (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003).

The importance of rapport and co-worker relationship were also stressed by several other Filipino interviewees during the interviews at BrazIT. As discussed by Jacano (1999), “Pakikisama” which means “getting along” in English, is the preferred way for Filipino to behave in relationships. The study of Carbonell (2008) further supports this idea of getting along and belongingness in the Filipino workplace. He conducted a study on retention factors for Filipino employees with 1,678 employees from 60 organisations across the Philippines and found that the level of cooperation with co-workers ranked first among 20 retention factors. This shows having a positive and harmonious relationship with co-workers is critical for Filipino employees to consider whether a company is a good place to work at. Even though VTMs do not take place in a physical setting, it seems that Cherry has also brought the idea of “Pakikisama” into VTMs and conveys that to other VTM participants.

Below is another example which shows how the meeting facilitator (Ben) chooses a topic that is familiar to his virtual meeting counterpart, Sarah, who is located in the US:

Example 6.13

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Alice, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Ben, Filipino recruitment manager and meeting facilitator based in Manila, explains the location of Cebu to Sarah (US based senior recruitment manager) who is his superior located in the US.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 74 | Ben | 1 | Okay (.) So it's not part of our progress report because it's under |
| | | 2 | China's requisition (.) but we're just assisting them because erm |
| | | 3 | you know (.) the location erm from a location's standpoint (.) We |
| | | 4 | are more familiar in terms of the geography because (.) Cebu by |
| | | 5 | the way Sarah is an island away from Manila (.) So erm we're |
| | | 6 | also working on this requisition remotely so it's like erm in |
| 75 | Sarah | 8 | Florida (.) Cebu is actually in LA |
| | | | Okay that's pretty long (.) pretty hard long way |

Example 6.13 shows Ben's perception of Sarah's interpretability and attunes accordingly. As Sarah is an American who works in the US, Ben assumes that she might not know where Cebu is and he uses a simile in lines 6 and 7 "so it's like erm in Florida, Cebu is actually in LA" to make location and geographic reference related to the US which Ben thinks will be familiar to Sarah. However, the effectiveness of Ben's example is questionable. The distance between Los Angeles (West Coast) and Florida (East Coast) is 3564km, and that may explain why Sarah comments "that's pretty long, pretty hard long way" in line 8, whereas the distance between Manila and Cebu is just 352.9km. So it is uncertain whether Sarah really understands the distance between Manila and Cebu if her understanding is based on Ben's reference. Nevertheless, if Ben's intention is to convey the point that Manila office is working on a remote requisition for Cebu and that these two cities are far apart, then the actual distance between these two cities should not pose any misunderstandings for Sarah's interpretation.

6.1.2.4 Check Questions

Check questions differ from other types of questions in terms of their function. While a question such as "what is the estimated cost of X?" is a question that requests information, the aim of check questions is to make sure the message conveyed is delivered successfully and understood by the audience, and this is why check questions are communicative behaviours

associated with Interpretability strategy. Check questions appear in two main forms in the VTM data: check tokens, usually found at end of utterances (Okay? Right? Yeah?) and close-ended questions, usually found at the end of a discussion point/topic (Any other questions? Is that okay? Does anyone have any questions?). Examples of check questions in VTMs are listed below:

| VTM | Turn/Speaker/Role | Utterance |
|-----|------------------------------------|--|
| A1 | T95: Cherry (Meeting facilitator) | So that I can also help her for any of those questions that she may have okay? |
| B1 | T26: Lincoln (Meeting facilitator) | Any questions on that bit? |
| | T38: Lincoln (Meeting facilitator) | Do you have any questions on this? |
| B2 | T33: Ann (Team Manager) | We'll keep you guys posted. Do you have any questions? |
| | T65: Ann (Team Manager) | Any other questions? |
| | T68: Jack (Team member) | Does anyone have any question? |
| | T73: Ann (Team Manager) | Is it answer your question? [sic] |
| B3 | T17: Oliver | <p>-so more business focus what we can add value instead of just a process okay?</p> <p>-[...] to avoid any major control incident okay?</p> <p>-what we are looking at doing is obviously improving our MI data okay?</p> <p>-we need to challenge those things yeah?</p> <p>-that's all we need to do right?</p> <p>-the traders need to resolve that with operation, with the external broker right?</p> <p>-you wanna say anything more on that?</p> |

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| B4 | T100: Noah (Team Manager) | Are there any other questions or issues that people have any concerns they would like to raise in the forum? |
| B5 | T30: Angela (Meeting facilitator) | Any question on that overall to start with? |
| | T48: Angela (Meeting facilitator) | Is that okay? |
| | T52: Angela (Meeting facilitator) | Any other question about this half? |
| | T60: Angela (Meeting facilitator) | Does that sound right? |

Table 6.1 Examples of check questions/tokens in VTM data

In order to find out how check questions are used and their relevance to VTM participants as well as the functions of the meetings, their occurrences in VTMs have been counted and illustrated in the table below:

| VTM | Function of VTM | Facilitator | Other participants |
|------------|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| A1 | Requesting information Discussing | Tokens: 2 Question: 0 | Token: 0 Question: 0 |
| A2 | Reporting progress Discussing (between two managers) | Token: 0 Question: 0 | Token: 0 Question: 0 |
| B1 | Giving instructions Discussing | Token: 0 Questions: 3 | Token: 1 Question: 0 |
| B2 | Reporting progress Discussing | Token: 0 Questions: 3 | Token: 0 Questions: 2 |
| B3 | Giving instructions | Tokens: 35 Question: 1 | Token: 0 Question: 0 |
| B4 | Reporting progress | Token: 0 Question: 0 | Token: 0 Question: 0 |
| B5 | Giving information/instructions | Tokens: 3 Question: 0 | Token: 1 Question: 0 |

Table 6.2 Usage of check questions in VTM data

Meeting facilitators (who are usually Team managers) have higher usage of check questions/tokens as compared to other meeting participants. As meeting facilitators need to ensure meetings are carried out smoothly and that information is shared by VTM participants, it is not surprising to find that they use more check questions/tokens to ensure understanding. It can also be observed that check questions/tokens appear more frequently in meetings that aim at giving instructions (VTMs B1, B3 and B5), as a way to ensure instructions are fully understood by the audience. Finally, the meeting facilitator as well as manager (Oliver) in VTM B3 employs a total of 36 check tokens/questions throughout this meeting. This phenomenon might be explained by the fact that Oliver is a native English speaker (Australian) while his interlocutor Tiffany is a non-native English speaker (Hong Kong Chinese). Thus, he wants to make sure Tiffany understands his messages correctly, together with the instructional nature of that specific meeting, these factors explain why there is such a high frequency of check question/token usage in meeting B3.

6.1.2.5 Provide Summary Statements

Providing summary statements is regarded as a strategy to aid interpretability because it allows meeting participants to summarise the issues being discussed and ensure mutual understanding. Below are some examples of summary statements found in the VTM data:

Example 6.14

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two

Cherry, Philippines HR manager located at Manila office

Lee, China Operations manager located in Jilin, China

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012.

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

Context: Cherry, meeting facilitator, confirms how she will process the request being put in by Lee after discussing first agenda item.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 64 | Cherry | 1 | Hahaha yeah anyway so that's how we'll do it Lee? Erm please |
| | | 2 | give me until Friday to just erm look up the job description that |
| | | 3 | you sent for Ben and Bonnie (.) And I will also discuss with |
| | | 4 | George he is here anyway in town (.) And so that he's aware if Jon |
| | | 5 | puts in the request |

Example 6.15

Meeting B1

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Four (two based in Melbourne, two based in Bangalore)

Participants: Samuel, team manager (Australian male, based in Melbourne)

Lincoln, meeting facilitator (Asian male, based in Melbourne)

Samesh (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Advik (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Planning, task-oriented (Australia team requests assistance on system development from India team and delivers standards as well as expectation to India team).

Context: Lincoln, meeting facilitator restates what actions would need to be taken by Advik close to the end of meeting.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 83 | Lincoln | 1 | Alright so uh:: the approaches that you would have (.) you will |
| | | 2 | reconsider what we've discussed (.) you'll draft an email out or |
| | | 3 | will you speak with other whatever and then this will be |
| | | 4 | presented in the next work force meeting as required |

Example 6.16

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (four based in Melbourne, two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;
 Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;
 Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;
 Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;
 Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

Context: Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, confirms actions she would take to Thomas and thanks him for the information he provides in the discussion.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 86 | Ann | 1 | OK well thanks very much for the meet up (.) We will talk to |
| | | 2 | ((Male name 5)) and ((Female name 2)) tomorrow and then mhm |
| | | 3 | I keep you in the loop Thomas (.) I didn't know that we have to |
| | | 4 | inform them one month prior to the contract end and that's good |
| | | 5 | information thank you |

All the summary statements found in the VTM data are provided by the meeting facilitators and they are usually located at the end of discussion items or close to the end of meetings. They function as summarising the discussion points being made by VTM participants and confirming actions to be taken.

This section (Section 6.1.2: Interpretability accommodation strategy) has shown that VTM participants employ various accommodating Interpretability strategies to aid comprehension and ensure information is delivered successfully and accurately. As business meetings are transactional and goal-oriented in nature, it is not surprising to see VTM participants make efforts to deliver their messages in order to be understood. While relational work is also important in meetings, comprehensibility is paramount in successful business meetings as claimed by Bell (1984), “in concentrating on approval seeking as a reason for style shift, accommodation has often overlooked a more transparent motivation: a speaker’s desire to be understood” (p. 199).

Table 6.3 below shows accommodating Interpretability strategies and respective communicative behaviours found in the VTM data. VTM participants are found to employ various accommodating Interpretability strategies which include: increase clarity of speech; select appropriate topics; check for understanding and provide summary statements to aid comprehension. Various factors have effects on the choice of strategies which include the nature of VTM, the perceived English proficiency of the interlocutors, the roles and relationship between VTM participants, as well as the complexity of the messages to be delivered.

| Interpretability strategy | Communicative behaviours | Examples |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Increase clarity of speech | Use of signposting | First and foremost; Then |
| | Use of repetition | Q: It will take some time? A: Yes it will take some time |
| | Rephrase | Do we have risk of losing Bonnie. Which is why a promotion has been requested? |
| | Use of frame markers | Make sure; Our expectation is |
| | Use of intertextual references | Refer to agenda, other written documents, presentation PowerPoints |
| | Provide explanations | We need to bring it to the next level, so more business focus on what we can add value instead of a process okay? |

| | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|---|
| | Provide examples | And one of the good examples is [...] [XXX] is a good example yeah? |
| Topic Selection | Select 'safe' topics | Weather; holiday; well-being |
| | Select familiar topics | Cebu by the way Sarah is an island away from Manila ...so it's like erm in Florida, Cebu is actually in LA |
| Check understanding | Use of check tokens | Okay? Yeah? Right? |
| | Use of check questions | Do you have any questions on this? |
| Summary statement | Provide summary statements | Alright, so the approaches you will reconsider what we've discussed and you'll draft an email out or will you speak with other and then this will be presented in the next work force meeting as required |

Table 6.3 Interpretability strategies and respective communicative behaviours in VTMs

6.1.3 Discourse Management

Discourse Management in the CAT framework is concerned with strategies that attend to other's conversational needs (Ayoko, Härtel & Callan, 2002; Coupland et al., 1988; Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016; Jones et al., 1999). Discourse Management has its focus on the conversational structure, how topics are chosen, introduced, developed, and whether conversational partners share talk time and turns in an equitable manner (Gallois & Giles 2015). Watson et al. (2015) share similar views by stating that Discourse Management concerns

effective management of the communicative process which deals with “conversational process rather than content” (p. 59) and explicates that interactants are regarded to be accommodating if they are able to engage each other in the conversation and recognise the needs of others.

Gallois, Ogay & Giles (2005) state that “discourse management results from a focus on B’s (interlocutor’s) conversational needs, and leads among other things to sharing of topic choice and development, as well as shared conversational register” (p. 140). This section will focus on Discourse Management strategies employed in VTM settings. In particular, how the overall structure of VTMs, turn-taking, turn allocation, as well as topic choice are associated with VTM participants’ engagements.

6.1.3.1 Structure of VTMs

Generally, VTMs fit into a three-stage meeting structure as previously proposed by scholars who have conducted research on the genre of business meetings (Bargiela-Chiappini & Harris, 1997; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003). The three stages include opening of meetings, discussion of agenda items and closing the meeting, and these stages are regarded as obligatory in business meetings. Handford (2010) proposes a broader meeting structure framework that contains six stages and encapsulates the intertextual and dynamic nature of business meetings. His proposed six structural stages are:

| | | |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Pre-meeting | Stage pre-2 (optional) | Meeting preparation |
| | Stage pre-1 (optional) | Pre-meeting |
| Meeting | Stage 1 (obligatory) | Opening of meeting |
| | Stage 2 (obligatory) | Discussion of agenda/topics |
| | Stage 3 (obligatory) | Closing of meeting |
| Post-meeting | Stage 4 (optional) | Post-meeting effects |

Table 6.4 Structural aspects of business meetings adapted from Handford (2010)

Although only Stage 1 to 3 are regarded as obligatory in business meetings, all six stages can be found (Stage pre-1, Stage 1-3) and reflected (Stage pre-2 and Stage 4) within all seven VTM transcripts.

Pre-meeting (Stage pre-2)

Most meeting preparation is dealt with in the pre-meeting stage. As reflected in the VTM data, participants make intertextual links to meeting documents, agenda as well as PowerPoint presentation slides to guide them through the meeting and to help them stay organised and coherent while presenting information. Although this stage does not occur within the actual meeting exchanges, this is an important stage for the meeting process.

Pre-meeting (Stage pre-1)

Stage pre-1 occurs before the actual meeting starts. In real life meeting contexts, meeting participants usually make use of this stage to do relationship building with other participants through small talk (Holmes, 2014). However, in VTM contexts, the pre-meeting stage covers a wider range of activities which function as relationship building as well as participants engagement strategies. Although this stage is optional, it can be found in all seven VTMs. The table below illustrates the activities in the pre-meeting stage (Stage pre-1) in VTMs:

| VTM | Greetings | Small talk | Introducing participants |
|------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| A1 | ✓ | ✓ | X |
| A2 | ✓ | X | X |
| B1 | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| B2 | ✓ | X | ✓ |
| B3 | X | X | X |
| B4 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| B5 | ✓ | ✓ | X |

Table 6.5 Activities in the VTM pre-meeting stage (Stage pre-1)

Greetings can be found in six out of seven VTMs. Unlike real life meetings in which participants can see who is present and can greet each other using non-verbal means such as smiling and nodding, participants in teleconferencing VTMs can only do so via explicit phatic communication. I would also argue that greetings in VTMs do not only serve the relationship building function, but also a way for participants to acknowledge each other's presence and this may explain why greetings are not found in meeting B3, which only involves two participants.

Small talk in the pre-meeting stage can only be found in three out of seven VTMs. The three VTMs (A2, B2 and B3) without small talk in the pre-meeting stage are regular internal manager-subordinate meetings, and this observation aligns with Handford's (2010) conclusion that the pre-meeting stage is often by-passed in regular internal manager-subordinate meetings. Although VTM B2 is interdepartmental, it is the first meeting of the whole virtual team to discuss a new project and the participants may not feel at ease about small talk as they may not know what can be regarded as "safe" and familiar topics for each other. So, it can be inferred that the degree of familiarity as well as the relationship of participants can affect the occurrence of small talk in the pre-meeting stage.

The number of participants also has a direct impact on whether participants are introduced. There is no need to introduce participants in VTMs A1 and B3 as these VTMs only consist of two participants. The reason why there is no member introduction in VTM A2 due to the fact that it is a regular weekly internal reporting meeting and the participants already know in advance who will be in presence. Although there are three participants in VTM B5, only two of them (Angela, Asian female meeting chair based in Singapore and Connie, Asian female based in Hong Kong) actively participate in the meeting. Angela and Connie together take up a total of 106 turns out of 112 turns, and the third participant Snowy (Asian female based in

Hong Kong) only takes up six turns throughout the whole meeting and remains silent most of the time during the meeting. Observations on the presence or absence of VTM participants introduction in VTM pre-meeting stage suggest that the number of participants as well as the regularity of meetings have determining effects on whether participants should be introduced in the pre-meeting stage of VTMs.

VTM structural stages can usually be categorised and classified within the genre of the business meeting. However, the transition of stages may not always be so clear-cut and distinctive, especially in the VTM context. The examples below exemplify how the unique characteristics of VTM can have an effect on the structure as well as stage transition in VTMs.

Meeting B4

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Nine

Noah, Australian male team manager based in Australia;

Seven Australian team members (Lucas, Charlotte, Olivia, Mia, Ava, Grace, Amelia) based in different offices in Australia

Anaisha, Indian female team member based in Bangalore

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing (backward-oriented), planning (forward-oriented)

Topic of meeting: Staff Training

Context: Pre-meeting stage in internal Training department meeting which consist of nine participants across three locations (Darwin, Melbourne and Bangalore).

| Turn | Moves | Utterance |
|------|-----------|---|
| 1-7 | Greetings | Turn 1: Charlotte: Hello (.) Hi Turn 2: Charlotte: Hello Turn 3: Olivia: Hi Ava Turn 4: Ava: Hello Turn 5: Mia: Yes Hmm Turn 6: Olivia: Hi (.) How are you? Turn 7: Charlotte: Good fine (.) How are you? |

| | | |
|-------|--|--|
| 8-20 | Small talk | |
| 21 | Manager tries to start the meeting | Turn 22: Noah: OK alright let's start it off when people join? Uh one thing I just want to mention [Hello who's that? |
| 22-25 | Greetings | Turn 22: Anaisha: [Hello I am here(.) Anaisha Turn 23: Noah: Hi Anaisha how are you? Turn 24: Anaisha: Good good [laughs] Turn 25: Charlotte: Hi Anaisha |
| 26 | Manager tries to start meeting | Turn 26: Noah: Uh I just want to [|
| 27-31 | Greetings | Turn 27: Anaisha: [Hi is that Charlotte? Turn 28: Charlotte: Yep yes Turn 29: Anaisha: How are you? Turn 30: Charlotte: Good Turn 31: Anaisha: That's good |
| 32 | Manager transits meeting from pre-meeting stage to opening meeting stage | now let's start the meeting (1.0) I think we can start with you Olivia and Mia (.) if you can give us some update on what's happening in your sites at the moment |

Table 6.6 Pre-meeting stage in VTM B4

As shown in the meeting excerpt above, VTM B4 starts with greetings and small talk in the pre-meeting stage. Noah then tries to transit pre-meeting stage to meeting opening in turn 21. However, he is interrupted while Anaisha from Bangalore dials in the meeting which activates greetings from Noah and Charlotte from turn 22 to turn 25 (second greeting stage). Noah then tries to open the meeting in turn 26 again after the second greeting stage, and he is once again interrupted by Anaisha who greets another VTM participant from turn 27 to turn 31. The manager finally succeeds in opening the meeting in turn 32 with the transition and opening phrase “now let’s start the meeting”. Participants in VTM may not join the meeting simultaneously and if the facilitator tries to open the meeting prematurely, it may obstruct a smooth transition from pre-meeting stage to opening stage.

Another example which can exemplify how the unique characteristics of VTM can have an effect on the structure as well as stage transition in VTMs can be found in VTM A2. VTM A2 is a regular internal meeting which involves nine participants and its goal is to report regular

progress from the Manila office to the US senior manager. Greetings can be found in the pre-meeting stage, but they are between the US senior manager Sarah and Manila team manager Ben. Instead of conducting a general greeting with all participants in the pre-meeting stage, Sarah opts for a more interpersonal approach and chooses to greet and thank each participant while he/she takes the turn to present progress. Example 6.17 below demonstrates how May, one of the recruitment team members located in Manila, reports her progress to Sarah, who is the senior recruitment manager located in the US.

Example 6.17

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Alice, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: May reports Manila recruitment progress to Sarah, who is the senior recruitment manager based in US

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 103 | May | 1 | Hi (.) good morning Sarah |
| 104 | Sarah | 2 | Hey May how are you? |
| 105 | May | 3 | Yes very well thank you (1.) For (XXX) this one still open (1.0) |
| | | 4 | Total of 3 applications received and then one for HR interview |
| | | 5 | (1.0) One for hiring manager (.) Last day of endorsement is today |
| | | 6 | (1.0) So the candidate will be interviewed by tomorrow night (.) |
| | | 7 | For (XXX) still open (.) applications received total of 12 (.) hiring |
| | | 8 | manager total of 3 (.) One for job offer and one accepted (1.0) So |
| | | 9 | er start date is on March 25 (.) Sarah just to give you an update |
| | | 10 | regarding () received from Aaron (.) all 4 had gone through (.) So |
| | | 11 | two are already identified and the other two will be identified by |
| | | 12 | higher manager by tonight |

| | | | |
|-----|-------|----------------------|---|
| 106 | Sarah | 13 | Okay (.) Do you know why they changed that by any chance? |
| 107 | May | 14 15 | Erm it still boils down to the idea that we want to bring in this Solit culture with every new account that we will have |
| 108 | Sarah | 16 | Okay (.) Okay |
| 109 | May | 17 18 | Um hm at the same time with the timeline (1.0) If we only have a limited time |
| 110 | Sarah | 19 20 | Right Okay (.) That makes me feel a little bit better [May laughs] about actually getting all of those right? |
| 111 | Ben | 21 | Yeah |
| 112 | Sarah | 22 | Ah ha |
| 113 | May | 23 24 25 26 | And then for C8274 it's still open (.) Total of applications received is 19 (.) Hiring manager is 2 (.) Last date of endorsement is erm March 14 today (1.0) So both candidates will be interviewed by tomorrow as well |
| 114 | Ben | 27 | Okay thanks May |
| 115 | May | 28 | Welcome |

The above excerpt demonstrates ‘mini’ meeting genre between respective VTM participants and the team managers. Each mini meeting genre contains greetings, opening, discussing and closing stages and it is repeated seven times in the discussion stage of VTM A2 while each participant takes his/her turn to present the progress to the team managers Sarah and Ben.

Stage 2 Discussion of agenda/topic

Stage 2 is where the actual transactional exchanges take place and the participants get their meeting goal(s) accomplished. The organisation and topics of the discussion stage usually adhere to the agenda and the involvement and contribution of meeting participants are contextually bound by the meeting purpose, the relationship of the speakers as well as meeting chair’s leadership style.

When looking at how the discussion phase unfolds in business meetings, a relevant area for investigation is the pattern of turns. According to Holmes and Stubbe (2003), discussion turn patterns can be classified as spiral or linear. A linear pattern of turns follows a more traditional and incremental structure that is often found in superior-subordinate meetings with reviewing

meeting purpose in which the turn-taking pattern usually follows the superiors' agenda. A spiral pattern of turns, on the other hand, is found to be more prevalent in peer meetings where the participants "engage in more extended exploratory talk" (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 70). Interlocutors engage in spiral pattern of turns may shift topics or return to an unfinished topic after a few turns, hence "spiral".

Turn pattern investigations within the discussion stage in VTM data reveal similar findings as discussed by Holmes and Stubbe (2003). Turn patterns in VTMs A1 (peer meeting between Manila and China offices, discussion of process), B1 (interdepartmental meeting between Australia and India offices, discussion of process) and B5 (peer meeting between Australia and Asia-Pacific office, discussion of process) appear to be spiral while turn patterns in VTM A2 (manager-subordinate meeting across US and Manila, reporting progress) tend to be linear and follow an incremental structure with each participant following the agenda sequence strictly to take the floor and report their progress. Interestingly, while VTM B4 is also a manager-subordinate meeting with its goal of subordinates reporting progress to the manager, there is greater flexibility for other meeting participants to involve themselves in others' progress reports by providing feedback and comments. I would argue that this may be due to the different leadership styles between the two managers in VTMs A2 and B4.

Holmes, Schnurr & Marra (2007) compare how different leadership styles in chairing meetings "constantly enact, reinforce and shape aspects of their workplace culture through their discursive performance" (p. 447). They further state that transactional and authoritative leadership style manifest institutional authority and encourage individual accountability while transformational and inclusive leadership style can enact teamwork and cooperation.

Example 6.18

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Alice, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Ben (Team manager in Manila office,) asks Tom (one of his co-located subordinates in Manila office) for clarifications while Tom presents his progress report.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|--------|---|
| 132 | Ben | 1 | Tom? |
| 133 | Tom | 2 | Yes sir (.) I'm sorry that's the same candidate |
| 134 | Ben | 3 | March 8 |
| 135 | Tom | 4 | March 8 yes sir |
| 136 | Ben | 5 | And the interview will be? |
| 137 | Tom | 6 | Will be tomorrow |
| 138 | Ben | 7 | For Japanese? |
| 139 | Tom | 8 9 | For Japanese it's still open (2.0) Applications received is 1 for hiring managers (1.0) Last day of endorsement is today March 14 |
| 140 | Ben | 10 | When is the interview? |
| 141 | Tom | 11 | Erm tomorrow (1.0) tomorrow afternoon yeah |
| 142 | Ben | 12 | No numbers? |
| 143 | Tom | 13 | No numbers yes sir |
| 144 | Ben | 14 | Alright thanks Tom |
| 145 | Tom | 15 | You're welcome thank you |

Exchanges between Ben and Tom are mainly transactional and not much work is done on the relational level. Ben's manager role and his authority are also enacted in his clear, short, hedge-free interrogatives (lines 5, 7, 10 and 12) which act as commanding information. The unequal social difference between Ben and Tom is also manifested by their use of address forms (Ben addressing Tom by his first name while Tom addressing Ben as "sir"). When Ben talks to his team in the Philippines, clarity and brevity are preferred and little attention is paid to the

interpersonal aspect in the interaction. Ben’s leadership style can be regarded as a transactional one as it focuses on goals and contractual obligation by following established routines and rules (Bass, 1998; Parry & Proctor-Thomson, 2002).

Analysis of VTM A2 suggests that Ben performs strict control of the discourse and a more authoritative and transactional leadership style (also see sections 6.1.4 and 6.2.2) whereas the manager in VTM B4 (as shown in Example 6.19 below) creates a more collaborative meeting atmosphere, allowing more room for humorous exchanges and discussions between VTM participants (also see sections 6.1.4 and 6.2.6).

Example 6.19

Meeting B4

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Nine

Noah, Australian male team manager based in Australia;

Seven Australian team members (Lucas, Charlotte, Olivia, Mia, Ava, Grace, Amelia) based in different offices in Australia

Anaisha, Indian female team member based in Bangalore

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing (backward-oriented), planning (forward-oriented)

Topic of meeting: Staff Training

Context: Noah introduces VTM participants in the pre-meeting stage while other team participants were chatting.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|-----------|------------------|--|
| 14 | Noah | 1 2 3 4 | Yeah alright okay we have myself (.) we have Lucas (.) we have Grace (.) mhm and we’re just gonna wait for a minute to see if anyone else dials in (.) so hopefully we’ll get something from WA or Bangalore dial in for conference as well (.) so please talk about yourselves for a moment |
| 15 | Charlotte | 5 | (3.0) We were until you rudely interrupted? [Laugh] |
| | | | [Team laugh] |
| 16 | Noah | 6 | I thought I did it in a very caring way Charlotte [Laugh] |
| | | | [Team laugh] |
| 17 | Charlotte | 7 | You keep telling yourself that Noah [Laugh] |

Charlotte makes a potentially face-threatening joke about Noah in the pre-meeting stage which results in laughter from the whole team. Charlotte's joke about Noah's interruption "We were until you rudely interrupted" in line 5 could be received by Noah as face-threatening and offensive but this is not the case. Noah replies to Charlotte in line 6 "I thought I did it in a very caring way Charlotte" and this results in more laughter from the team. It can be inferred that the jokes they share are positively perceived by all VTM participants. The occurrence of collaborative humour is co-constructed and supported by Noah, the team manager and Charlotte, one of the participants and is shared by the whole team. It can serve the purpose of constructing team cohesion and strengthening the rapport between VTM participants of VTM B4.

In fact, VTM B4 is full of jokes and humour initiated by various participants and the overall atmosphere of the meeting is friendly, collaborative and supportive. Controlling participants using authoritative discourse strategies by the manager does not seem to be apparent in this meeting. Examples 6.20 further illustrates the collaborative and supportive VTM atmosphere:

Example 6.20

Context: Grace reports her progress to the team

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|---|---|
| 59 | Noah | 1 2 | Cool:: OK I'll bring it back here (.) So Grace could you give us some update of what is happening to yourself? |
| 60 | Grace | 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 | Um I've just been updating on my materials for I'm being told that it'll start probably in March (.) and for the moment we've got material notes (.) some kind of PowerPoint (.) some kind of combining everything into one (1.0) So that I can be organized as I first run it (.) So I'm also going to start helping the // what do they call? [Noah: (XXX) quality] just sort of putting the edge for New Zealand mhm:: it had been of a // I guess disaster when they first put all the programme for New Zealand and I can't // I don't trust them at the moment (.) I'm gonna oversee what they put in there |
| 61 | Noah | 13 | That's a great opportunity (.) I mean it's gonna be hard work |
| 62 | Mia | 14 | That's really cool |
| 63 | Grace | 15 | Yep so we have to be in touch with them at least three times a week |

| | | | |
|----|-------|----------|---|
| 64 | Noah | 16 | Yep |
| 65 | Grace | 17 | Mhm::: just to manage them |
| 66 | Noah | 18 | And we'll be friends with ((Male name)) |
| 67 | Grace | 19 | That's brilliant |
| 68 | Lucas | 20 | That's great |
| 69 | Grace | 21 | Yeah that should be fun |
| 70 | Noah | 22 | It shall be and you'll be very occupied |
| 71 | Grace | 23 | Yes [Laugh] |
| 72 | Noah | 24 25 | But it works really well when we did it here (.) Making sure that issue got picked up and fixed and it's great experience |

Unlike Example 6.18 of VTM A2, in which progress reports only involve the manager (Ben) and the team member (Tom) who is currently reporting, together with Ben's use of authoritative discursive strategies (direct, short and hedge-free interrogatives) to enact his managerial power, Example 6.20 shows how linear progress reports can be done differently. Noah selects Grace to report her progress through low epistemic modality interrogative "So Grace could you give us some update of what is happening to yourself?" (lines 1-2) to tone down the force of his request. Other than Noah and Grace, there is also involvement of various VTM participants during Grace's report via self-selections (turn 62: Mia and turn 68: Lucas) which suggests VTM participants in VTM B4 are comfortable participating and making comments on other team member's work. The various comments made by Noah, Mia and Lucas are all positive and encouraging including positive acknowledgements and appreciation: Noah: "That's a great opportunity" (line 13) and "it's great experience" (line 25); Mia: "That's really cool" (line 14) and Lucas: "That's great" (line 20). Noah also expresses his empathy towards Grace in lines 13 and 22 by saying "it's gonna be hard work" and "you'll be very occupied". Grace's responses ("yep" in line 16; "Yeah" in line 21 and "Yes" in line 23 together with laughter) towards her co-workers' positive and empathic comments show high level of agreement. This excerpt shows how VTM participants co-construct collaborative and supportive discourse, which is supported by the chair, and how their discursive performance helps build team cohesion.

6.1.3.2 Turn-Taking in VTMs

As Discourse Management in the CAT framework is concerned with speaker engagement within an exchange. Turn-taking and turn allocation patterns are relevant when investigating Discourse Management strategies adopted by a speaker as they reveal 1) how the exchange unfolds locally, turn-by-turn and 2) the degree of participation and engagement of speakers in a particular exchange. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) characterise the turn-taking system of informal conversation as local management of turns by the participants on a turn-by-turn basis, and they propose fourteen “grossly apparent facts” (p. 700) in ‘any conversation’ (ibid.) and their applicability to VTM contexts will be discussed:

| | Organization of turn-taking system (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974, p. 700-701) | Applicability to VTMs |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Speaker-change recurs, or at least occurs | ✓ |
| 2 | Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time | ✓ |
| 3 | Occurrences of more than one speaker at a time are common but brief | ✓ |
| 4 | Transitions with no gap and no overlap are common. Together with transitions characterized by slight gap or slight overlap, they make up the vast majority of transitions | ✓ |
| 5 | Turn order is not fixed, but varies | Depends on the purpose of the meeting and the degree of control from meeting facilitators/leaders |
| 6 | Turn size is not fixed, but varies | Depends on the purpose of the meeting and the degree of control from meeting facilitators/leaders |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 7 | Length of conversation is not specified in advance | Depends on the purpose of the meeting and the degree of control from meeting facilitators/leaders |
| 8 | What parties say is not specified in advance | Depends on the purpose of the meeting and the degree of control from meeting facilitators/leaders |
| 9 | Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance | Depends on the purpose of the meeting and the degree of control from meeting facilitators/leaders |
| 10 | Number of parties can vary | ✓ |
| 11 | Talk can be continuous or discontinuous | ✓ |
| 12 | Talk-allocation techniques are obviously used (current speaker selects the next speaker or speaker self-selects) | ✓ |
| 13 | Various 'turn-constructural units' are employed (one word long to sentential length) | ✓ |
| 14 | Repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations | ✓ |

Table 6.7 Organisation of turn-taking system in conversation (Sack et al., 1974) and its applicability to VTMs

Although Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) claim that these fourteen facts about turn-taking can be observed in “any conversation”, they also acknowledge that this claim has raised questions from different readers and add that “we do find that aspects of turn-taking

organisation may vary in terms of other aspects of the sequential organisation of conversation [...] there are various turn-taking systems for various speech-exchange systems” (p. 700). My study of VTM exchanges suggests that while most of these facts about turn-taking in conversation can also be applied to VTM settings, item 5: Turn order is not fixed, but varies; item 6: Turn size is not fixed, but varies; item 7: Length of conversation is not specified in advance; item 8: What parties say is not specified in advance; and item 9: Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance would depend on the purpose of the meeting as well as the degree of control from meeting facilitators/leaders.

Turn order is not fixed, but varies: This proposition by Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) is based on the assumption that turn order is locally controlled. However, in the context of the business meeting, turn order can be predetermined in the meeting preparation stage via agenda setting. VTM transcript data show that turn orders are usually fixed and they follow the agenda in VTMs with reviewing purpose (i.e., to review, report or update progress), and turns are allocated by meeting facilitators. However, in VTMs which aim at discussing issues and solving problems, the turn order is not fixed and it allows greater flexibility for participants to self-select or select others for next turn.

Turn size is not fixed, but varies: Turn size varies from just one word to turns that are over five minutes long in the VTM data. Small turn size can be found when interlocutors are agreeing or acknowledging each other (such as “yeah”, “okay”) while long turn sizes can be found when VTM participants report progress to managers in reviewing meetings, and managers delivering instructions and/or expectations to subordinates in information/instruction-giving meetings. Thus, the type of meeting has a determining factor on the amount of information to be given in meetings which again affects the turn size.

Length of conversation is not specified in advance: Length of VTMs range from 17 minutes to 53 minutes. In most meetings, there is usually an estimation of the length of meetings so that participants can reserve time slots in their work schedule for the meeting. Although there is no direct reference in the VTM transcripts as to how long the VTMs should be, there are utterances made by meeting facilitators which express concern about time:

Example 6.21

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (Four based in Melbourne, Two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;

Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

Context: Ann, team manager and meeting facilitator, transits discussion topic with reference to the limitation of time

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|--|
| 88 | Ann | (3.0) OK mhm:: I'm just concerned about time so let's move on to the next item we have in the agenda |

Example 6.22

Meeting B5

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Three

Angela, Asian female meeting chair based in Singapore

Connie, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Snowy, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Relationship of participants: Peer

Purpose of Meeting: Giving/receiving information, task/problem-oriented (filling out form)

Topic of meeting: Instructional; Procedural

Context: Angela, meeting facilitator asks Connie and Snowy if it is fine to continue the meeting as it approaches the scheduled end time

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|--|
| 88 | Angela | Okay that's fine (1.0) We're getting close to ten-thirty (.) I'm okay to stay on (.) But do either of you need to leave at five to ten-thirty? |

The excerpts above show that the team managers as well as meeting facilitators (Ann in VTM B2 and Angela in VTM B5) are aware of the limitation of time thus it can be inferred that the length of VTMs are predetermined.

What parties say is not specified in advance: One of the aspects where business meetings differ from casual conversation is that business meetings are highly goal-oriented and transactionally focused. Meeting participants are expected to deliver and contribute in business meetings, and they should have ideas of what to share. The topics are usually predetermined in the meeting preparation stage, and participants should also prepare themselves for the meeting at the same stage. So it can be inferred that what participants say is specified in advance. However, there can also be some flexibility for participants to discuss issues that are not predetermined and stated in the agenda.

Relative distribution of turns is not specified in advance: Although there is no exact turn distribution specified in advance, the distribution of turns can be anticipated by the number of participants in VTMs as well as the topics designed to be discussed in the meetings. In VTMs which only consist of two participants, the distribution of turns is observed to be even. Whereas in VTMs which consist of more than two participants, the distribution of turns would depend

on who has more expertise and information to share in the meeting, which again is related to the topics. In such cases, certain participants are expected to talk more than others. It is also found that in meetings that consist of multiple participants, the facilitators take the largest percentage of turns. So the difference in roles as well as power asymmetry can also influence turn distributions in VTMs. The following section will discuss turn distribution and turn allocation with more details from the seven VTMs.

6.1.3.3 Turn Allocations in VTMs

Turn allocation can reflect participants' involvement in VTMs. In order to investigate turn distribution in VTMs, the turns have been classified and calculated and results will be presented in this section.

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two

Cherry, Philippines HR manager

Lee, China Operations manager

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

| Speakers | No. of turns (100) | Total Duration | % of duration |
|----------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Cherry | 51 (51%) | 5min 4sec | 31.1 |
| Lee | 49 (49%) | 8min 6sec | 49.22 |

Table 6.8 Turn and speech time allocation of VTM A1

Meeting B3

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Two

Oliver, Australian male Manager

Tiffany, Hong Kong Female subordinate

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinate

Purpose of meetings: Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information

Topic of meeting: Procedures

| Speakers | No. of turns (66) | Total Duration | % of duration |
|----------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Oliver | 33 (50%) | 25 min 5sec | 84.63 |
| Tiffany | 33 (50%) | 4 min | 13.32 |

Table 6.9 Turn and speech time allocation of VTM B3

VTM A1 and VTM B3 both consist of only two participants. As shown in Tables 6.8 and 6.9 above, turn allocations between VTM participants are even and the analysis of the turn distributions in these two VTMs shows that the speakers take turns to speak in adjacency pairs. Although turn distributions between the speakers are even in both meetings, a look at the percentage of the speakers' speech time provides insights into understanding how the purposes of meetings can affect speech time allocation and each participant's involvement.

Cherry's goal in VTM A1 is to elicit information from Lee, which explains why Lee takes longer turns and more speech time. Whereas in VTM B3, the goal of the meeting is for Oliver to give clear instructions to Tiffany, his subordinate based in Hong Kong, which explains why he takes up almost 85% speech time in that particular meeting. If we just look at speech time allocation of VTM B3, Oliver can be regarded as non-accommodative because he does not allow equal opportunity for Tiffany to be involved in the meeting since attuning Discourse Management strategies in the CAT framework advocate for inclusion and speakers' engagement, i.e., whether conversational partners share talk time and turns in an equitable manner (Gallois & Giles, 2015). However, it is the specific goal of the meeting that results in this distribution pattern. Instead of achieving equal speech time between himself and Tiffany as an accommodating Discourse Management strategy, Oliver opts for attending to Tiffany's

conversational needs mainly through accommodating Interpretability strategies (see Example 6.11, p.128) and Emotional Expressions strategies (Example 6.44, p.203).

Meetings do not always consist of only two members. Most of the meetings in fact involve multiple participants, which result in more complex turn allocations and distribution patterns. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974) suggest two groups of turn allocation techniques, namely 1) current speaker selects next speaker and 2) self-select. In order to gain better insights on turn allocation in VTMs, I have further classified the turn allocation components into 1) a turn is selected by the chair of meeting; 2) a turn is selected by the speaker himself/herself; 3) a turn is selected by other VTM participants other than the chair and 4) a turn that continues the previous turn and transits into an adjacency pair. The classification of these components is inductively derived from my observation and analysis of VTM data. The first three components are self-explanatory while the fourth component may require some explanations. During close investigation of turn allocation pattern in VTMs, I have found that sometimes when speaker A is taking his/her turn to share information with the whole team, speaker B joins in and asks for more information and clarification. In this case then, speaker A would reply to speaker B specifically which results in adjacency pairs (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973) between speaker A and speaker B. Since speaker A is already talking, and thus his/her turn should not be classified as self-selected nor other-selected, it is more appropriate to classify it as a continuation of his/her turn which falls into adjacency pairs with a particular participant, which, in this case, is speaker B. Example 6.23 illustrates how turn allocations are classified and how adjacency pairs are initiated:

Example 6.23

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Amy, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Chap present his recruitment progress report to the team

| Speaker | Line | | Turn Allocation Classification |
|---------|----------------------|---|--------------------------------|
| Chap | 1 | Hey Sarah good morning | Self-select |
| Sarah | 2 | Hey Chap (.) how are you? | Other-select (by Chap) |
| Chap | 3 | I'm good | Adjacency Pair (with Sarah) |
| Sarah | 4 | Good | Adjacency Pair (with Chap) |
| Chap | 5 6 7 | So for IT specialist erm it's still open (1.0) And for applications received erm we have additional erm:: 23 (1.0) Erm:: we have er [| Self-select |
| Ben | 8 | [how many for assessment? | Self-select |
| Chap | 9 10 | Total of 7 sir (1.0) We have no additional for hiring manager and then we have one accepted the job offer | Adjacency Pair (with Ben) |
| Ben | 11 | Is this endorsed Chap? | Adjacency Pair (with Chap) |
| Chap | 12 13 14 15 | Er none (.) none yet sir (1.0) That is the same (.) For the start date she will start on Monday March 18 (.) Erm external (.) Her name is [Female name] (1.0) And then for the other IT specialist we are still searching | Adjacency Pair (with Ben) |
| Ben | 16 | Okay (.) so we're now down to open FDE | Adjacency Pair (with Chap) |
| Chap | 17 | Yes | Adjacency Pair (with Ben) |
| Sarah | 18 | Yes | Self-select |
| Ben | 19 | Thank you Chap | Self-select |
| Chap | 20 | Welcome Sir | Adjacency Pair (with Ben) |

Table 6.10 below shows the turn allocation of respective speakers under the classification of chair-selected, self-selected, other-selected as well as adjacency pairs. The names before the turn numbers under adjacency pairs indicate which speaker those turns are associated with.

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Amy, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

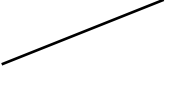
| Speakers | No. of turns (250) | | | |
|----------------------|--|---------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| Ben (Facilitator) | 99 (39.6%) | | | |
| | Chair selected | Self-selected | Other- selected | Adjacency pair |
| |  | 35 | 1 | 63: Sarah (36); Others (27) |
| Sarah | 75 (30%) | | | |
| | 7 | 16 | 5 | 47: Ben (36); Others (11) |
| AA | 5 (2%) | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 0 | Ben (2) |
| Andrew | 26 (10.4%) | | | |
| | 3 | 7 | 1 | Ben (13); Sarah (2) |
| Tom | 16 (6.4%) | | | |
| | 1 | 3 | 0 | Ben (7); Sarah (5) |
| Chap | 7 (2.8%) | | | |
| | 0 | 2 | 0 | Ben (4); Sarah (1) |
| May | 8 (3.2%) | | | |
| | 0 | 3 | 0 | Ben (2); Sarah (3) |
| Alice | 7 (2.8%) | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 0 | Ben (5); Sarah (1) |
| Kimmy | 8 (3.2%) | | | |
| | 1 | 1 | 0 | Ben (4); Sarah (2) |

Table 6.10 Turn allocation in VTM A2

This table shows that the two most senior members in the team, Ben and Sarah, take the most turns overall, and they are mainly self-selected and part of adjacency pairs. A look at their adjacency pair numbers reveals that they mainly discuss between themselves. For the rest of the VTM members, it can be seen that they are rarely selected by other VTM participants apart from the chair or they self-select. Their adjacency pair numbers also suggest that when they engage in conversation in the meeting, they are associated with either Ben or Sarah and none between the Filipino subordinates. Since it is a progress report meeting, it is reasonable to find that there is not much interaction and discussion between the Filipino subordinates themselves and at times, Ben and Sarah ask questions when a specific team member is presenting his/her progress report, thus contributing to the adjacency patterns specifically associated with Ben and Sarah.

Meeting B1

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Four (Two based in Melbourne, Two based in Bangalore)

Participants: Samuel, team manager (Australian male, based in Melbourne)

Lincoln, meeting facilitator (Asian male, based in Melbourne)

Samesh (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Advik (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Planning, task-oriented (Australia team requests assistance on system development from India team and delivers standards as well as expectation to India team)

| Speakers | No. of turns (98) | | | |
|----------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Lincoln | 34 (34.7%) | | | |
| | Chair selected | Self-selected | Other-selected | Adjacency pair |
| | | 23 | 3 | 2 |
| Samuel | 17 (17.3%) | | | |
| | 6 | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| Samesh | 19 (19.4%) | | | |
| | 6 | 10 | 0 | 2 |

| | | | | |
|-------|------------|----|---|---|
| Advik | 28 (28.6%) | | | |
| | 3 | 17 | 0 | 2 |

Table 6.11 Turn allocation in VTM B1

Samuel is the most senior participant in VTM B1 in terms of managerial authority, but he takes the fewest turns as compared to other participants. Lincoln, meeting facilitator, takes up most of the turns in this meeting. Turn distributions in this meeting suggest that all speakers have a fair share of turns, may they be selected by the chair or self-selected. Since this meeting is about the India office's collaboration of a system for the Australia office, Samesh and Advik take a large number of turns asking for standards and clarifications from their Australian colleagues, Lincoln and Samuel.

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (Four based in Melbourne, Two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;

Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

| Speakers | No. of turns (88) | | | |
|----------|-------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Ann | 31 (35.2%) | | | |
| | Chair selected | Self-selected | Other-selected | Adjacency pair |
| | | 26 | 2 | 3: Thomas (3) |
| Evak | 7 (8%) | | | |
| | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | | |
|--------|------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Henry | 17 (19.3%) | | | |
| | 4 | 6 | 0 | 7: Jack (1); Thomas (6) |
| Jack | 11 (12.5%) | | | |
| | 1 | 6 | 0 | 3: Ann (1); Evak (1); Aakesh (1) |
| Thomas | 18 (20.5%) | | | |
| | 6 | 6 | 0 | 5: Ann (3); Henry (2) |
| Aakesh | 4 (4.5%) | | | |
| | 0 | 3 | 1 | 0 |

Table 6.12 Turn allocation in VTM B2

Ann, the team manager as well as meeting facilitator in VTM B2, again takes up most of the turns (35.2%). As this is a task/problem solving meeting, there is a considerable number of exchanges between the team members, as illustrated in the adjacency pair column. Team members also take initiatives to self-select during the discussion. Aakesh is new to the team and this is his first VTM meeting with the rest of the team which explains why he has relatively low engagement (as seen in chair selected turns as well as adjacency pair turns) in this meeting.

Meeting B4

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Nine

Noah, Australian male team manager based in Australia;

Seven Australian team members (Lucas, Charlotte, Olivia, Mia, Ava, Grace, Amelia) based in different offices in Australia

Anaisha, Indian female team member based in Bangalore

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing (backward-oriented), planning (forward-oriented)

Topic of meeting: Staff Training

| Speakers | No. of turns (106) | | | |
|----------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Noah | 41 (38.7%) | | | |
| | Chair selected | Self-selected | Other-selected | Adjacency pair |


| | | | | |
|-----------|---|----|---|--|
| |  | 20 | 3 | 16: Charlotte (1); Mia (3); Anaisha (7); Ava (1); Grace (4) |
| Lucas | 12 (11.3%) | | | |
| | 1 | 8 | 1 | 4: Mia (3); Noah (1) |
| Charlotte | 15 (14.2%) | | | |
| | 0 | 8 | 1 | 6: Noah (2); Olivia (3); Anaisha (1) |
| Olivia | 6 (5.7%) | | | |
| | 1 | 3 | 0 | 2: Charlotte (2) |
| Mia | 8 (7.5%) | | | |
| | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Anaisha | 13 (12.3%) | | | |
| | 2 | 3 | 0 | 7: Noah (5); Charlotte (2) |
| Ava | 4 (3.8%) | | | |
| | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2: Noah (2) |
| Grace | 6 (5.7%) | | | |
| | 1 | 0 | 0 | 5: Noah (4); Lucas (1) |
| Amelia | 1 (0.9%) | | | |
| | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 6.13 Turn allocation in VTM B4

Table 6.13 above shows a certain degree of interaction among members as illustrated in the adjacency pair column. A closer look at the VTM transcript shows that the exchanges among team members are mainly found in the greeting section as well as in praising each other's performance after their respective progress reports. Amelia only takes one turn to report her progress as she has to leave the meeting early after her progress report, which explains her very low turn allocation.

Although the purpose of this meeting is similar to the one of VTM A2 (Table 6.10), both are about progress reports but more interactions among team members can be found in VTM B4. This may be due to the fact that although seven out of total eight participants are from Australia offices, they are dispersed across different offices in Australia so they greet each other during

the meeting. On the other hand, eight out of nine VTM participants in VTM A2 are co-located within the same Manila office, which implies that they would have greeted each other earlier in the day and they would also have established relationship in their physical workplace. Therefore, there is no need for them to do relational work during the VTM.

Meeting B5

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Three

Angela, Asian female meeting chair based in Singapore

Connie, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Snowy, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Relationship of participants: Peer

Purpose of Meeting: Giving/receiving information, task/problem-oriented (filling out form)

Topic of meeting: Instructional; Procedural

| Speakers | No. of turns (112) | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Angela (Facilitator) | 54 (48.2%) | | | |
| | Chair selected | Self-selected | Other-selected | Adjacency pair |
| | | 3 | 3 | 47: Connie (45); Snowy (2) |
| Connie | 52 (46.4%) | | | |
| | 0 | 6 | 0 | 46: Angela (46) |
| Snowy | 6 (5.4%) | | | |
| | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2: Angela (2) |

Table 6.14 Turn allocation in VTM B5

The goal of this meeting is problem solving but as illustrated in Table 6.14, Angela and Connie take up 94% of the total turns and they mainly discuss between themselves during the VTM. The very low engagement of Snowy leads to the question as to whether there is a real need for her to be present in this particular meeting, and whether she feels excluded by the other meeting participants in this meeting.

6.1.3.4 Topic Choice in VTMs

As stated previously, topic choice in VTMs is mainly predetermined at the meeting preparation stage and controlled by the chair during the meeting. There is usually not much flexibility for participants to choose topics for discussion during the meeting discussion stage based on their personal wishes. On occasions in which meeting participants raise topics for discussion, they are related to issues being discussed at that point. One exception is found in VTM B3 in the data in which the Hong Kong subordinate initiates small talk: off-task talk about work (Koester, 2010) focusing on the resignation of her colleague which lasts for 22 turns between her and Oliver, her Australian manager. The manager then enacts his role as meeting chair by stating that “we probably deviate a bit” in turn 57 and steers the discussion back to the agenda:

Example 6.24

Meeting B3

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Two

Oliver, Australian male Manager

Tiffany, Hong Kong Female subordinate

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinate

Purpose of meetings: Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information

Topic of meeting: Procedures

Context: Tiffany initiates small talk during the meeting and Oliver steers the discussion back to the agenda

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|---------|--|
| 36 | Tiffany | 1 | Just one thing that (.) Mhm do you know ((Male name 1)) has left |
| 37 | Oliver | 2 | Yeah so ((Male name 1)) |
| 38 | Tiffany | 3 4 | [ah yeah yesterday is the last day (.) very rush |
| 39 | Oliver | 5 6 | Very rushed? huh ? So unusual from (XXX) of this perspective (.) If they decide to go it will be immediate right? |
| 40 | Tiffany | 7 | Yeah |
| 41 | Oliver | 8 | He's also // so he's hanging around quite a lot |
| 42 | Tiffany | 9 10 | The reason is a little bit strange (.) The reason [is a little bit um::: strange [Laugh] |
| 43 | Oliver | 11 | [Right who? |

| | | | |
|----|---------|--|--|
| 44 | Tiffany | 12 13 | But but but did ((Male name 2)) told [sic] you about their rumours of the reason that he leave? |
| 45 | Oliver | 14 15 16 17 | (1.0) No::: I asked ((Male name 1)) (.) he said he'd come back and say look the official [Laugh] the official reason is he's going back to Australia but of course the unofficial one is (.) you know looking at [|
| 46 | Tiffany | 18 | [Yeah the performance |
| 47 | Oliver | 19 | The P&L and then uh::: it is performance right? |
| 48 | Tiffany | 20 | Ah yeah (.) yeah right [Laugh] |
| 49 | Oliver | 21 22 23 24 | Yeah alright (.) So it's the main reason but the official reason is of course we don't say that (.) So we will all know this is why (.) You know it is operated as we are the bank if you don't perform then you go |
| 50 | Tiffany | 25 | Yeah yeah right |
| 51 | Oliver | 26 | That's just a routine sort of uh::: a routine sort of uh [|
| 52 | Tiffany | 27 28 29 30 31 32 | [Yeah I think it's very irresponsible (.) Yeah the result at this moment not good then I change my job (.) But they are front office [Oliver: yeah] I think yeah [Laugh] it's front office (.) He try to make the money ah:::so far it's not good then I leave it (.) But how about the portfolio (.) He doesn't manage his portfolio it's not fair |
| 53 | Oliver | 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 | (1.0) Yeah so I guess you know they're pretty much tied to the year end result (.) If he already started off the first one having so much loss (.) It's gonna be difficult for him to crawl back those losses and met the P&L by the end of the year (.) If he can go and get another job and start brand new then you know he doesn't need to work that extra hard to crawl back those four months [Tiffany: yeah] of losses (.) So from his perspective (.) look you know if I stay here what's come to worst (.) I'll get // we'll just break even for that year which means he won't gonna get paid right? [Tiffany: yeah] but if he moves to another bank he starts up his new set of portfolio (.) He changes his strategy and if that strategy gives him a positive P&L(.) he'll get a kind of that right but nobody's gonna talk about his losses in his previous bank [|
| 54 | Tiffany | 46 47 | [Yeah right no protection from the previous bank |
| 55 | Oliver | 48 49 50 | Yeah so I guess you know that // that's the way it is in the market (.) That's how it is playing right? [Tiffany: Okay] So we'll try to get someone in the door to uh::: to replace him right? |
| 56 | Tiffany | 51 52 | Yeah right he's [Laugh] very busy now (.) He has to take care of his portfolio [Laugh] Very busy |
| 57 | Oliver | 53 54 55 | [Laugh] Yup that's right (.) Now okay we're probably deviating a bit (.) Just to quickly let you know those onshore advisory board now went back to the desk yesterday [remaining turn omitted] |

The stage that allows greater flexibility and freedom for participants to choose topics for discussion mainly lies in the pre-meeting stage via small talk. Studies on small talk in business

meetings suggest common topics such as “work talk” or job related talk, “meeting preparatory talk” or meeting-related talk and “shop talk” or work related gossip (Mirivel & Tracy, 2005, p. 1), while Holmes & Stubbe (2003) find that topics about the weather, recent shared activities and ritual enquiries after well-being are typical small talk topics in workplace settings which serve a face-attending function. Interview data with employees from BrazIT reveals their perceptions of small talk in workplace contexts:

You just want to have like an interaction and connection for the conversation to be for if ever there's going to be a meeting or something that you need to talk about after that so it will be good to have some connection with them (Group discussion with Operation Agents- Manila office BrazIT)

I think those type of discussion usually happens while we're waiting for people to join or when we're closing the meeting really trying to be human within the meetings (Group discussion with Operation Agents- Manila office BrazIT)

The above excerpts show that VTM participants regard small talk as relevant in VTMs as it helps them establish interaction and connection with other team members as well as adding some “human touch” within meetings which are usually task-related and transactionally focused.

In order to be accommodative in terms of topic choice in exchanges, speakers should choose ‘safe’ and familiar topics for discussion so interlocutors can be included and would not be offended by insensitive choice of topics. Interview data with VTM participants show that certain degrees of awareness and sensitivity are required by VTM participants:

Regardless if I'm attending a face-to-face meeting in Manila versus, you know, attending a virtual meeting both requires a certain amount of sensitivity. It's just that I think when I'm attending a virtual meeting the sensitivity is higher yeah because I might

[...] you know I just don't want to offend someone (Fred, Filipino Senior Recruiter, Manila office BrazIT)

Um, first, I know that not everyone is aware of everyone else's culture. So there's this level of sensitivity. Like, for example, “okay, I'm sorry, but can I ask, is this what happens to your country?” Or “can I ask if you guys celebrate this holiday?” There's that instance that we kind of asked each other. But no, I have not felt that someone may have said something that could be politically wrong. Or someone may have said something that can be insensitive. I haven't experienced that. Yeah (Mabel, Filipina Marketing/Digital Marketing Officer – Manila office BrazIT)

Fred's comments shows that although sensitivity is also required in face-to-face meetings, his level of sensitivity is higher in VTMs as he believes there is a higher risk of “offending someone” in VTMs. Mabel's comments reveal that awareness of other team members' cultures is important and a degree of cultural sensitivity is needed. VTM members should not choose topics which can be regarded as “politically wrong” nor “insensitive” by other VTM participants who are from other cultural backgrounds.

Bronfenbrener, Harding and Gallway (1958) are some of the earliest scholars who studied the concept of intercultural sensitivity. They proposed that sensitivity can be broadly categorised as sensitivity to the generalised other and sensitivity to individuals. Sensitivity to the generalised other concerns with the “kind of sensitivity to the social norms of one's own group” (McClelland, 1958, p. 241). It is generally agreed that intercultural sensitivity consists of three major components, namely affective (i.e. the positive attribution and emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences between self and others), cognitive (i.e. the understanding of different ways one can behave and the open-mindedness concerning these differences) and behavioural (i.e. the degree of behavioural flexibility one demonstrates in a

new culture or in intercultural encounters) (Bennett, 1984; Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Martin & Hammer, 1989; Ruben & Kealey, 1979).

However, due to the geographically dispersed and temporary natures of virtual work teams, cultural sensitivity, and in particular the cognitive aspect, may not be easily achieved. Team dispersion concerns with the degree to which a team is distributed across different locations and their communication relies heavily on technological means instead of face-to-face. In addition, most virtual work teams are of temporary nature and are put together for as long as the projects require. Team tenure, or the amount of time a team has spent together, has been a subject of study for group development (Pfeffer, 1983; Weick, 1969) and usually “the longer a team is together, the smoother and more automatic its process becomes [...] this is helpful to groups, for example, for reducing conflict” (Stahl et al., 2010, p. 696). The lack of opportunities and time for socialisation and familiarisation between team members can hinder their understanding of different ways one can behave and thus, the cognitive element of intercultural sensitivity is more difficult for VTM participants to acquire. This can explain why both Fred and Mabel commented that VTMs require higher level of cultural awareness and sensitivity as compared to face-to-face meetings.

Although most interviewees have stressed the issue of sensitivity in VTMs, there are times when other VTM participants choose topics which are not familiar to the Manila team at BrazIT. The operation agents have shared with me two episodes of such situations, their strategy to resolve as well as the motives for their strategies:

Sometimes they ((American counterparts)) will talk about the US holiday so of course they talk about their plan. How they're going to celebrate it and sometimes the conversation will just revolve around that topic. I don't have anything to share because I don't have that in here. How I handle it is that I just ask a question: “so how do you

normally do this? Is that something that, would US or an American would celebrate that holiday?” Just to make sure that, so that they won't feel awkward as well. And then hey, there's another person on the meeting that's not aware of this holiday. So okay, I need to be more curious (Group discussion with Operation Agents- Manila office BrazIT)

For example for me is, when I talk to someone from China. They are big with World Cup. I don't know why they are big with World Cup there but I don't watch. So you tend to ask questions, “okay what team is good?” that kind of things. So not really just to stay relevant, but you just want to have like an interaction and connection for the conversation to be, for if ever there's going to be a meeting or something that you need to talk about after that so it will be good to have some connection with them (Group discussion with Operation Agents- Manila office BrazIT)

The above episodes show that even when the topics are ‘safe’, such as US holidays or the World Cup, they may not be familiar to team members with other cultural backgrounds. The Operation Agents’ strategies to tackle this issue are to be curious and to ask questions about the topics for various reasons: 1) they want to stay “relevant” within the meeting; 2) they want to establish interaction and connection with other VTM members; 3) they want to remind other VTM members that someone in the team is not familiar with the topics and 4) they do not want the topic initiator to feel “awkward” for leaving others out of the discussion. By engaging themselves in the discussion, they thus take a pro-active role to include themselves and others in the exchange.

The strategies adopted by the Filipino Operations Agents at BrazIT demonstrate that they are aware of the importance of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is defined by Johnson, Lenartowicz & Apud (2006) as “an individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad” (p. 530). Barret (2011, p. 3)

synthesises and summarises the components of intercultural competence by drawing on a range of studies in the area:

- 1) Attitudes: Respect for other cultures; curiosity about other cultures; willingness to learn about other cultures; openness to people from other cultures; willingness to suspend judgement; willingness to tolerate ambiguity; and valuing cultural diversity
- 2) Skills: Skills of listening to people from other cultures; skills of interacting with people from other cultures; skills of adapting to other cultural environments; linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills; skills in mediating intercultural exchanges; skills in discovering information about other cultures; skills of interpreting cultures and relating cultures to one another; empathy; multiperspectivity; cognitive flexibility; and skills in critically evaluating cultural perspectives, practices and products
- 3) Knowledge: Cultural self-awareness; communicative awareness; culture-specific knowledge, especially knowledge of the perspectives, practices and products of particular cultural groups; and general cultural knowledge
- 4) Behaviours: Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately during intercultural encounters; flexibility in cultural behaviour; flexibility in communicative behaviour; and having an action orientation, that is, a disposition for action in society in order to enhance the common good, especially through the reduction of prejudice, discrimination and conflict

Even though the Operations Agents may not have sufficient knowledge about the cultural backgrounds of their VTM counterparts, they maintain positive attitudes and curiosity as well as willingness to learn about other cultures. They are also willing to listen without judgements and to actively ask questions and participate in intercultural exchanges which help them acquire intercultural competence in intercultural communication.

This section has illustrated Discourse Management strategies used in VTMs as well as suggested areas for research when investigating Discourse Management strategies employed by VTM participants. The examples shown in this section have illustrated how the overall structure of VTMs, turn-taking, turn allocation, as well as topic choice are associated with Discourse Management strategies in virtual meeting contexts. It is also observed that the purpose of meetings, the role and power of the chair as well as the relationship between VTM participants have direct impact on Discourse Management strategies.

Attuning Discourse Management strategies in the CAT framework advocates for inclusion, speakers' engagement and attendance to interlocutors' conversational needs. However, this view may not be applicable in business meeting settings in which speaker engagement is heavily dependent on the goal of meeting. I would argue that VTM participants are practicing Discourse Management in a complementary fashion instead of converging to each other in VTM settings. Street (1991) describes complementarity as "interactants mutually attempt to maintain their social differences" (p. 135) and it is usually present in situations where there is role, power or status differences between interactants. Complementarity is different from divergence because interactants mutually attempt to maintain their social differences via dissimilar discursive practices, which discursively reinforce their differences. A business meeting is a site in which there are inherent power differences between manager and subordinates, between meeting chair and meeting participants. Meeting participants behave in a complementary manner that can reflect the social differences among them as well as reinforcing them. This will be discussed in detail in Section 6.1.4 which is concerned with Interpersonal Control strategies.

6.1.4 Interpersonal Control

Interpersonal Control in the CAT framework is concerned with role relationship between interlocutors (Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016). Specifically, whether interactants position themselves or their interactants in particular role or power position (Jones et al., 1999). Interactants would be regarded as non-accommodative if they attempt to constrain and control others within their roles (Watson et al., 2015). Gallois & Giles (2015) state that interpersonal control is likely to be apparent in interactions with power difference between interactants. As meetings “function as one of the most important and visible sites of organisational power, and of the reification of organisational hierarchy” (Mumby, 1988, p. 68), they would fit into this context as power asymmetry between participants is inherent. This section will discuss how interpersonal control is realised or mitigated in VTMs.

The most apparent social and power position difference in business meetings is role. As stated by Svennevig (2012), “meetings are prime sites where organizational roles and relations are manifested” (p. 3) and those with power can explicitly or implicitly remind their status or roles in the relationship during exchanges (Willemyns, Gallois & Callan, 2003) which would confine the roles of their interlocutors and leave little room for them to leave or reject (Gallois & Giles, 2015). I will exemplify how organisational roles are manifested explicitly and implicitly in VTMs.

6.1.4.1 Explicit Managerial Role Enactments

Explicit mentioning of organisational roles concerns with utterances in which the speakers talk about their roles in the meetings overtly. Two instances of such mentioning can be found in the VTM data:

Example 6.25

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (Four based in Melbourne, Two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;

Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

Context: Ann mentions her role in the beginning of VTM while delivering project aims

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 11 | Ann | 1 | now my role as a programme manager // facilitate and make sure that the projects that have been managed under my stream uh::: are adequately planned for and have the right resources etc |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |

Example 6.26

Meeting B3

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Two

Oliver, Australian male Manager

Tiffany, Hong Kong Female subordinate

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinate

Purpose of meetings: Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information

Topic of meeting: Procedures

Context: Oliver mentions his role to Tiffany as a tactic to support his proposition

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 19 | Oliver | 1 | From uh business perspective // from from from uh a business manager's perspective (.) and I agree with him (.) we need to somehow come up with a strategic if not tactical solution |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |

Explicit managerial role enactments are manifested by Ann in Example 6.25 (line 1: “now my role as a programme manager”) and Oliver in Example 6.26 (lines 1 to 2: “from a business

manager's perspective"). Although Oliver states his authority and role explicitly, he does so with repeated hesitations "from from from uh" in line 1 which also suggests it may be difficult for him to enact his authority in an overt manner.

Such overt mentioning of managerial roles as shown in the examples above not only serves as reminders of their authoritative positions in organisational settings but also helps the managers pave the way for their propositions during the meetings, and thus leaves little room for other VTM participants to negotiate or reject.

6.1.4.2 Implicit Managerial Role Enactments

Although managers in VTMs can state their roles in meetings explicitly, they are relatively rare as compared to ways in which managers enact their power and managerial roles implicitly. Analysis of VTM transcripts shows that managers can enact their managerial roles implicitly in multiple ways, which will be discussed and exemplified below.

6.1.4.2.1 Discourse Management

Organisational roles and hierarchy are inherent in business meetings and those who chair meetings are granted privilege and power to control the discourse. As stated by Holmes & Stubbe (2015, p. 71):

People who are 'experts' or who have particular responsibilities or seniority in particular areas are especially likely to be able to influence the direction of the discussion when it relates to their areas of expertise or responsibility. Influence over the structure of a meeting is thus one way in which power manifests itself in meetings.

Meeting chairs (who are also often managers of work teams) can control the discourse through agenda setting, summarising progress, keeping discussion on track and deciding when a

decision is reached (see Section 6.1.3 Discourse Management). Although discourse management can be regarded as one of the many ways in which meeting chair authority and managerial role are enacted, it is also necessary in keeping the meeting structured and to ensure it is run smoothly and efficiently.

6.1.4.2.2 Address forms

The use of address forms can signal power difference and occupational roles of the interlocutors in business contexts. Hence, the deployment of address forms can be regarded as one of the Interpersonal Control strategies in CAT framework. Research on address forms has shown that they are determined by two main factors: power and solidarity, and they can be affected by other social attributes such as age, race and occupational roles (Brown & Ford, 2003; Brown & Gilman, 1960; Ervin-Tripp, 1972). Brown and Ford's study (2003) on address forms shows that in American English, speakers tend to address acquaintances with title or last names (TLN), but as soon as they get to know each other, they would change to reciprocal first names (FN). In the case of non-reciprocal address form, that is one calling the other person by his/her TLN and receives a FN or vice versa, it would mainly be based on age and occupational differences.

The use of address forms by VTM participants in VTM A2 serves as a good example to illustrate how address forms used by interlocutors can signal power difference and occupational roles and how their use can be influenced by cultural norms. VTM A2 consists of nine participants (Sarah – American Senior Talent Requisition Manager located in US; Ben – Filipino Talent Requisition Manager located in Manila and his co-located team of seven Filipino Talent Requisition team members) and the goal of the meeting is to present the Manila office's recruitment progress to Sarah, who possesses the highest occupational rank in the Talent Requisition team. It is observed in VTM A2, as shown in Example 6.27 below, that

Sarah and the Filipino team call each other by their first names (lines 1 and 2), despite the differences in their occupational ranks, and it is reciprocal. However, the address forms are non-reciprocal between Ben and his co-located Filipino team, i.e., all Manila team members use honorific forms and call Ben “sir” while Ben addresses his team members by their first names (lines 9, 11, 12, 19 and 20):

Example 6.27

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Amy, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Chap, one of the talent requisition team members based in the Manila office, presents his progress report to Sarah and Ben

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|----------------------|---|
| 153 | Chap | 1 | Hey Sarah good morning |
| 154 | Sarah | 2 | Hey Chap (.) how are you? |
| 155 | Chap | 3 | I'm good |
| 156 | Sarah | 4 | Good |
| 157 | Chap | 5 6 7 | So for IT specialist erm it's still open (1.0) And for applications received erm we have additional erm::: 23 (1.0) Erm we have er [|
| 158 | Ben | 8 | [how many for assessment? |
| 159 | Chap | 9 10 | Total of 7 sir (1.0) We have no additional for hiring manager and then we have one accepted the job offer |
| 160 | Ben | 11 | Is this endorsed Chap? |
| 161 | Chap | 12 13 14 15 | Er none (.) none yet sir (1.0) That is the same (.) For the start date she will start on Monday March 18 (.) Erm external (.) Her name is [Female name] (1.0) and then for the other IT specialist we are still searching |
| 162 | Ben | 16 | Okay (.) So we're now down to open FDE |
| 163 | Chap | 17 | Yes |

| | | | |
|-----|-------|----|----------------|
| 164 | Sarah | 18 | Yes |
| 165 | Ben | 19 | Thank you Chap |
| 166 | Chap | 20 | Welcome sir |

The address forms ‘sir’ and ‘kuya’ (elder brother) are commonly used in the Tagalog region for showing respect to those who are older and of higher social status. While ‘sir’ and ‘kuya’ can both be used to address an older male interlocutor, ‘sir’ is used particularly with male interlocutors who are of higher social status. Hence, Chap’s (and his fellow Filipino co-workers in the Manila office) use of honorific “sir” to address Ben, who is his senior, is regarded to be socially expected norms which serve as politeness ritual (Dumanig, 2014).

Examples 6.27 above shows that despite the greater occupational and geographical differences between Sarah and the team, a lesser degree of social difference is manifested in their utterances as compared to Ben and his team, despite the fact that they are co-located and share the same office. One of the reasons may be due to the Filipino professional culture which sustains and stabilises hierarchical differences in professional discourse. Previous studies on Filipino organisational hierarchy have suggested that Filipinos place high values on authority and organisational hierarchy (Andres, 1981; Arce & Poblador, 1979; Wilson, Callaghan & Wright, 1996), which is also supported by Hofstede (1991) who argued that there is high power distance between superiors and subordinates in Filipino organisational context.

This example also illustrates how Ben and Chap communicate in a complementary manner. As discussed in the section 6.1.3, complementarity is usually present in situations where there is role, power or status differences between interactants who “mutually attempt to maintain their social differences” during interactions (Street, 1991, p. 135). Interactants mutually attempt to maintain their social differences via dissimilar discursive practices, which discursively reinforce their differences. A business meeting is a site in which there is inherent power

differences between manager and subordinates, between meeting chair and participants. Participants behave in a complementary manner which can reflect the social differences among them as well as reinforcing them.

6.1.4.2.3 Align with Authority/Policies

It can be found in the VTM transcripts that managers sometimes inject external authorial interventions and voice into the discourse so as to strengthen their own propositions and limit the space of negotiation from their interlocutors. Examples of managers' alignments with authority and company policies are shown in the examples below:

Example 6.28

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two

Cherry, Philippines HR manager

Lee, China Operations manager

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

Context: Cherry explains the promotion procedures to Lee and that she needs to seek approval from George, who is the country director in the Philippines.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|-------------|---|
| 46 | Cherry | 1 | So I have to discuss with George as well |
| 47 | Lee | 2 | Ah ha okay |
| 48 | Cherry | 3 4 5 | Okay? Because the approvals for promotions and the salary changes would require two levels of approval (1.0) George will have to approve it as well |
| 49 | Lee | 6 | Okay (1.0) So we use the title of er admin supervisor? |
| 50 | Cherry | 7 8 | Yes we will (.) Erm but I have also to work with Jon to have that title created in Peoplesoft |
| 51 | Lee | 9 | For China only |
| 52 | Cherry | 10 | Yes for China only |
| 53 | Lee | 11 | Okay |

| | | | |
|----|--------|----------------------------------|--|
| 54 | Cherry | 12 13 14 | Or I will check if // because Jay // Jon has been reviewing the job descriptions (.) I will check with him if there is anything similar somewhere within other locations of BrazIT |
| 55 | Lee | 15 | Um hm okay |
| 56 | Cherry | 16 17 | we might just need to use erm:::a similar title er if it already exists in another location |
| 57 | Lee | 18 19 | Okay then for the salary increase also the be // we put that in the request right? |
| 58 | Cherry | 20 21 22 23 24 25 | Yes we will (1.0) Er however we'll have to take note (.) Erm once we're going to do this Lee (.) We'll have to take note that the merit portion if we're going to include it already and she doesn't get any merit [Lee: Yes] Or are we going to do increase for promotion and then she'll get rate that amount for the merit (.) But again the merit is not guaranteed so we can't really you know (.) we'll just have to make certain decisions about that |
| 59 | Lee | 26 27 28 | Actually Bonnie's pay is the lowest one in Dalin centre (.) And I see she takes more important things compared to the agents (.) She's (.) she got lower than even than the agents in Dalin |
| 60 | Cherry | 29 30 | Okay but you do know that we compare salaries based on roles so we can't really compare her salary with the help desk technicians |
| 61 | Cherry | 31 | I know I know I know I just er::: mention the numbers |
| 62 | Cherry | 32 33 | That's really the world to us in support people at HR (.) Admin [Laugh] Our salaries are always lower than you guys in operations [Laugh] |

Example 6.29

Context: Cherry explains the process to Lee regarding a claim filed by Katie, a Chinese staff located in Jilin, China

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------------------------------|--|
| 89 | Cherry | 1 2 3 | Before you are asking the company to pay (.) You know a huge sum of money and it's not like it's as simple as getting the cost from somewhere (.) So er [|
| 90 | Lee | 4 5 | [So this is her first time (.) she keeps on checking with you do this and do that |
| 91 | Cherry | 6 7 8 9 10 11 | Yeah but to your point Lee she should have already given us like a heads up so that we wouldn't be caught // caught by surprise and we // and now she's pushing me to give her an answer [Lee: yeah] and I haven't even spoken to anyone about // coz it's not as if we can just approve all this costs (1.0) I know it's under the China law (.) But again we need to understand better why we need to pay this |
| 92 | Lee | 12 13 | Yes (.) I also // I though Jon should be already tell Europe people to know about this but I will double check with him (.) Coz they will pay the [|
| 93 | Cherry | 15 16 17 18 19 | [Yeah but I already sent an email to Sandy (.) So if we have anything then we'll we'll // I will reach out to you and Ken and Katie (1.0) If there is // if she has any more questions but those questions that I asked her would be the same the same questions Sandy would be asking (1.0) Yeah |
| 94 | Cherry | 20 | Yeah [Laugh] Yeah even more I believe [Laugh] Okay |

As can be seen from the two examples above, Cherry draws on authorial interventions such as senior management in turn 46, turn 48 and turn 93 (George and Sandy) as well as company

practices and policies in turn 48, turn 60, turn 89 and turn 91. Not only does she draw on authority to support her propositions, the use of the inclusive pronoun “we” in turn 60 and turn 91 shows that she aligns herself with the company practices. Hence, not much space is left for Lee to negotiate as a result.

6.1.4.2.4 Hedge-Free Interrogatives

Although not commonly found in the VTM data, hedge-free interrogatives are used by certain managers and can be regarded as a discursive device which invokes managerial authority. Extract from VTM A2 below illustrates the usual speech pattern of the manager, Ben, when he asks for clarifications from his co-located Manila team:

Example 6.30

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Amy, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Ben asks for clarifications while one of his co-located team members (Tom) presents his progress report

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 132 | Ben | 1 | Tom? |
| 133 | Tom | 2 | Yes sir (.) I’m sorry that’s the same candidate |
| 134 | Ben | 3 | March 8 |
| 135 | Tom | 4 | March 8 yes sir |
| 136 | Ben | 5 | And the interview will be? |
| 137 | Tom | 6 | Will be tomorrow |
| 138 | Ben | 7 | For Japanese? |

| | | | |
|-----|-----|--------|---|
| 139 | Tom | 8 9 | For Japanese it's still open (.) Applications received is 1 for hiring managers (1.0) Last day of endorsement is today (.) March 14 |
| 140 | Ben | 10 | When is the interview? |
| 141 | Tom | 11 | Erm tomorrow (.) tomorrow afternoon yeah |
| 142 | Ben | 12 | No numbers? |
| 143 | Tom | 13 | No numbers yes sir |
| 144 | Ben | 14 | Alright thanks Tom |
| 145 | Tom | 15 | You're welcome (.) thank you |

The conversation between Ben and Tom is mainly transactional and is concerned with the hiring progress. Not much work is done on the relational level. It can also be seen that Ben's manager role and his authority are enacted in his clear, short, hedge-free interrogatives (lines 5, 7, 10 and 12) which act as commanding information. While Ben talks to his co-located team in Manila, clarity and brevity are preferred and little attention is paid to the interpersonal aspect in the interaction. However, it should be noted that the surrounding discourse context should be taken into account while interpreting the force of such interrogatives. Since Ben and Tom are co-located in the Manila office, it should be considered that they may have established collegial relationships in real-life Filipino workplace settings which, as some studies have argued, place high values on authority and organisational hierarchy (Andres, 1981; Arce & Poblador, 1979; Wilson, Callaghan & Wright, 1996) as well as high power distance between superiors and subordinates (Hofstede, 1991).

6.1.4.3 Mitigating Managerial Force

6.1.4.3.1 Directives

Directives or control acts are speech acts that are intended to get people to do something (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Koester, 2010) and are very common in workplace discourse as well as business meetings with their goal for superiors to deliver instructions to their subordinates. The most direct and explicit form of directives in imperative form is not common in the VTM data. Most directives found in VTMs are realised in various forms (interrogative and

declarative) and modified by various epistemic and pragmatic devices to mitigate their force as shown in the examples below:

Example 6.31

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Amy, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Sarah (American senior talent acquisition manager based in US and the most senior member in the team) requests action from one of the Filipino team members (Tom) and provides the rationale behind her request

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 28 | Sarah | 1 | Okay (.) I would like to understand how much that would cost so if we |
| | | 2 | can maybe compile a list (.) So I know Tom did a very good job in terms |
| | | 3 | of putting a list together (.) Thank you Tom for that but I think you know |
| | | 4 | just having the universities list without any action items is not going to |
| | | 5 | take us any further right? So let's see what (.) I'm not saying // I'm not |
| | | 6 | promising anything but let's see what the options are because sometimes |
| | | 7 | the cost might not be that high in the return (.) What we might be getting |
| | | 8 | might be pretty extensive (.) So we'll figure that out before we make any |
| | | 9 | decisions but it's something I would be interested in taking a look at |

Instead of giving direct commands in imperatives to the team, Sarah put forward her request in a rather long turn that is filled with declaratives (“I would like to understand how much” (line 1); “we can maybe compile a list” (lines 1 to 2); “let’s see what the options are” (line 6); “we’ll figure that out before we make any decisions” (lines 8 to 9) and modal verbs such as “could”, “can”, “maybe”, “might” and “would” (lines 1, 2, 7, 8 and 9). In fact, Sarah’s request to the team is to compile a list but she says this with an if-clause + modal verb “can” and “maybe”

(lines 1 to 2: “if we can maybe compile a list”) to mitigate the force of her request. She also praises Tom publicly that he did a very good job in putting a list together (line 2). This move is strategic as it attends to Tom’s positive face need after she requests him to compile a list. She does, however, ask a rhetorical question from lines 3 to 5 “you know just having the universities list with without any action items is not going to take us any further right?” to support her rationale as well as establishing common ground with Tom. By initiating the request with “you know” in line 3 together with “right” in line 5, it is assumed that Tom would share and take her ideas as mutual. After asking a rhetorical question, she also provides justification and explanation for her request so as to convince other team members to take her reasoning into consideration as well as mitigating the force of her request.

This phenomenon of mitigating force in directives aligns with Mullany’s (2007) and Vine’s (2004) studies on organisational discourse. Vine’s (2004) study on leadership speech employed a mixed-methods approach to investigate how leaders ‘do power’ in the workplace. She expected to find patterns of imperative used by team leaders as people with more authoritative power “are seen as having the right to use direct forms such as imperatives” (p. 153). However, her results show that directives from the leaders are expressed in all forms (imperatives, interrogatives and declaratives) and that the use of imperatives only accounts for 28% of the leaders’ speech acts, while the largest proportion of directives are expressed in less forceful declarative forms. Vine’s (2004) study argues that leaders “use a range of forms to express control acts and always use mitigation” (p. 165) and that less powerful and less forceful request forms are more favoured by the leaders. They also tend to minimize power difference while performing requests because managing good relations with other employees is important in the workplace.

This kind of interactional style is typically associated with feminine interactional style in the literature. Holmes (2006b, p. 6) categorises and summarises the most widely cited features of normatively Feminine interactional style and normatively Masculine interactional style as follows:

Feminine interactional style

- Facilitative
- Supportive feedback
- Conciliatory
- Indirect
- Collaborative
- Minor contribution (in public)
- Person/process-oriented
- Affectively oriented

Masculine interactional style

- Competitive
- Aggressive interruptions
- Confrontational
- Direct
- Autonomous
- Dominates (public) talking time
- Task / outcome-oriented
- Referentially oriented

However, it is important to note that, in reality, men and women are not confined and restricted to a particular interactional style as the terms may confusingly suggest. For instance, Mullany's (2007) study on workplace talks argues that both men and women favour feminine interactional style which includes a wide range of mitigation strategies while they are exercising power and authority. They also use humour and small talk as relational strategies to minimise status differences. Ladegaard's (2011b) study on executive managers of both sexes in a large Danish corporation finds that both sexes, irrespective of their gender, tend to prefer an indirect interactional style, while male leaders are more inclined to adopt a wide verbal repertoire (Case, 1988) style that is both normatively male and normatively female.

Not only does Sarah mitigate the force in directives, she also mitigates the force in her interruption of another team member:

Example 6.32

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Context: Ben is giving instructions to one of the team members (AA) and Sarah interrupts with her recommendations:

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 24 | Ben | 1 | Can you send me an email about these updates so that we can identify the priorities and also erm::: our working stats (.) So that we can send our communication with these universities as soon as possible because most of er (.) I think the graduation was mostly happened on April and May |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |
| | | 5 | |
| 25 | AA | 6 | Um hm yes sir. Oh so that's [update |
| 26 | Sarah | 7 | [Um, if I may (.) I do have a question as well (1.0) So here in the US (.) and I don't know again how it is y'all know I'm still learning a lot about the Philippines which I'm grateful for (.) But we have usually the career services within those universities |
| | | 8 | |
| | | 9 | |
| | | 10 | |

Sarah wants to know if the university career service, which she knows exists in the US, can also be found in universities in the Philippines. She puts forward her question by interrupting AA's turn. Multiple hedges are used to tone down her potentially face-threatening act. For example, "Um" (line 7) to signal her hesitation to cut into the presentation at this point. The use of "if I may" (if clause + low epistemic modal) in line 7 is not really because she does not know if she can ask a question, but to show the fellow VTM participants that there are opportunities for rejection, although it is highly unlikely for anyone to object. She also uses hedges in lines 8 and 9 such as "I don't know, again I'm still learning a lot about the Philippines" in which she explicitly confesses her lack of knowledge in the Filipino context. She emphasises that she welcomes input from her Filipino team, and this is followed by an expression of gratitude to learn about the country. Although the act of interruption itself can be face-threatening and can signal authority, Sarah employs different mitigating strategies to counter its effect.

Another way the manager mitigates directive force is to minimise institutional obligation and project it as personal needs/wishes. Examples of such can be found in VTMs B1 and B3:

Example 6.33

Meeting B1

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Four (Two based in Melbourne, Two based in Bangalore)

Participants: Samuel, team manager (Australian male, based in Melbourne)

Lincoln, meeting facilitator (Asian male, based in Melbourne)

Samesh (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Advik (Indian male, based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Planning, task-oriented (Australia team requests assistance on system development from India team and delivers standards as well as expectation to India team)

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 11 | Lincoln | 1 | Do you mind if uh::: I give you a quick update on uh::: where we are and how we need uh your support to validate what our requirements are now |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |

Example 6.34

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 77 | Lincoln | 1 | That's why we need someone like yourself or someone from Bangalore team to come in and help us (.) I need an IFT and the IFT needs to focus on getting this all and work it out getting a higher level (.) So that we can start getting those resources locked down |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |

Example 6.35

Meeting B3

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Two

Oliver, Australian male Manager

Tiffany, Hong Kong Female subordinate

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinate

Purpose of meetings: Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information

Topic of meeting: Procedures

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 59 | Oliver | 1 | And I would need your help in trying to well you know (.) when you have a chance or whenever you spot something uh then we just need to talk well (.) We // we've got a slightly different way of doing things (.) you need to do it that way |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |

As illustrated in the examples above, managers in the VTMs express their requests in declarative forms rather than direct interrogatives and these declaratives are framed in psychological term: “need” (line 2 in Example 6.33; line 1 in Example 6.34; line 1 in Example 6.35) as managers needing help from their team members. By framing the requests as a need for help, institutional role and obligation are downplayed.

6.1.4.3.2 Self-Deprecating Comments/Humour

Apart from the various linguistic devices to tone down directive force in the examples above, managers in VTMs are also observed to make self-deprecating humour (Example 6.36) or comments (Example 6.37) to tone down their managerial roles:

Example 6.36

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Amy, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Andrew, one of the Filipino meeting participants in Manila office, asks Sarah for information about India recruitment team

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 200 | Andrew | 1 | Just to ask Sarah (.) for our recruiting team in India (.) er which site we are actually // are we have the team based? [sic] |
| | | 2 | |
| 201 | Sarah | 3 | That's a very good question that I don't know the answer for to be honest. [Ben and Andrew laugh] |
| | | 4 | |
| 202 | Andrew | 5 | Okay because I think we have one in Hyderabad |

| | | | |
|-----|-------|----|--|
| | | 6 | Yeah I don't think it is the preferred location but I can be wrong |
| | | 7 | about that (.) So don't // whatever I say don't take me very |
| | | 8 | seriously (1.0) [Team laugh] I think the majority of them (.) they |
| | | 9 | are in one location (.) but I know they were talking about office |
| | | 10 | space and they were talking before about where to expand (.) But |
| | | 11 | I am not sure you know (.) and I don't have anybody there either |
| | | 12 | (.) So erm somebody that I usually work with one is in (xxx) so I |
| | | 13 | don't know (1.0) Let me look at somebody else in here and see |
| 203 | Sarah | 14 | where they are located |

As shown in the exchange between Andrew and Sarah above, Sarah openly confesses that she does not know the answer to Andrew's question (lines 3 to 4), which elicits laughter from Ben and Andrew. After realizing her honesty may have humorous effects to the team, she then turns that into a self-deprecating humour and tells her interlocutors in lines 7 and 8: "whatever I say don't take me very seriously" which results to more laughter from the whole team.

According to Martin et al. (2003), self-deprecating humour is a "non-hostile, tolerant use of humour that is affirming of self and others" (p. 53). Self-deprecating humour targets the person who is telling the joke and serves affiliative functions. Leaders who use self-deprecating humour demonstrate their willingness to expose their potential vulnerability by identifying their weaknesses (Westwood, 2004) and thus, make themselves appear closer to the level as their followers to reduce the status distinctiveness in the relationship (Kets de Vries, 1990; Martin et al., 2003). Studies on self-deprecating humour and leadership have also shown that leaders who can laugh at themselves are positively correlated with their persuasiveness (Lyttle, 2001), and it has a positive correlation with transformational leadership style (Hoption, Barling & Turner, 2013).

Example 6.37

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (Four based in Melbourne, Two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;

Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

Context: Ann replies to a query from one of her team members

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 52 | Ann | 1 | mhm well if // well the good point about the CSV is again (.) |
| | | 2 | Correct me if I'm wrong because you would be more familiar with |
| | | 3 | it rather than myself (.) It's going to be able to map that when we |
| | | 4 | specify that like any in the file (.) adding any value |

Ann, the manager in this example acknowledges that her subordinates would know better than herself and that she may be wrong with her opinions. She also offers the opportunity to her subordinates to “correct” her if she is wrong (line 2). Managers in work teams are usually the ones with the most experience or expertise, and by admitting that they do not have knowledge or information on work-related issues, offering opportunity for subordinates to correct them as well as turning that into humour can be seen as ways for managers to mitigate their managerial roles and reduce perceived authority in the manager-subordinates relationship.

As getting things done efficiently is one of the main goals of business meetings, one may expect to see managers enacting their authority and power to instruct or delegate tasks to their subordinates through directives. However, it is also observed that bald and explicit forms of directives are not the most preferred way for getting things done by the managers in the VTM data. Rather, managers are seen to use various discursive devices to mitigate the force of their directives as well as toning down their managerial voice. This finding aligns with various

studies on manager's preferred ways of giving directives to their subordinates (Holmes & Marra, 2003; Mullany, 2007; Vine, 2001; 2004). This is also reflected in the interview with Aaron, the Operations Director in BrazIT who stated that:

The management, when they're meeting with the people they bring their agents, they bring their team leads, and on the client side they would bring their CIO ((Chief Information Officer)). So there's a lot of layers there that when people would talk they tend to stay very cognizant of who's in attendance. I don't want to sound like a bad guy in front of agents who are working for us. Yes I mean I would probably be more upfront if it was only the management people. But now that an agent is in attendance, I mean I might tone down a bit (Aaron, Filipino Operations Director – Manila office BrazIT)

In fact, Aaron has various legitimate reasons for him to exercise his authority in VTMs: he is a male, he is a director at the Manila office, and he belongs to the cultural group which is considered to place high value on authority (Andres, 1981; Arce & Poblador, 1979; Hofstede, 1991; Wilson, Callaghan & Wright, 1996), but his reflection reveals that he is still aware of his interactional style towards different people with diverse social status. He has no problem expressing himself in a masculine interactional style (“to be more upfront”) with people of the same rank, but if the exchange involves people with less social power, he would “tone [it] down a bit” because he thinks that if he enacts his authority through his interactional style, he might be perceived by his subordinates as “a bad guy”. This shows that he would attune his interactional and discursive strategies depending on the context and in this case, that is the social distance between him and his interlocutors.

Aaron's strategic use of interactional styles is relevant to Case's (1988) notion of wide verbal repertoire style, which suggests a third kind of interactional style that draws on characteristics from both normatively feminine and normatively masculine speech styles. It aims to get things

done at work and, at the same time, to manage harmonious collegial relationships. This is also illustrated by Holmes and Stubbe (2015) who argue that:

People at work simultaneously achieve many different workplace objectives which include getting things done efficiently while constructing and maintaining collegial relationships. These two demands, sometimes labelled transactional vs interpersonal, social or affective goals, are frequently perfectly compatible, since good workplace relationships facilitate many aspects of work (p. 53).

Although business meetings are goal-oriented and heavily transactional, managing good collegial and interpersonal relationship is also paramount to the success of a work team (Mullany, 2007; Vine, 2004). This section has also shown that contextual elements of VTMs, such as the relationship of team members, the familiarity between team members, the cultural norms, and whether the team is co-located or not, can also influence the employment of Interpersonal Control strategies as well as mitigating devices which counter the force.

6.1.5 Emotional Expressions

Emotional Expressions focuses on attending to the emotional and relational needs of interactants (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005). Due to the development of the CAT framework, much of existing CAT research is conducted in healthcare contexts, and the focus is on the interactions between doctors/caretakers and patients. Thus, accommodating Emotional Expressions strategies in healthcare contexts evolves around offering reassurance and care to the patients (Watson & Gallois, 2002).

Attending to virtual team members' emotional needs, and providing socio-emotional support and feedback, are essential in successful management of virtual teams as it can enhance team trust and cohesion (Ford, Piccolo & Ford, 2017; Skovholt, 2015; Yoo & Alavi, 2004). While offering reassurance and care can also be observed in VTM settings, this is not the most

common kind of emotional expression found in the VTM data. This section will illustrate Emotional Expressions strategies with examples found in VTM data and discuss the contextual and strategic factors that are associated with them.

6.1.5.1 Empathy and Care

Example 6.38

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two

Cherry, Philippines HR manager

Lee, China Operations manager

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

Context: Small talk in pre-meeting stage between Cherry and Lee (Operations manager in Jilin, China)

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 9 | Lee | 1 | We have // yeah we have snow and I have a very bad cold this morning. |
| | | 2 | |
| 10 | Cherry | 3 | Oh I hope you get well soon. How // how // how cold is it in Jilin right now? |
| | | 4 | |
| 11 | Lee | 5 | Umm still minus [3...minus 5 |
| | | | ((turns omitted)) |
| 20 | Cherry | 7 | Anyway so I won't keep you very long (.) So we can rest (.) Erm so Lee (.) erm:::this is regarding the proposal for Bonnie's promotion. |
| | | 8 | |
| | | 9 | |

The excerpt above shows how small talk takes place in the beginning of the VTM before the two managers start discussing business. Small talk is initiated by Lee in turn 9 and she mentions that she caught a cold and therefore she has to work from home. Having heard that, Cherry shows her empathy by saying “Oh I hope you will get well soon” in turn 10. The topics of this small talk, that is the weather and the well-being of the participants, also echo Holmes and

Stubbe's (2003) findings on typical small talk topics such as the weather, recent shared activities, and ritual enquiries after well-being which serve a face attending function. Attending to others' face needs is crucial in developing relationships (Holmes, 1995). In the workplace context, attending to colleagues' face needs is a way to develop collegiality and solidarity as "they indicate mutual good intentions as they construct, maintain, repair or extend their collegial relationships" (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003, p. 97). Cherry's concern for Lee's well-being in turn 10 and turn 20 ("oh I hope you will get well soon" and "Anyway so I won't keep you very long. So we can rest") are examples of small tokens that serve a positive politeness function (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and indicate good intention for Lee as well as co-constructing a positive and harmonious environment to pave the way for the business discussion that follows.

6.1.5.2 Assurance

Example 6.39

Meeting B5

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Three

Angela, Asian female meeting chair based in Singapore

Connie, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Snowy, Asian female based in Hong Kong

Relationship of participants: Peer

Purpose of Meeting: Giving/receiving information, task/problem-oriented (filling out form)

Topic of meeting: Instructional; Procedural

Context: Angela (meeting chair based in Singapore) gives information to Connie and Snowy (staff in Hong Kong) on how to fill out a template regarding staff progress and cost

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 23 | Angela | 1 | We're running up for thirty minutes (.) Let's get started (1.0) First |
| | | 2 | I'm // just have to check with you both (.) I'm actually // this is an |
| | | 3 | unrelated question (.) I'm actually doing a course in a few weeks |
| | | 4 | (.) managing virtual teams and part of the pre-work needs to |
| | | 5 | record the call (.) So I just want to check with you guys if it would |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | | 6 | be okay if I record this call (.) It doesn't go with anyone else (.) I |
| | | 7 | think I'll either record it or send it (.) I have to write a reflection |
| | | 8 | on it (.) But I can just turn it off if either of you are uncomfortable |
| | | 9 | with it. |

Angela, the meeting chair in VTM B5, asks the other two VTM participants whether it is fine for her to record the call. Not only does she ask for their permission, but she also offers assurance to her team members that “it [the recorded call] doesn't go with anyone else” in line 6 as she anticipates that recording their exchange might be intrusive and can make Connie and Snowy feel “uncomfortable” (line 8). She also provides reasons for doing the recording as well as giving a chance for others to object to her proposition.

Example 6.40

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 30 | Angela | 1 | This template is the start of that process (.) And I know it does look |
| | | 2 | quite complicated (.) But I don't want it to be too complicated for |
| | | 3 | you |

Example 6.41

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 40 | Angela | 1 | Let's understand in terms of what type of information you need to |
| | | 2 | provide (.) It's really//And I know this sounds // Whatever you |
| | | 3 | know (.) Let's just go through each of the sheets (.) If you got |
| | | 4 | questions on a particular question then we can discuss that (.) Just |
| | | 5 | make sure you're feeling okay |

Example 6.42

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 44 | Angela | 1 | So that's really your view (.) You don't need to stress too much |
| | | 2 | about that (.) The whole exercise is not a case of anybody (.) It is |
| | | 3 | not about the people (.) It is just about the processes and |
| | | 4 | information that you're providing (.) So there will be no // This |
| | | 5 | person does this or this person does this (.) It's just what's really |
| | | 6 | happening (.) Just don't feel // It's not personal at all (.) Let's just |
| | | 7 | refer them to // Just don't feel that you're doing something |

The above excerpts (turns 30, 40 and 44) take place during the transactional talk in VTM B5.

The goal of the meeting is for Angela (Asian female manager based in Singapore) to give instructions and information to Connie and Snowy (both based in Hong Kong) on how to fill

out a template regarding the staffing and costs in Hong Kong office since the Australia office does not have much information on what is going on in the Hong Kong site. The purpose of the template can thus be perceived by Connie and Snowy as intrusive in the sense that the Australia office is checking up on the Hong Kong Office. This can explain why Angela attempts to assure them and care for their feelings throughout the whole meeting. She continuously asks about their feelings: “just make sure you’re feeling okay” (turn 40 – lines 4 and 5); “just don’t feel that you’re doing something” (turn 44 – line 7); expresses her concern for others: ‘And I know it does look quite complicated. But I don’t want it to be too complicated for you’ (turn 30), and establishes shared feelings: ‘I know’ (turn 30 – line 1 and turn 40 – line 2). She also employs relational language to tone down her requests by using mitigation: “whatever” (turn 40, line 2) and mitigating minimiser to minimise imposition: “just” (turn 40 – line 3 and turn 44 – lines 3, 6 and 7). Another assurance she offers Connie and Snowy is “It is not about the people. It is just about the processes and information that you’re providing [...] it is not personal at all” (turn 44 – lines 3, 4 and 6). It can be seen that Angela uses multiple relational strategies to offer comfort and assurance to her team members as the task she has to perform can be regarded by her team members as intrusive.

Apart from offering care and assurance as accommodative Emotional Expressions under CAT framework, another common kind of Emotional Expressions found in the VTM data is recognition of individual team member as well as team achievements which are unique accommodative Emotional Expressions strategies in virtual work teams. Examples of these recognitions are illustrated below:

6.1.5.3 Recognition of Individual Team Member’s Achievements

Example 6.43

Meeting B2

Organisation: AusBank

Number of Participants: Six (Four based in Melbourne, Two based in Bangalore)

Ann, manager and meeting facilitator, Asian female based in Melbourne;

Evak, Indian male based in Bangalore;

Henry, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Jack, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Thomas, Australian male based in Melbourne;

Aakesh, Indian male based in Bangalore)

Relationship of participants: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: task/problem – oriented

Topic of meeting: procedure, technical

Context: Ann thanks and praises one of the VTM participants for his work

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 75 | Ann | 1 | Yes for now automation from (RN) but he has done a lot of work and thanks first for all the good work that you've done with the migration (.) I think it has been quite // we have managed for the past two years to migrate many manual models |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |

Example 6.44

Meeting B3

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Two

Oliver, Australian male Manager

Tiffany, Hong Kong Female subordinate

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinate

Purpose of meetings: Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information

Topic of meeting: Procedures

Context: Manager expressed positive evaluation towards his subordinate

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 59 | Oliver | 1 | Yeah I think in terms of control (.) I'm pretty happy with you (.) You and ((Male name)) in terms of control (.) You know what to do anyway and you know what those controls are |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |

Examples 6.43 and 6.44 above can be regarded as recognition of individual team members' success. However, they are different in terms of the 'target' of the recognitions. Ann, the manager in VTM B2, praises her team member in terms of the work he has done, whereas the

recognition found in VTM B3 is much more direct and personal. Oliver, the manager in VTM B3, makes an evaluative comment on Tiffany's ability by saying "I think in terms of control, I'm pretty happy with you" (line 1), "you know what to do anyway" (lines 2 and 3). Asymmetrical power relations are realised through the judgement and evaluation made by the two managers in VTMs B2 and B3 respectively. However, I would argue stronger managerial power is manifested in VTM B3 with overt evaluations made on the person instead of the task. Nevertheless, both interlocutors in VTMs B2 and B3 receive the evaluation and recognition positively and this can again be regarded as complementary (Street, 1991) in which such asymmetrical power and social difference as well as behaviour are mutually accepted and sustained.

6.1.5.4 Recognition of Team Achievements

Other than recognizing individual team members' achievements, managers in VTMs also express recognition towards team achievements as an attuning Emotional Expressions strategy as shown in the following examples:

Example 6.45

Meeting A2

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of Participants: Nine

Participants:

Sarah, Senior recruitment manager, based in US

Ben, Filipino recruitment manager based in Manila, the Philippines

Seven Filipino recruiters (AA, Andrew, May, Tom, Chap, Amy, Kimmy) co-located with Ben at the Manila office

Relationship of speakers: Manager – subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing, Planning

Topic: Recruitment

Context: Ben reports Kimmy's and team's success to Sarah

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------------------|--|
| 223 | Ben | 1 2 | Okay (.) And also I'd like to comment [sic] Kimmy and also the rest of service delivery for facilitating our FCA last week |
| 224 | Kimmy | 3 | [Laugh] thank you |
| | | | [Applause from team] |
| 225 | Ben | 4 5 6 7 | Erm Sarah we had 100% show up rate last Monday [Sarah laughs] And we also had a complete show up rate (.) Three candidates who were under the VCG (.) So all in all we had a perfect attendance for the week for our talk |
| 226 | Sarah | 8 | Awesome (.) Very nice well done Kimmy and everybody else |
| 227 | Kimmy | 9 | Thank you so much and thank you for my team [Laugh] |

In turns 223 and 225, Ben explicitly mentions Kimmy's name and comments on the talk the team facilitated with various positive evaluations: "100% show up rate" (line 4); "complete show up rate" (line 5) and "perfect attendance" (line 6). The recipient of such mentioning is in fact Sarah who is their senior manager located in the US and who did not know about the team's achievements at the time of the meeting. By mentioning the successful talk the Manila team held, Ben makes the team's achievement overt to Sarah and thus, invites recognition from her which is realised by her utterance "Awesome. Very nice well done Kimmy and everybody else" in line 8. While Kimmy receives personal recognition, she also attends to the positive face needs of other team members and shares the achievement with the whole team ("thank you for my team") in line 9. This example shows how Ben, Sarah and Kimmy co-construct team achievement recognition to develop team cohesion. The discursive strategies employed by them in this example can be regarded as attuning Emotional Expressions strategies in CAT framework as they attend to the emotional and relational needs of interactants (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005).

Example 6.46

Meeting B4

Organisation: AusBank

Number of participants: Nine

Noah, Australian male team manager based in Australia;

Seven Australian team members (Lucas, Charlotte, Olivia, Mia, Ava, Grace, Amelia) based in different offices in Australia

Anaisha, Indian female team member based in Bangalore

Relationship of participants: Manager – Subordinates

Purpose of meeting: Reviewing (backward-oriented), planning (forward-oriented)

Topic of meeting: Staff Training

Context: Noah asks his team to read an article written by a business head about the team's success

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 79 | Noah | 1 | Cool thank you (.) Okay I'll go really quick update mhm if you |
| | | 2 | have a look at the newsletter (.) there's actually a little article |
| | | 3 | mhm uh Mister (Male name) wrote about the technology () so |
| | | 4 | have a look at that |
| 80 | Olivia | 5 | I read it and I'm very excited (.) It's a great write up (.) great |
| | | 6 | recognition from one of our business heads (.) so I think you |
| | | 7 | know uh it just shows what value we can actually add and the |
| | | 8 | more we get that kind of stuff the better (.) So good on you Noah |
| 81 | Noah | 9 | Applause for us |
| | Team | 10 | [Applause and cheering] |

While recognition is often considered to be carried out by those with power, this is not always the case. This excerpt shows that virtual team members can take a pro-active role to initiate recognition and facilitate team cohesion and trust. Noah, the manager in this meeting asks his team to read an article which is written by the upper management about their team (turn 79). He does not make further comments nor evaluations on the performance of his team but Olivia self-selects herself in turn 80. She expresses her excitement on having recognition from the upper management, and that it is an important index for the team to know that they can add value to the company. She also attends to Noah's positive face need and makes an evaluative comment for his leadership ("so good on you Noah" in line 8). After the positive comments made by Olivia, Noah then initiates "virtual applause" (line 9) which results in the team's applaud and cheering.

By explicitly mentioning that the team has received recognition from the upper management and that their work is noticed and appreciated by other virtual team members can make them feel that they are important to the company, which facilitates team motivation and cohesion. This strategy, according to Skovholt (2015), is regarded as a rhetorical one which can motivate the group and enhance internal relationships in virtual work groups and can be regarded as accommodative Emotional Expressions strategy. Giving recognition and approval is also considered to be one of the relational practices in the workplace by Holmes and Marra (2004). They have found multiple examples of such a strategy in their LWP project, especially from superiors to subordinates, but they are typically “brief and low-key” as in “great”, “good work”, “fine”, “nice one” etc. (p. 385). Holmes and Marra (2004) explain the reason behind such subtleness due to the egalitarian values of New Zealand culture. This again shows how cultural norms can affect the intensity of CAT strategies employment and the situational factors of VTMs can also impact the intensity of positive recognition. In virtual settings, superiors tend to make such approval and recognition explicit to ensure its effectiveness in team and cohesion building among virtual team members.

Ford, Piccolo and Ford (2017) state in their study on building effective virtual teams that “it is too easy for members of virtual teams to believe that “out of sight” leads to “out of mind” when it comes to organizational leadership” (p. 27) and this is why open and transparent communication to let the team members know that their work is recognised and valued is essential in building trust in virtual teams. They also mention that some virtual team leaders even hold virtual parties and celebration for team success with the aim to reproduce the feeling of excitement and unity that face-to-face teams have. Regarding the strategies used by virtual team leaders to build trust, they suggest that virtual team leaders should enhance their skills in “goal setting, rewarding individual and team performance” (p. 32) as well as “inventing virtual celebrations to recognize team member’s milestones and group accomplishments” (p. 33).

While most of the Emotional Expressions strategies found in VTMs are positive with the aims to better develop interpersonal relationship as well as enhancing team cohesion, negative emotional expressions can also be found (although rarely) in one of the VTMs:

6.1.5.5 Dissatisfaction

Example 6.47

Meeting A1

Organisation: BrazIT

Number of participants: Two

Cherry, Philippines HR manager

Lee, China Operations manager

Relationship of speakers: Peers – They have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012

Purpose of meeting: Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented

Topic: Procedure (Human Resources Management)

Context: Lee explains to Cherry that one of her staff's (Bonnie) pay is the lowest in the Dalin centre but Cherry does not think the justification is valid

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 59 | Lee | 1 | Actually Bonnie's pay is the lowest one in Dalin centre (.) And I see |
| | | 2 | she takes more important things compared to the agents (.) She's got |
| | | 3 | lower (pay) than even than the agents in Dalin |
| 60 | Cherry | 4 | Okay (.) but you do know that we compare salaries based on roles so |
| | | 5 | we can't really compare her salary with the help desk technicians |
| 61 | Lee | 6 | I know I know I know I just er mention the numbers |
| 62 | Cherry | 7 | That's really the world to us in support (.) people at HR Admin |
| | | 8 | [laughter] Our salaries are always lower than you guys in operations |
| | | 9 | [Laugh] |
| 63 | Lee | 10 | [Laugh] sorry |

Lee expresses that one of her staff, Bonnie, gets the lowest pay in the Dalin centre and thus, she would like to promote her and raise her pay. Cherry then rejects Lee's rationale in turn 60 by aligning herself with company pay policy with the use of inclusive "we" as in "Okay but you do know that we compare salaries based on roles so we can't really compare her salary

with the help desk technicians” (lines 4 to 5). Cherry’s utterance can be regarded by Lee as face-threatening as it challenges Lee’s understanding of company pay policies. This results in Lee’s repeated acknowledgements “I know” in line 6, which signals her defensive response to Cherry’s contestive comment. She also downplays her proposition with mitigating minimizer “just” as in “I just er mention the numbers” in line 6. Interestingly, Cherry takes on this point and performs an FTA in turn 62, expressing her dissatisfaction about different pay scales between administrative and operative staff to Lee, who is an Operations Manager, that the pay for support staff is always lower than Operations staff. Although she does so with laughter and thus, is trying to conceal her FTA as a joke, it may still be regarded as contestive (Holmes, 1998; Holmes, 2006a; Holmes & Marra, 2002; Holmes & Schnurr, 2005) by Lee. According to Holmes and Marra (2002), different types of humour can construct different work relationships in the workplace. Supportive humour can “function to construct and sustain relationships which contribute to workplace harmony by expressing solidarity. But humour can also serve as an acceptable vehicle for expressing subversive attitudes or aggressive feelings” (p. 1687). In terms of how humour pragmatically orients within a discourse, supportive humour “agrees with, adds to, elaborates or strengthens the propositions or arguments of previous contribution” while “contestive humour [...] challenges, disagrees with or undermines the propositions or arguments put forward in earlier contributions” (p. 1687). Cherry’s example in turn 62 can be regarded as contestive and non-accommodative because it challenges and disagrees with Lee’s proposition in turn 59 when Lee justifies her reasons for raising Bonnie’s pay. The contestive nature of Cherry’s joke is picked up by Lee and as a result, elicits an embarrassed laugh and an apology from Lee in turn 63 after realizing Cherry’s joke is actually a complaint.

This section has discussed various Emotional Expressions strategies observed in VTMs. Accommodating Emotional Expressions strategies include offering empathy, care and

assurance as well as recognition to individual and team achievements. Expressing care and assurance is found to be used to enhance interpersonal relationship between VTM participants, especially when the topic of discussion is perceived to be potentially intrusive to other members. Another widely studied and used form of expression is recognition of individual team members as well as team achievements with the goal to enhance team trust and cohesion which are essential but also challenging to obtain in virtual work teams. Although rare, negative Emotional Expressions strategy such as expressing dissatisfaction can also be found in one of the VTMs (VTM A1). Albeit Cherry tries to mitigate the face-threatening effect of her negative and non-accommodative Emotional Expressions by concealing it as a joke, it is not perceived positively by Lee and her negative Emotional Expressions strategy can be regarded as non-accommodating within CAT framework.

6.2 Communication Accommodation Strategies in Seven Virtual Team Meetings

This section will explore how CAT strategies are employed in seven VTMs respectively in order to gain insights on what and to what extent contextual factors affect the use of CAT strategies.

6.2.1 CAT Strategies in VTM A1

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Organisation | BrazIT |
| Number of participants | Two |
| Relationship of speakers | Peers (Have been working together since 2011 and met in person in 2012) |
| Participants | Cherry: Filipina HR manager based in Manila office Lee: Chinese female, China Operations manager based in Jilin, China |
| Purpose of meeting | Giving and receiving information; Task-problem oriented |
| Meeting Topic | Procedure, HRM (task-oriented and problem solving – present oriented) Cherry initiates two discussion topics and asks for Lee's clarifications and explanations Cherry asks for clarification and explanation about promotion procedures of a Chinese staff (Bonnie) |

| | |
|--|---|
| | Cherry asks for explanations on why a Chinese staff files a claim but does not communicate with her directly beforehand |
|--|---|

Table 6.15 Context of VTM A1

6.2.1.1 Interpretability

Both participants can be regarded as competent English speakers, although it can also be observed in the audio recording that Cherry's English proficiency level is higher than Lee's. Accommodating Interpretability strategies employed by Cherry in VTM A1 include using signposting, rephrasing, repetition (Example 6.1, p.118); Use of intertextual references (Example 6.4, p.123); Use of check markers (Table 6.1, p.134 and Table 6.2, p.135); Choosing topics that are familiar to Lee (Example 6.12, p.129); Provide summary statement (Example 6.14, p.136) and providing clarification and explanation (Example 6.28, p.182 and Example 6.29, p.183).

6.2.1.2 Discourse Management

This meeting falls into the spiral pattern mainly because of its purpose and the number and the relationship between the participants: to give/receive information for clarification and trying to solve a problem between peers with no hierarchical difference. Since VTM A1 only consists of two participants, this explains why the number of turns distributed between them is relatively even (48%: 52%). As previous studies (Handford, 2010; Holmes & Stubbe, 2003) on small talk have found (usually in the pre-meeting stage, but it is also worth noting that not all meetings contain small talk, and that small talk can also appear at different stages of meetings and are not only confined in the pre-meeting stage), small talk in VTM A1 takes place in the pre-meeting stage of this meeting, and it transits to transactional talk after Cherry's (the meeting chair of VTM A1) initiation of business topic discussions (Example 6.12, p.129). As chair, Cherry manages the discourse by opening and closing the meeting; agenda setting, topic transition as well as topic summarization.

6.2.1.3 Interpersonal Control

Although Cherry and Lee are peers within the company hierarchy, there is asymmetry of power in the VTM and the dialogic positioning and space between them is unequal. Cherry enacts her authority as chair as well as HR manager in the meeting by employing different strategies: controlling the meeting structure and turn patterning; Use of directives and high deontic modality (Examples 6.27, p.180 and 6.28, p.182); Performing FTA (Example 6.47, p.205); Rejecting requests by aligning herself with company policies and practices and limiting Lee's dialogic and negotiation space), while Lee is more in the position of compliance (Example 6.29, p.183).

A possible reason for the less favourable position for Lee may be because she is the one to put in the request, and she and the China office have no control over the decision. Also, as an Operations Manager, she may not have sufficient knowledge on the HR procedures. As Handford (2010) puts it "expertise (and lack of it) may also be a source of asymmetry" (p. 11). The fact that her English proficiency is also lower than Cherry's can also contribute to her less favourable position in the VTM. Cherry enacts her authority not by her managerial role (as they are of the same rank) but by the company hierarchy between offices, her knowledge and authority as a HR Manager, and as a speaker with superior English language skills.

6.2.1.4 Emotional Expressions

Cherry expresses care for Lee's well-being after Lee mentions in the pre-meeting stage that she is sick. As illustrated by Cherry's interview excerpt (Section 6.1.3), she states that small talk helps the participants to create a friendly atmosphere before formal business talk. So the occurrence of small talk before the meeting is consciously co-constructed by both participants, and the aim is to maintain a positive collegial relationship between them, which can be regarded

as accommodative strategy. However, Cherry also performs FTAs through her expression of dissatisfaction about different pay scales between her and Lee, which results in laughter and an apology from Lee, and this can be regarded as non-accommodative in the CAT framework (Example 6.47, p.205).

The analysis of Cherry and Lee's employment of Communication Accommodation Strategies shows that both interlocutors make use of different strategies to illustrate their communicative stance in order to serve their communication needs and demonstrate their competence in virtual meetings. Their use of strategies can be summarized in the table below:

| | Cherry | Lee |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Interpretability | (+) Signposting (Ex. 6.1) (+) Repetition (Ex. 6.1) (+) Use of intertextual references (Ex. 6.4) (+) Appropriate topic choice (Ex. 6.12) (+) Provide clarification and explanation (Ex. 6.28 and 6.29) (+) Provide summary statements (Ex. 6.14) (+) Check markers (Table 6.1 and 6.2) | |
| Discourse Management | (+) Small talk (Ex. 6.12) (+) Share topic (Ex. 6.38) (+) Develop topic (Ex. 6.28 and 6.29) (+) Backchanneling (-) Introduce topic which induced conflict (Ex. 6.47) | (+) Small talk (Ex. 6.12) (+) Share topic (+) Continuing topic (Ex. 6.28) (+) Provide information to develop topic (Ex. 6.28) (+) Backchanneling (Ex. 6.28) |
| Interpersonal Control | (+) Inclusive pronoun signals shared identity (Ex. 6.28) (-) State occupational roles and policies (Ex. 6.29) (-) Use pronouns to signal role differences (Ex. 6.29) (-) Use of directives and high deontic modality (Ex 6.28 and 6.29) | |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Emotional Expressions | (+) Express empathy (Ex. 6.12; Ex. 6.38) (+) Supportive humour (Ex. 6.12) (+) Laughter (Ex. 6.12) (-) Express dissatisfaction (Ex. 6.47) (-) Face threat (Ex. 6.47) (-) Contestive humour (Ex. 6.47) | |
|------------------------------|---|--|

Table 6.16 CAT strategies in VTM A1 (+ Accommodative; - Nonaccommodative)

According to Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles (2016), CAT proposes two motives to explain why speakers adjust their speech in interactions: Affective motives and cognitive motives. Cherry and Lee's communicative behaviours in terms of Interpretability and Discourse Management suggest that their use of these two strategies is driven by cognitive motives, that is to manage comprehension and increase communicative efficiency (Accommodative). Their employment of Interpersonal Control and Emotional Expressions, on the other hand, is driven by affective motives, that is to either maintain and strengthen personal and social identities (Accommodative), or signalling one's difference and distinctiveness from the interlocutor (Nonaccommodative). These motives are vital and can be mapped onto the communicative needs in the context of business meetings: messages need to be clearly delivered and received in order to get the work done and, at the same time, maintain good interpersonal relationship in the workplace, even if it is virtual. Maintaining necessary social distance, roles distinctiveness and authority is also significant.

As illustrated in Table 6.16, Cherry employs a wider range of communicative behaviours (both accommodative and nonaccommodative) in order to achieve different communicative goals compared to Lee, who mainly accommodates using a limited range of behaviours and fewer strategies. Dragojevic, Gasiorek and Giles (2016) discuss multiple constraints which can restrict communication accommodation, namely 1) one's communicative repertoire; 2)

physiological constraints and 3) communication medium. In this virtual meeting between Cherry and Lee, it is arguably Lee's limited communicative repertoire which may have limited her ability to employ a wider range of CAT strategies. Communication medium is also relevant in the context of non-visual virtual meetings as Cherry and Lee do not have many options for adjustments apart from using their voices, as opposed to face-to-face meetings in which they can also accommodate to their interlocutor(s) through other paralinguistic features, such as gestures or gaze.

6.2.2 CAT Strategies in VTM A2

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Organisation | BrazIT |
| Number of participants | Nine |
| Relationship of speakers | Manager – Subordinates (Intradepartmental) |
| Participants | Sarah: American female, Senior talent acquisition manager based in the US Ben: Filipino talent acquisition manager based in Manila Seven Filipino recruiters in Ben's team, based in Manila AA: Filipino Male Andrew: Filipino Male May: Filipina Female Tom: Filipino Male Chap: Filipino Male Amy: Filipina Female Kimmy: Filipina Female |
| Purpose of meeting | -Reviewing, Planning -Regular progress report meeting from the Philippines recruitment team to Sarah (backward oriented), some future plan discussion between Ben and Sarah (forward-oriented) |
| Meeting Topic | Recruitment |

Table 6.17 Context of VTM A2

6.2.2.1 Interpretability

Although eight of the nine participants in this VTM are non-native speakers of English (Ben and his co-located team), all of them are competent in communicating in English and communication breakdown due to team members' English proficiency is not found. Reported talk by the agents is rather 'scripted' and follows a similar pattern and language of reporting

(Example 6.17- turn 105, p.146). One of the reasons may be because they are reading the recruitment figures from the PowerPoint presentation, which they share via Skype for Business during the VTM. Making use of intertextual references can aid comprehension by increasing clarity of speech because they can provide a guide or a structure for VTM participants to follow through (Example 6.5, p.123).

Ben also illustrates his point with a topic that is more familiar to Sarah (Example 6.13, p.132), the only non-Filipino in the team, while he is talking about a location in the Philippines. By acknowledging that virtual team members possess different levels of knowledge concerning the topics discussed, and choosing topics familiar to others is an accommodative strategy used by Ben to enhance interpretability.

6.2.2.2 Discourse Management

VTM A2 also follows a “tripartite structure” that contains an opening, a central development section as well as a closing. It also follows a traditional linear patterning of turns (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003): who to speak and when to speak is predetermined by the meeting chair, Ben, and his agenda. The reason for this pattern is largely determined by the VTM context. First of all, the main purpose of this meeting is to review regular progress of the team, and there is not much collaboration or joint decision making among the participants. Secondly, there are nine people involved in this meeting, so a structured agenda is necessary to keep all participants on track. Thirdly, the relationship of the speakers in the meeting is managers and subordinates, and Ben acts as a meeting facilitator, controls the discourse and directs his subordinates’ turns in the meeting. Although the level of engagement from the subordinates in this VTM is largely determined by Ben, it is accepted by the Filipino team in a complementary manner (Street, 1991) (Example 6.18, p.149).

6.2.2.3 Interpersonal Control

Although Sarah is the most senior participant and possesses the highest managerial power in VTM A2, she mitigates her authority through various linguistic and pragmatic strategies. She praises the team on their ability; performs directives in declarative form with mitigating devices such as epistemic modality and hedges to tone down the force of her requests (Example 6.31, p. 186). She also initiates almost all the jokes throughout the one-hour meeting, including self-deprecating humour (Example 6.36, p. 191). As stated by Holmes and Stubbe (2003), humour is a strategic recourse in the construction of harmonious work relationship and management of power relationships in the workplace. Humour employed by Sarah is a clear sign of her wish to establish relationship with the Philippines recruitment team (Example 6.36, p.191). Sarah's awareness of her identities may explain her discursive strategies for leadership enactment. As the only 'foreigner' in the team who is dispersed from the rest of the Manila team, she tends to tone down her directives directed at the Manila team, and, at the same time, emphasises her appreciation to the Philippines to attend to the positive face need of the Manila team (Example 6.32, p. 189). Although female identity does not necessarily equate to the adoption of a normatively feminine interactional style, Sarah's interactional style in VTM A2 suggests her preference for a normatively feminine one.

Unlike Sarah, Ben does not make frequent and open relational talk with the team in the VTM and performs his requests to his subordinates in direct, hedge-free interrogatives (Example 6.30, p. 184). One possible reason is because he and the rest of the team (except Sarah) are co-located in the Manila office so the relationship among them has already been established in real life and thus, there is no need for him to do so during the VTM. Another possible reason for his use of direct, hedge-free interrogatives (Example 6.30, p.184) with his co-located subordinates

is the alleged high power distance between superiors and subordinates in Filipino workplace culture (Hofstede, 1991) which might provide a legitimate reason for him to sustain his authoritative speech styles with his subordinates.

The subordinates' use of address forms when they talk to Ben and Sarah also reveals the power relationship between the participants. The team addresses Sarah by her first name, and use honorific "sir" while addressing Ben. As discussed in Example 6.27 (p. 180), this mismatch between address forms and rank might be mainly due to different managerial styles as well as different cultural norms on leadership in the workplace, which are mutually accepted by VTM participants with different social roles in a complementary manner (Street, 1991).

There are two instances of Ben doing relational talk (Example 6.48, turn 5 and Example 6.49, turn 40), but the addressee is Sarah:

Example 6.48

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 1 | Ben | 1 | Hello Sandra (.) good morning |
| 2 | Sarah | 2 | Hi good evening Ben (.) How are you? |
| 3 | Ben | 3 | I'm good (.) How are you? |
| 4 | Sarah | 4 | Good |
| 5 | Ben | 5 | Here we go again with a 'how are you' [Laugh] |
| 6 | Sarah | 6 | Today we have 10 participants (.) So it should be a little bit more |
| | | 7 | [Laugh] |

Example 6.49

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 36 | Ben | 1 | We will proceed Sarah with our progress report |
| 37 | Sarah | 2 | Sounds good (.) That's the most exciting part always right? |
| 38 | Ben | 3 | [Laugh] Ahh::: |
| 39 | Sarah | 4 | [Laugh] Really lifts my spirit so that's the part that I usually get |
| | | 5 | excited about |
| 40 | Ben | 6 | We will try [Sarah laughs] We will try anything |

It is interesting to see how Ben performs his different social roles (as a subordinate of Sarah and as a team manager to his co-located Filipino agents) simultaneously within the span of a VTM. As shown in Example 6.48, Ben initiates humour that is directed at Sarah (line 5), and both Examples 6.48 and 6.49 (p.215) illustrate how Ben and Sarah co-construct positive humour in extended sequences, and that they laugh at their jokes together. Ben in Example 6.49 also performs his subordinate role by explicitly saying he and his team will try anything to lift Sarah's spirit (line 6). His interactional style towards Sarah is in stark contrast to the nominatively masculine interactional style he adopts with his team, which is characterised by aggressive interruptions, direct, hedge-free interrogatives, task and referentially oriented utterances which focus primarily on transaction rather than interpersonal relations (Example 6.30, p.184). This again shows the wide verbal repertoire styles (Case, 1988) Ben adopts while interacting with VTM participants who have role differences, and the high value placed on hierarchy in Filipino culture, as argued by some studies (Andres, 1981; Arce & Poblador, 1979; Hofstede, 1991; Wilson, Callaghan & Wright, 1996) may explain why he adopts different interactional styles with his interlocutors.

6.2.2.4 Emotional Expressions

Ben makes use of positive and accommodating Emotional Expressions by highlighting the achievement of one of his team members with precise information such as "100% show up rate", "complete show up" as well as the appraisal adjective "perfect attendance" to Sarah (Example 6.45, p.201). As Ben and the recruitment team co-locate in the same office, this achievement would be known and shared by everybody in the Manila office. So the main reason to mention the success of the events in this VTM is to inform Sarah of the Philippines team's achievements in order to gain her recognition of the team's performance and ultimately, to improve the team's sense of achievements and cohesion.

CAT strategies employed by VTM A2 participants are presented in the table below:

| | Sarah | Ben | Filipino Agents |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Interpretability | | (+) Choose familiar topic (Ex. 6.13) (+) Intertextual references (Ex. 6.5) | (+) Intertextual references |
| Discourse Management | (+) Provide information to develop topic (Ex. 6.32) (+) Backchannelling | Control meeting progress, topic transition and turn allocation (+) Backchannelling | (+) Providing information to develop topic (+) Backchannelling |
| Interpersonal Control | (+) Mitigate managerial force through relational language (Ex. 6.31) (+) Self-deprecating humour (Ex. 6.36) | (-) Enact authority role through direct, hedge-free directives (Ex. 6.27 and 6.30) | (+) Use of honorifics |
| Emotional Expressions | (+) Recognize team achievement (Ex. 6.45) (+) Supportive humour (Ex. 6.36) (+) Laughter (Ex. 6.36) | (+) Recognize team achievement (Ex. 6.45) (+) Laughter (Ex. 6.36) | (+) Laughter (Ex. 6.36) |

Table 6.18 CAT strategies in VTM A2 (+ Accommodative; - Nonaccommodative)

VTM A2 presents a more complex interpersonal dynamics as it is comprised of nine participants of different ranks, genders and regional offices. In virtual meetings as such, participants have to negotiate their knowing, doing and being with different participants and this can pose challenges on VTM members, especially in the early stage of the virtual team setup, when they have little knowledge of each other. The different address forms employed by the Filipino recruitment team to different managers may suggest different perceptions they have of the managers, and that they are determined by the wider sociocultural context, such as Filipino cultural norms on leadership and authority in the workplace in this case (Andres, 1981; Arce & Poblador, 1979; Wilson, Callaghan & Wright, 1996).

6.2.3 CAT Strategies in VTM B1

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Organisation | AusBank |
| Number of participants | Four |
| Relationship of speakers | Manager – Subordinates (Intradepartmental) |
| Participants | Samuel: Australian male team manager based in Melbourne Lincoln: Asian male meeting facilitator based in Melbourne Samesh, Indian male based in Bangalore Advik: Indian male based in Bangalore |
| Purpose of meeting | Planning, task-oriented (forward-oriented) Australia team requests assistance on system development from India team and delivers standards as well as expectation to India team |
| Meeting Topic | Technical |

Table 6.19 Context of VTM B1

6.2.3.1 Interpretability

Three out of four VTM participants in this meeting are non-native speakers of English (Lincoln, Samesh and Advik), whereas team manager Samuel is a native Australian. Despite the fact that Lincoln is also a non-native speaker of English, but as the chair of this VTM, one of his responsibilities is to ensure mutual understanding between participants, and he makes use of various accommodating Interpretability strategies in the VTM to ensure he and Samuel's messages and expectations are precisely delivered and that mutual understanding are achieved. The strategies he employs include asking check questions after discussion points, as in turn 26 and turn 38: "Any question on that bit?", "Do you have any questions on this?" (Table 6.1, p.134). He also acts as a bridge between team manager Samuel and Samesh/Advik and facilitates communication between them:

Example 6.50

Context: Samuel delivers procedures and expectations to the Indian counterparts and Lincoln further elaborates and clarifies Samuel's messages to the Indian team

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 50 | Samuel | 1 | And that'll be ramping down once // this will be just about setting |
| | | 2 | up the infrastructure as required to test the solution uh:: the |
| | | 3 | (intended) (.) once we've done the () will run through a non- |

| | | | |
|----|---------|----|---|
| | | 4 | production environment through the solution and have the solution |
| | | 5 | signed-off (.) The BAU team will then take that solution and under |
| | | 6 | serious rolling (CRs) push it push it out to the uh::: service that has |
| | | 7 | been identified as most critical and that would be an ongoing |
| | | 8 | iterative process (.) So mhm::: I'm thinking at this stage you know |
| | | 9 | between one and two days mhm a week for the next probably two |
| | | 10 | maybe two and a half months (.) and that's what sort of () you're |
| | | 11 | thinking right? |
| | | 12 | So yeah I // I think we're fine but if we can make it a bit more clear |
| | | 13 | for you Advik (.) I think we would start off with at least two days |
| | | 14 | a week and we can then after design is more concrete and we're |
| | | 15 | going to the implementation phase (.) We // we've gone through the |
| | | 16 | test phase because there is where I think there will be a lot of work |
| | | 17 | uh: we might require two days // we might require a bit more mhm::: |
| | | 18 | but that is still the end of June (.) we're thinking at this stage and |
| | | 19 | then wrapping down once we've got that design locked down and |
| | | 20 | everything is more around just rolling it out (.) Then I think we'll |
| | | 21 | wrap it down to a day a week where it is making sure the CRs are |
| | | 22 | reached () and this is thirtieth of September (.) making sure that all |
| | | 23 | the downstream teams are // communication is working well etc. |
| | | 24 | etc. and then having it all the BAU teams come (early) in |
| | | 25 | September (.) So at this stage let's start off two days a week and |
| 51 | Lincoln | 26 | then post June we like to wrap it down to one day a week. |
| 52 | Advik | 27 | Alright that's fine |
| 53 | Lincoln | 28 | (2.0) Say if you guys are okay then can we move on to the next one |
| | | 29 | then? |
| 54 | Samesh | 30 | Yes yes yes yes |

After Samuel delivers his plans and expectations in turn 50, Lincoln further clarifies Samuel's points to Advik in turn 51 by saying "but if we can make it more clear for you Advik" (lines 12 and 13).

Example 6.51

Context: Samuel answers Advik's inquiry and his messages are further clarified by Lincoln

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 61 | Advik | 1 | And a lot of work has been done by the vendor already? |
| | | 2 | The vendor will be involved in application design and providing us |
| | | 3 | mhm::: their::: best mhm::: design to moving forward in terms of |
| | | 4 | how our infrastructure should look (.) However how we actually |
| | | 5 | set that infrastructure up in AusBank will be dependent on our |
| | | 6 | infrastructure designers and our solution designers (.) making sure |
| | | 7 | that what CA provides meets our standard so there may be some |
| | | 8 | work required that will deviate from what the vendor suggested to |
| | | 9 | what we design to ensure that integrates with all our firewalls |
| | | 10 | integration will be quite an important piece because significant |
| 62 | Samuel | 11 | number of service with the (UTSM) switch (.) I think the |

| | | | |
|----|---------|----|---|
| | | 12 | production is about // I don't know (.) anywhere between sixteen |
| | | 13 | hundred servers (.) This is global mind you (.) but just to give you |
| | | 14 | an idea it's quite a big uh:: piece of work (.) We only bring in two |
| | | 15 | new servers across (.) They will be putting two new servers and |
| | | 16 | then QA-ed and tested but we just have to be mindful with the fact |
| | | 17 | that there'll be quite a number of integration that we'll have to |
| | | 18 | manage (.) There'll be some network pieces (.) There'll be database |
| | | 19 | pieces (.) What we just have to make sure is that all is set up in a |
| | | 20 | timely manner that we're ahead of the ball (.) so that we'll ahead of |
| | | 21 | the game mhm:: but then there comes a piece of work everything |
| | | 22 | is set up and good to go so that [it (starts to be working) |
| | | 23 | [Yes yes Samuel if we can start |
| | | 24 | summarise that what // what Advik is asking is [Samuel: oh ok] |
| | | 25 | mhm:: Advik mhm:: just to make it very simple (.) we bring in CA |
| | | 26 | to all the application bit and make a recommendations regarding |
| | | 27 | the infrastructure CA are contractually under the agreement (.) to |
| | | 28 | deliver all the application bit and make sure that the testing and |
| | | 29 | working of these applications work correctly on the infrastructure |
| | | 30 | (.) That way that includes the firewall and all the network side of |
| | | 31 | things under their recommendation so they're only recommending |
| | | 32 | in the infrastructure (.) They do not actually touching or delivering |
| 63 | Lincoln | 33 | any of our infrastructure |
| 64 | Advik | 34 | Yeah yeah thanks a lot Lincoln (.) Maybe I cannot kind of express |
| | | 35 | it very clearly |
| 65 | Samuel | 36 | No no that's fine |

In the above excerpt, Lincoln paraphrases Advik's message for Samuel by saying "if we can start summarise that what Advik is asking is...just to make it very simple..." (lines 23 to 25). Examples 6.50 and 6.51 show how Lincoln clarifies and summarises team members' messages to ensure smooth information flow between them.

Lincoln also provides summary statements (Example 6.15, p.137) and refers to intertextual documents during topic transition to guide the participants on the meeting process as well as keeping them on track (Example 6.6, p.124). Since this meeting is about giving instructions and delivering expectations of a project from the Australia office to the India office, numerous markers are used by Lincoln (Example 6.3, p.121) and Samuel to frame their delivery of project goals and expectations, "making sure/make sure" are used 27 times, "we need to look at/we are looking at" are used 7 times, "we are expecting/our expectation is" are used twice and

“ensure”, “I envisage” are used once respectively. The use of such markers to frame their delivery of goals and expectations can enhance clarity and help orient Samesh and Advik’s focus and attention to what is deemed important in carrying out the project.

6.2.3.2 Discourse Management

The structure of the current meeting is spiral without clear and straightforward linear progression. This is mainly due to the fact that this meeting is task-oriented and is concerned with planning and discussing how a project should be carried out and participants discuss around a topic back and forth when they consider it necessary.

Lincoln manages the discourse by opening and closing the meeting, checking mutual understanding and making summaries after each discussion point and decides on when a discussion topic is sufficiently dealt with and moves on to the next topic (Example 6.50, p.218, turn 53).

6.2.3.3 Interpersonal Control

Due to the nature and purpose of the current VTM, which is about planning and delivering goals and expectations from the Australia office to the India office, it can be expected that the meeting is full of requests and directives. Bald-on imperatives and interrogatives of directives are not apparent, and the commands made by Samuel and Lincoln are usually realised in declarative forms together with mitigating devices to tone down authoritative and obligatory force. A typical example of how Lincoln puts forward his requests throughout the meeting is illustrated in the example below:

Example 6.52

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 22 | Lincoln | 1 | We just need to make sure that we can put some structure around it because there are different architects working on some external we call it VWC working (.) So you know just making sure that the cost side of things is under control (.) Helping uh them uh making sure that the project schedule is in line with the way the documentation as the stuff is progressing |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |
| | | 4 | |
| | | 5 | |
| | | 6 | |

Various relational language devices can be observed in the excerpt above. For example, the use of inclusive pronoun “we” (line 1) instead of “you” signals the task as a shared, joint effort instead of putting the responsibility solely on the India team. He also makes use of hedges such as “some structure around it” (line 1) and “stuff” (line 6) as well as mitigating minimiser “just” (line 3) to tone down his requests.

Lincoln also projects his requests as personal/team needs instead of institutional obligation and they are realised as in the examples shown below:

Example 6.53

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 11 | Lincoln | 1 | Do you mind if uh I give you a quick update on uh where we are and how we need uh your support to validate what our requirements are now. |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |

Example 6.54

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 77 | Lincoln | 1 | That's why we need someone like yourself or someone from India team to come in and help us |
| | | 2 | |

By framing his requests as Australian team’s needs together with a modal clause “Do you mind if” (Example 6.53 – line 1) he not only mitigates the institutional and authoritative force of his requests from his Indian colleagues, he also says that India team’s effort is important to the success of the project (Example 6.54); it thus functions as attending to his Indian teammates’ positive face need and enhances trust and cohesion of the virtual work team. It is also worthy

to note that there are frequent hesitation markers “uh” in Lincoln’s utterance in turn 11, which may suggest his uneasiness while delivering task requirements and expectations. Although giving instructions and delivering expectations are the main purposes of current meeting, it is observed that the Australian team tones down their demands for relational purposes.

6.2.3.4 Emotional Expressions

Lincoln expresses his gratitude and appreciation of the Indian team in the closing stage of the VTM, also trying to build good collegial relationship with them:

Example 6.55

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|---|
| 85 | Lincoln | Thank you so much any support we can get would be greatly appreciated |

CAT strategies employed by VTM B1 participants are summarized in table 6.20 as shown below:

| | Lincoln | Samuel | Samesh, Advik |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|
| Interpretability | (+) Frame markers (Ex. 6.3) (+) Check question (Table 6.1) (+) Provide summary statement (Ex. 6.15, 6.48) (+) Provide clarification (Ex. 6.50, 6.51) (+) Intertextual references (Ex. 6.6) (+) Signposting | (+) Frame markers (Ex. 6.3) | |
| Discourse Management | Control meeting progress, topic transition (Ex. 6.50) (+) Provide information to develop topic (Ex. 6.50, 6.51) | (+) Provide information to develop topic (Ex. 6.50, 6.51) | (+) Ask for information and clarification (Ex. 6.50, 6.51) (+) Backchannelling |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Interpersonal Control | (+) Mitigate directives through relational language (Ex. 6.52, 6.53 and 6.54) | (+) Mitigate directives through relational language | |
| Emotional Expressions | (+) Appreciate support from team members (Ex. 6.55) | | |

Table 6.20 CAT strategies in VTM B1 (+ Accommodative; - Nonaccommodative)

6.2.4 CAT Strategies in VTM B2

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Organisation | AusBank |
| Number of participants | Six |
| Relationship of speakers | Manager – Subordinates (Intradepartmental) |
| Participants | Ann: Asian female team manager, based in Melbourne Evak: Indian male team member, based in Bangalore Henry: Australian male team member, based in Melbourne Jack: Australian male team member, based in Melbourne Thomas: Australian male team member, based in Melbourne Aakesh: Indian male team member, based in Bangalore |
| Purpose of meeting | Task/problem – oriented (present and forward-oriented) |
| Meeting Topic | Procedure; Technical |

Table 6.21 Context of VTM B2

6.2.4.1 Interpretability

Ann introduces the agenda in the beginning of the meeting using signposting to clearly introduce the discussion topics to the VTM participants and adheres to them strictly which helps enhance the clarity of the purpose for other participants (Example 6.2, p.119). She also asks check questions (Table 6.1, p.134), refers to intertextual references such as agenda (Example 6.7, p.125), and summarises discussion points regularly to ensure participants' understanding of the issues discussed (Example 6.16, p.137).

6.2.4.2 Discourse Management

There is no small talk in the pre-meeting stage of this VTM. In the pre-meeting stage, the team members greet each other, the manager performs attendance check and Aakesh introduces himself since he is new to the team and this is his first VTM with other team members.

Example 6.56

Context: VTM participants greet each other in the beginning of the meeting.

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|----------------------------|---|
| 1 | Ann | 1 | Okay I think we can start now |
| 2 | Ann | 2 | Okay guys can you hear me clearly? |
| 3 | Evak | 3 | Yes Ann we can hear you |
| 4 | Ann | 4 5 6 7 | Okay mhm::: Okay thank you everyone for joining the mhm the meeting (.) Now let's go through who attend from the Melbourne side and Bangalore side (.) From Melbourne we have Henry Jack Thomas and myself |
| 5 | Henry | 8 | Hey guys |
| 6 | Jack | 9 | Hi guys |
| 7 | Evak | 10 | Hi hello everyone |
| 8 | Ann | 11 | Okay uh::: so::: tell me who's in Bangalore please? |
| 9 | Evak | 12 | Okay um::: From Bangalore we have Aakesh and myself |
| 10 | Ann | 13 | Hi guys hi Evak and the team |
| 11 | Evak | 14 | Hi Ann |
| 12 | Ann | 15 16 17 18 | Mhm::: mhm Okay (.) first we're going through the meeting agenda for today mhm::: I believe we have a new team member (.) Do you want to include this new team member and let him include himself to the team? |
| 13 | Evak | 19 20 21 | Yeah we have a new team member called Aakesh (.) So he just joined this team on fifteenth of Jan (.) So Aakesh was working in German Bank as well as in mhm [financial company] |
| 14 | Aakesh | 22 23 24 | Hi I'll take it from here Ann (.) I have four point five years of experience altogether I was with (financial company) asset management and invest with income size close to two millions |
| 15 | Ann | 25 | Okay hello |
| 16 | Jack | 26 | Shall we call you mhm Aakesh? |
| 17 | Aakesh | 27 | Yeah yeah that'll do |
| 18 | Jack | 28 | Yep |
| 19 | Ann | 29 | Okay (.) alright welcome to the team |
| 20 | Aakesh | 30 | Thank you |
| 21 | Henry | 31 | Welcome |
| 22 | Aakesh | 32 | Thanks |
| 23 | Ann | 33 34 35 36 37 | OK mhm::: now let me go through the meeting agenda for today mhm::: first we'll go through the Indian leave during the month of February in Bangalore and Melbourne then we will mhm go through mhm the MBM department initiatives and requests (.) Then after that we speak about the MBM validation and |

| | | | |
|--|--|----|---|
| | | 38 | investigation for equity (.) I have sent the document out which |
| | | 39 | mhm which I believe you have a chance to read through (.) I would |
| | | 40 | open for any questions and feedbacks that you have on this |
| | | 41 | documentation (.) mhm then any other issues and questions (.) |
| | | 42 | open for the team to discuss, now let's go through the leave during |
| | | 43 | February mhm ((MS4)) do you want to brief me and the |
| | | 44 | Melbourne team of who is on leave during February? |

The manager manages the discourse through controlling meeting structure and topic transition, and she adheres to the agenda strictly throughout the meeting. She first introduces agenda topics one by one in the beginning of the meeting (turn 23), and before she moves on to each discussion point, she asks check questions and provides summary statements, which are followed by topic transition phrases such as “mhm let's move on mhm we'll talk about the development or initiatives and the requests” (turn 33); “mhm let's move on to migration initiative and the licensing issue” (turn 67) and “I'm just concerned about time so let's move on to the next item we have in the agenda” (turn 88). The transitional phrases she uses above helped enhance clarity in terms of meeting structure.

6.2.4.3 Interpersonal Control

Ann also performs requests and directives in declaratives. However, these declaratives are not as hedged with mitigating devices and more direct as compared to other VTM managers in the current study. Some examples of her requests in declarative forms are:

Example 6.57

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 33 | Ann | 1 | After the release I would expect to have some post- |
| | | 2 | implementation checks and I will request your help and assistance |
| | | 3 | mhm:: picking up any problems (.) any operational issues during |
| | | 4 | this release (.) So we'll keep you guys posted |

Example 6.58

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 66 | Ann | 1 | There are several action items from this development queue (1.0) |
| | | 2 | Henry is going to speak to Thomas about global service |
| | | 3 | development mhm and you guys identify a deadline (.) when you |
| | | 4 | want it to be in UAT (.) Henry to ensure that will allow sufficient |
| | | 5 | time for us to do all the testing |

Examples 6.57 and 6.58 above show how her managerial authority is enacted in her directives. In turn 33, she uses self-referential pronoun “I” with power-signalling action words such as “expect” and “request”, together with strong deontic modality “will” in “I will request” to enact her managerial authority (lines 1 and 2). In turn 66, she also makes use of hedge-free declarative with high deontic modality while designating tasks to her team members as in “Henry is going to speak to Thomas” and “you guys identify a deadline” (lines 1 to 3). Her use of directives leaves little space for other team members to negotiate and thus, is regarded as non-accommodative in terms of Interpersonal Control under CAT framework.

The way Ann gives directives to her team is typically regarded as a normatively masculine interactional style, which is realised by her use of hedge-free declaratives with high deontic modality. It is reasonable to speculate her female identity may play a crucial role for her leadership enactment. As the only female member as well as a team leader in this VTM, she may feel the need to demonstrate her assertiveness and enact her managerial authority through her interactional style with a team full of male members. However, a female leader adopting a masculine interactional style in the workplace is not unproblematic and she may risk jeopardising not only her femininity but also her role as an effective leader. If she conforms to the expectations of how women should talk in the workplace and adopts a normatively feminine interactional style, her competence as a leader may be undermined. This issue is termed by Tannen as the “double bind” (1998, p. 203). Ladegaard’s (2011b) study on how male and female leaders ‘do power’ in a large Danish corporation also demonstrates this dilemma faced by female leaders. His study shows that while male leaders may adopt normatively feminine interactional and management styles, which yield positive results from the team, this is not always the case for female leaders. When female leaders adopt a normatively feminine management style in the workplace, their professional integrity may be jeopardised by the male

staff. His research also calls on increased awareness of the negative stereotypes against female leaders in the workplace.

6.2.4.4 Emotional Expressions

Appreciation toward individual team member as well as teams is expressed by Ann in terms of Emotional Expressions. For instance, her appreciation towards Jack in turn 75 “thanks first for all the good work that you've done with the migration” (Example 6.43, p.199) and her gratitude towards the team in turn 77 “Yeah so it's quite an effort from everyone and I would like to thank you over for this”. As discussed in Section 6.1.5, showing recognition and appreciation for team effort and achievement is considered to be accommodating to other’s emotional needs and can facilitate team trust and team cohesion.

Table 6.22 below illustrates CAT strategies employed by VTM B2 participants:

| | Ann | Subordinates |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Interpretability | (+) Check questions (Table 6.1) (+) Signposting (Ex. 6.2) (+) Intertextual reference (agenda) (+) Provide summary (Ex 6.16) | |
| Discourse Management | Control meeting progress, topic transition and turn allocation (Ex 6.56) (-) No small talk | (+) Providing information to develop topic |
| Interpersonal Control | (-) Bald and direct requests in declaratives (Ex. 6.57 and 6.58) | |
| Emotional Expressions | (+) Appreciation | |

Table 6.22 CAT strategies in VTM B2 (+ Accommodative; - Nonaccommodative)

6.2.5 CAT Strategies in VTM B3

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Organisation | AusBank |
| Number of participants | Two |
| Relationship of speakers | Manager – Subordinate (Intradepartmental) |

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Participants | Oliver: Australian male manager located in Australia Tiffany: Hong Kong female subordinate located in Hong Kong |
| Purpose of meeting | Planning (forward – oriented), giving/receiving information |
| Meeting Topic | Procedures |

Table 6.23 Context of VTM B3

6.2.5.1 Interpretability

Oliver, the native Australian manager and meeting chair in this meeting, makes use of various accommodating Interpretability strategies to facilitate Tiffany's (a native Hong Kong Chinese) understanding (Example 6.11, p.126). As this meeting is instructional in nature, i.e., Oliver gives instructions to Tiffany on carrying out various tasks, he makes use of signposting and numerous check markers (total of 36 times) such as “okay?” and “alright?” throughout the meeting to ensure Tiffany's understanding (Table 6.1, p.134 and Table 6.2, p.135). Apart from heavy use of check markers, he also refers to other intertextual references (Examples 6.8, p.125 and Example 6.9, p.126) as well as examples to illustrate his points with moderate speech pace. The reason for his heavy use of accommodating Interpretability strategies to check understanding may be due to the fact that Tiffany is a non-native speaker of English, which may have motivated him to adjust his speech accordingly to ensure understanding. Constant feedback and backchannelling provided by Tiffany signals that she understands what has been presented to her and can be regarded as accommodating Interpretability as well as Discourse Management strategies.

6.2.5.2 Discourse Management

There is no greeting and no small talk in the pre-meeting stage, and Oliver starts the transactional talk right after the conference call begins. There is, however, some office gossip concerning a colleague which is observed in the middle of the meeting and it is initiated by Tiffany (Example 6.24, p.168). The topic for the gossip illustrates that they are familiar and comfortable with each other.

Oliver is the one who controls the discourse and he manages the meeting by deciding which topics to discuss, how much they should discuss on the topics, and he steers the discussion back to business issues at hand when it deviates (Example 6.24, p.168).

Turn distributions are even between Oliver and Tiffany. However, there is a stark contrast in their turn durations. Number of turns, total turn durations and average turn duration are shown in the table below:

| Speaker | Number of turns | Total Duration (sec) | Average Turn Duration (sec) |
|---------|-----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Oliver | 33 | 1529.64 (86.7%) | 46.35 |
| Tiffany | 33 | 240.72 (13.3%) | 7.29 |

Table 6.24 Number of turns, total and average turn durations of VTM B3 participants (in seconds)

As shown in the table above, Oliver takes up 86.7% of total speech time and his average turn duration is 6.4 times more than Tiffany's. The different speech duration and distribution between the two participants are heavily influenced by the instructional nature of this meeting as well as Oliver's instructional style. His turns are mainly instructional in nature which include explanations, clarifications and examples which result in long speech turns (Example 6.11, p.126). Tiffany, on the other hand, performs a compliance role and mainly provides backchannelling as feedback to Oliver's instructions, which explains why her speech durations are much lower than Oliver's

6.2.5.3 Interpersonal Control

Managerial power of the manager can be observed in different occasions which will be exemplified below:

Example 6.59

Context: Oliver makes decision on agenda topics without mutual consent

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|---|
| 11 | Oliver | Anyway we can // do you prefer me to print it out? Was there much changes? Or we can talk through it [quickly |
| 12 | Tiffany | [Uh:::No yeah I don't think I have much changes? But I just mhm add one point on top of yours (.) the mhm the task you assigned to me to try to assist the team (.) uh:: do a better job [Oliver: yeah] yeah apart from that everything // all the items are the same |
| 13 | Oliver | OK [so if I // yep |
| 14 | Tiffany | [But but but yep |
| 15 | Oliver | But let's go through them one by one very quickly yeah? |
| 16 | Tiffany | Yeah yeah yeah okay uh yep |

In turn 11, Oliver asks Tiffany whether there are many changes made in the agenda items and Tiffany replies that not much has been changed, except the additional point she adds in turn 12. Albeit full of hesitation markers “Uh” and “mhm” in her turn, which suggests her uneasiness of performing a potentially face-threatening act by adding a discussion topic to Oliver’s agenda, her reply implicitly implies that they do not need to go through all discussion points which remain largely the same. However, Oliver insists on going through all the discussion items after the concessive conjunction “But” in turn 15, even though he offers the opportunity for Tiffany to make the decision. Tiffany then has to comply with Oliver’s authority as Team Manager and agrees to his suggestion in turn 16.

Another way Oliver enacts his managerial role is to mention his role explicitly (as discussed in Section 6.1.4) and shown in the example below:

Example 6.60

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 19 | Oliver | 1 | From a business perspective // from from from uh a business manager's perspective (.) and I agree with him (.) we need to somehow come up with a strategic if not tactical solution |
| | | 2 | |
| | | 3 | |

Although Oliver makes use of non-accommodating Interpersonal Control strategy to state his authority and role explicitly as in “from a business manager’s perspective” (lines 1 to 2), he does so with repeated hesitations “from from from uh” in line 1 which also suggests it may be difficult for him to enact his authority in an overt manner.

Similar to other VTMs in the data set, Oliver tries to mitigate his managerial power while performing directives through the use of declaratives with the inclusive self-referential pronoun “we” to signal team effort instead of Tiffany’s sole responsibilities:

Example 6.61

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|---|
| 17 | Oliver | I think we're doing well we just need to carry on doing it and also bring it to the next level [Tiffany: yeah] So more business focus (.) what we can add value instead of just a process okay? |

Example 6.62

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|--|
| 33 | Oliver | So we're gonna just have to assist them to migrate into that model |

Example 6.63

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|---|
| 59 | Oliver | We need to bring him up the curve in terms of control yeah? [Tiffany: Um] And I would need your help in trying to well you know [Tiffany: Okay] when you have a chance or whenever you spot something |

6.2.5.4 Emotional Expressions

In terms of Emotional Expressions, Oliver expresses his recognition through positive evaluation of Tiffany:

Example 6.64

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 59 | Oliver | 1 | Yeah I think in terms of control I'm pretty happy with you and |
| | | 2 | ((Male name1)) (.) in terms of control (.) You know what to do |
| | | 3 | anyway and you know what those controls are (.) I think I'm |
| | | 4 | gonna need your help to bring ((Male name2)) and ((Male |
| | | 5 | name3)) to speed up |

Oliver explicitly states that he is happy with Tiffany because she knows what she is doing, and that he would need her help to assist other team members who are not up to standard. As discussed in Section 6.1.5, recognition of team members’ performance is important in building team trust and can enhance the recipient’s professional identity and thus can be regarded as accommodating Emotional Expressions strategy in organisational settings. Although it can also be argued that his overt personal evaluation of Tiffany as in “I’m pretty happy with you” (line

1) can also be regarded as a way he enacts his managerial authority. Afterall, it is more common for superiors to make evaluative comments on their subordinates than the other way round.

The table below illustrates CAT strategies employed by Oliver and Tiffany in VTM B3:

| | Oliver | Tiffany |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Interpretability | (+) Check markers (Ex. 6.11; Table 6.1 and 6.2) (+) Signposting (Ex. 6.11) (+) Moderate pace (+) Intertextual reference (Ex. 6.8 and 6.9) | (+) Backchannelling (Ex. 6.63) |
| Discourse Management | Control meeting topics (Ex. 6.59) Occupy long turns (Table 6.24) (+) Steer back discussion when it deviates (Ex. 6.24) | Initiate small talk topic (Ex. 6.24) (+) Backchannelling (Ex. 6.63) |
| Interpersonal Control | (-) Make decision without consent (Ex. 6.59) (-) Mention managerial role explicitly (Ex. 6.60) (+) Requests in declarative forms with inclusive pronoun 'we' (Ex. 6.61, 6.62 and 6.63) | |
| Emotional Expressions | (+) Recognition (Ex. 6.44) | |

Table 6.25 CAT strategies in VTM B3 (+ Accommodative; - Nonaccommodative)

6.2.6 CAT Strategies in VTM B4

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Organisation | AusBank |
| Number of participants | Nine |
| Relationship of speakers | Manager – Subordinates |
| Participants | Noah: Australian male team manager based in Australia Lucas: Australian male team member based in Australia Charlotte: Australian female team member based in Australia Olivia: Australian female team member based in Australia Mia: Australian female team member based in Australia Anaisha: Indian female team member based in Bangalore Ava: Australian female team member based in Australia Grace: Australian female team member based in Australia Amelia: Australian female team member based in Australia |
| Purpose of meeting | Reviewing (backward-oriented), planning (forward-oriented) |
| Meeting Topic | Staff Training |

Table 6.26 Context of VTM B4

6.2.6.1 Interpretability

Interpretability strategies to enhance mutual understanding are not found to be apparent in VTM B4. The reason for this may be that eight out of nine participants in the meeting are native speakers of Australian English. Also, from the small talk in the pre-meeting stage, it can be observed that the Australian participants know each other quite well. Although they are dispersed in different sites across Australia, they do meet each other in different offices sometimes, and they should be familiar with each other's speech styles.

6.2.6.2 Discourse Management

One of the main purposes of this meeting is to review team member progress from different sites but unlike VTM A2, VTM B4 does not seem to have a strict order or agenda for participants to follow. The manager manages the discourse by opening and closing the meeting, as well as selecting turns for participants to report as in turn 32 “now let's start the meeting. I think we can start with you Olivia and Mia, if you can give us some updates on what's happening in your sites at the moment” (Table 6.6, p.144). It is also observed that participants have greater flexibility to self-select and join the discussion while other participants are reporting (Example 6.20, p.151, Example 6.65, p.234, Table 6.13, 165), and most of these self-selected turns are positive reactions and encouragements to the participants as shown in the excerpt below:

Context: Exchanges between VTM participants during Grace's progress report

Example 6.65

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|---|
| 61 | Noah | That's a great opportunity (.) I mean it's gonna be hard work |
| 62 | Mia | That's really cool |
| 63 | Grace | Yep (.) So we have to be in touch with them at least three times a week |
| 64 | Noah | Yep |
| 65 | Grace | Mhm::: just to manage them |
| 66 | Noah | And we'll be friends with [Indian male name] |
| 67 | Grace | That's brilliant |
| 68 | Lucas | That's great |
| 69 | Grace | Yeah that should be fun |
| 70 | Noah | It shall be and you'll be very occupied |

However, as discussed in Table 6.6 (p.144), Noah intends to start the meeting pre-maturely before all team members have joined the meeting, possibly because he wants to adhere to the scheduled meeting time. But it results in multiple cut-offs during Noah's meeting opening phrase and obstructs the flow in the beginning of the meeting.

6.2.6.3 Interpersonal Control

Managerial role is mainly manifested through meeting management by the chair. Controlling participants using authoritative managerial power is not apparent in this meeting. VTM B4 is full of jokes and co-constructed positive humor sequences initiated by various participants, and the overall atmosphere of the meeting is friendly, collaborative and supportive. Example 6.66 below illustrates how humour "slips in" the transactional talk, and how relational practices such as humour and laughter further one of the transactional goals of VTM B4:

Example 6.66

Context: Noah, Team Manager and meeting Chair, reminds his team that they need to submit a bi-annual personal profile and share it with the upper management. The team co-construct an extended humour sequence concerning a photo to be included in the personal profile:

| Speaker | Line | |
|-----------|------|--|
| Mia | 1 | Do we have to take a photo? |
| Lucas | 2 | Yes |
| Noah | 3 | I have a question about photos |
| | 4 | [Team laugh] |
| Noah | 5 | Mhm fortunately we're all extremely attractive so |
| | 6 | [Team laugh] |
| Lucas | 7 | It's not gonna be a problem |
| Charlotte | 8 | Maybe we can take a long-distance shot |
| | 9 | [Team laugh] |
| Noah | 10 | Alright I'll be taking // I'll be here and the camera will be in our (XXX) |
| | 11 | [Team laugh] |
| Noah | 12 | Should be pretty good (.) I'll stand at the window(.) mhm are there any |
| | 13 | other questions or issues (.) people have any concerns they would like to |
| | 14 | raise in the forum? |

Mia raises a question and asks whether she needs to include a photo in the personal profile in line 1, which elicits Noah's response in line 3 "I have a question about photos", which signals his reluctance to include a photo in the profile, and his response results in laughter from the team. He then elaborates on his previous comment and provides assurance to the team by saying "Mhm fortunately we're all extremely attractive" in line 5, which attends to the team's positive face needs, assuring the concern that they may have and frame it as a humorous response. By using the inclusive pronoun "we", he also aligns himself with the team rather than presenting himself as part of the management. Lucas's comment "it's not gonna be a problem" in line 7 aligns with Noah's proposition and provides further assurance to the team. Another team member, Charlotte, co-constructs the humour initiated by Noah in line 8 by saying "maybe we can take a long-distance shot" which is elaborated further by Noah in line 10. This extended humour sequence is a positive one since it is acknowledged by the team members through laughter that it attends to the positive face needs of the team members, as well as providing assurance to them. The way different team members co-construct this humour sequence also signals the team's engagement, participation and cohesiveness. Therefore, it should be considered as an accommodative Interpersonal Control strategy. This also aligns with Holmes and Stubbe's (2003) observation on shared humour that:

The emphasis [is] common ground and shared norms. A humorous comment which elicits a positive response (such as a laugh or a smile) [...] indicates that the speaker shares with others a common view about what is amusing – thus creating or maintaining solidarity, while also enhancing the speaker's status within the group. A collaborative, interactively constructed sequence [...] indicates even more clearly that colleagues are on the same wavelength. (p. 111)

Through constructing positive humour, the transactional goal of including a photo in the personal profile for the management team is also accomplished. Note that Noah also

demonstrates his authority in lines 12 to 14; he is the one to decide when the humour sequence should end and get back to transactional talk by asking “are there any other questions or issues”.

Example 6.19 illustrates an instance in which a subordinate makes a potentially face-threatening joke about Noah, which results in the whole team laughing as a whole. Charlotte’s joke about Noah in turn 15 (Example 6.19, p. 150) could have been received by Noah as face-threatening and offensive but this is not the case. Noah replies to Charlotte in turn 16 “I thought I did it in a very caring way Charlotte” results in even more laughter from the team. It can be inferred that the jokes they share are positively perceived by VTM participants. Another example of this kind of potentially offensive joke which is perceived positively is shown below:

Example 6.67

Context: Noah explains to VTM participants that the meeting is recorded before team’s progress report

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|--|
| 32 | Noah | Now we have been recorded which will form part of my mhm programme of attaining managing virtual teams and stakeholders (.) We still run the call the same way as normal and Olivia I'm sure you'll still behave as natural as you always do |
| | | [Team laughs] |

Noah in the example above makes a sarcastic joke about Olivia which implies that she does not always behave “naturally” in Noah’s terms. Instead of being taken as an offensive comment, the whole team, including Olivia, just laugh about it-

6.2.6.4 Emotional Expressions

Apart from the virtual applause initiated by the manager for the team’s achievement as shown in Example 6.46 (p. 202), there are also encouragements and cheering between VTM

participants on each other's progress. A strong sense of team success and team cohesion can be observed in VTM B4.

The table below illustrates CAT strategies employed by both VTM participants in VTM B4:

| | Noah | Team members |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Interpretability | | |
| Discourse Management | Open and closing meeting Turn allocation (+) Small talk and greetings in pre-meeting stage (Table 6.6) | |
| Interpersonal Control | | |
| Emotional Expressions | (+) Recognition (Ex. 6.46) (+) Jokes (Ex. 6.19, 6.66, 6.67) (+) Laughter (Ex. 6.19, 6.66, 6.67) | (+) Recognition (Ex. 6.46) (+) Jokes (Ex. 6.19, 6.66) (+) Laughter (Ex. 6.19, 6.66, 6.67) |

Table 6.27 CAT strategies in VTM B4 (+ Accommodative; - Nonaccommodative)

6.2.7 CAT Strategies in VTM B5

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Organisation | AusBank |
| Number of participants | Three |
| Relationship of speakers | Peers |
| Participants | Angela: Asian female meeting chair based in Singapore Connie: Asian female meeting participant based in Hong Kong Snowy: Asian female meeting participant based in Hong Kong |
| Purpose of meeting | Giving/receiving information, task/problem-oriented (present-oriented) |
| Meeting Topic | Instructional; Procedural |

Table 6.28 Context of VTM B5

6.2.7.1 Interpretability

All three meeting participants in VTM B5 make use of intertextual referencing and refer to external documents to orient their interlocutors to the issues that they want to focus on. Signposting is used by Angela and Connie since they want to break down their long turns into smaller sections. Check questions are mainly used by Angela to check Connie and Snowy's understanding. This is due to the instructional nature of VTM B5 and Angela's role as meeting chair and information giver. By asking check questions, she continuously ensures her messages

are clearly delivered and understood by Connie and Snowy whose native language is not English.

6.2.7.2 Discourse Management

Although there are three participants in the meeting, Snowy's involvement in the meeting is very low. She only takes six turns out of total of 112 turns, and most exchanges in VTM B5 take place between Angela and Connie (Table 6.14, p.167). The transcript of VTM B5 reveals that Snowy is brought into the meeting by Connie to sit in and raise any questions she has in terms of the procedures discussed. So, it can be inferred that she is not a regular member of this virtual meeting team and this may explain why her involvement is low.

There are greetings and small talk between Angela and Connie in the pre-meeting stage. As the facilitator of the meeting, Angela manages the discourse via opening and closing the meeting as well as topic transition (Examples 6.21 and Example 6.22, p.156). Since most interactions only involve Angela and Connie, the turn-taking patterns in this meeting appear to be in adjacency pairs (Table 6.14, p.167). Selecting Snowy as next speaker by Angela and Connie happens but rarely (3 turns in total).

Topics for this meeting are concerned with Angela giving information and instructions to Connie on how to fill out a template regarding staffing and cost in Connie's Hong Kong site, as the headquarter in Australia does not seem to know much about what is going on in the Hong Kong office. The discussion pattern is found to be spiral with both speakers going back and forth on the discussion points.

6.2.7.3 Interpersonal Control

Although Angela and Connie are peers without differences in rank, Angela is regarded to have more power as she is the one who has more procedural knowledge on how to fill out the form and what kind of information should be included in the form. However, Angela is found to offer a great degree of agency and autonomy to Connie in completing the tasks, which will be illustrated in the examples below:

Context: Angela gives information and instructions to Connie on how to fill out a form regarding staffing in Connie's Hong Kong office

Example 6.68

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|---|
| 44 | Angela | 1 | So the next one is that general learning data (.) Now this again is |
| | | 2 | an overview of the information (.) So this is just question one |
| | | 3 | question two (.) It's just really your view on what you think is |
| | | 4 | going well and what you think you would like to // And in terms |
| | | 5 | of development it's not necessarily personal development (.) You |
| | | 6 | just need more people in your team so you have more time or |
| | | 7 | something like that (1.0) So that's really your view (.) You don't |
| | | 8 | need to stress too much about that (.) The whole exercise is not a |
| | | 9 | case of anybody (.) It is not about the people (.) It is just about the |
| | | 10 | processes and information that you're providing (.) So there will |
| | | 11 | be no // this person does this or this person does this (.) It's just |
| | | 12 | what's really happening (.) Just don't feel // It's not personal at |
| | | 13 | all (.) Let's just refer them to // Just don't feel that you're doing |
| | | 14 | something |

Example 6.69

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|------|--|
| 54 | Angela | 1 | For all these things (.) if you don't have the actual data easily on |
| | | 2 | hand (.) an estimate is alright (1.0) Again with the average |
| | | 3 | training centre employed (.) You may not have data at the |
| | | 4 | moment (.) That's fine (.) If you have estimate (.) provide an |
| | | 5 | estimate (.) If you really don't know (.) just say you have no data |
| | | 6 | available (.) |

In turn 44, Angela keeps repeating that the purpose of the exercise is “really your view” (line 3 and line 7), and that Connie does not need to “stress too much about that” (line 8). The way she intensifies Connie's view with “really” (line 3 and line 7), and mitigates the negative perception of such form filling as a check-up from the upper management with the minimizer

“just” (eight times in total), as in “it is just about the process and information that you’re providing” (lines 10 and 10). Angela also encourages Connie to freely express her view, and that she should not be intimidated by the process by saying: “it’s just what’s really happening. Just don’t feel -it’s not personal at all...just don’t feel that you’re doing something” in turn 44 (lines 11 to 14).

Angela’s extensive use of hedges in turn 44 functions as attenuating the force of her directives. As the purpose of the form, which Connie needs to fill in, regards to reporting her Hong Kong site’s progress and situation to the headquarter, it can be regarded as a ‘check-up’ and is intrusive in nature, which could infuse objection and resentment from Connie. This explains why Angela draws on a range of linguistic and pragmatic devices in her directives so as to release the tension in VTM B5.

It can also be observed that Angela offers Connie flexibility on how to complete the form in turn 54 where she says that Connie can provide either actual data or an estimate or even no data, depending on her situation instead of confining her on what she needs to provide according to the organisation’s need and requirements.

Although Angela adopts a normatively feminine interactional style full of relational discursive strategies to tone down her directives and requests to Connie, the performance of her leadership role is not always unproblematic and at times, she is challenged by Connie:

Example 6.70

Context: Connie asks Angela for clarifications with regards to the form she has to fill in for the Hong Kong office

| Turn | Speaker | Line | |
|------|---------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 97 | Connie | 1 2 3 4 | Let's just start with three point one of cost (.) Please provide breakdown of cost including additional category personnel cost (1.0) You're not expecting me to go to HRM to find out what's the personnel cost for HK (.) are you? |
| 98 | Angela | 5 | No no that's fine (.) That's fine Connie |
| 99 | Connie | 6 7 | And how much do we invest in personnel technology? I would have no idea. |
| 100 | Angela | 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 | Well I guess that one is just // if you have // So if you have any additional laptop or any::: I don't know if you have iPads or anything like that are used for training (.) then you just add in details there (1.0) Some countries have special software licenses that they use (.) So // and if you don't know about it it's just probably nothing because a lot of those things are paid essentially at Melbourne. |

As stated previously, the purpose of VTM B5 is instructional: Angela giving information to Connie and Snowy on how to fill in a form, which aims to provide the Hong Kong site operations details to the headquarter in Melbourne. Therefore, the purpose of this form can be regarded by Connie and Snowy as intrusive. This can be illustrated by Connie's defensive and challenging enquiry with tag question forms in lines 3 to 4: "You're not expecting me to go to HRM to find out what's the personnel cost for HK (.) are you?". According to Holmes (1990), tag questions may take a variety of forms and can serve a range of functions including: expressing uncertainty; requesting information of the proposition from the addressee; acting as a positive politeness device to provide an opportunity for the addressee to contribute to the conversation; acting as an negative politeness devices to reduce the force of a directive or criticism, or serving as challenging strategies and to force addressee to take a speaking turn or intensifying the force of a negative speech act.

In this case, Connie frames her enquiry as an interrogative followed by a canonical tag "are you?", and her tag question functions as a challenging strategy to coerce agreement of her proposition from Angela. Holmes (1990) argues that this kind of canonical question tag is often

used as “an attack by the speaker, who is often in a more powerful role, and aim at eliciting an admission or acknowledgement from the less powerful addressee” (p. 188).

Having sensed the defensive and challenging stance proposed by Connie through her use of question tags, Angela immediately offers assurance to Connie’s proposition in her repeated phrases “No no that’s fine (.) that’s fine Connie” (line 5). After Angela gives in in line 5, Connie further challenges another question on the form by saying “I would have no idea” in lines 6 and 7. Her negative comment again elicits Angela’s explanation in turn 100, which is filled with hedges “if” (four times), “just” (three times), “probably” (line 13), “I guess” (line 8) and “I don’t know” (line 9) to tone down her directives as well as her authority.

Apart from allowing flexibility for her interlocutors on how to complete tasks as shown in the excerpts above, Angela also allows choices to Connie and Snowy in terms of Discourse Management as illustrated below:

Example 6.71

Context: Angela asks if Connie or Snowy need to leave before the meeting finishes

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|---|
| 88 | Angela | Okay that’s fine. We’re getting close to ten-thirty. I’m okay to stay on. But do either of you need to leave at five to ten-thirty? |

The meeting transcript suggests that the meeting starts thirty minutes later than scheduled and that is the reason why the team does not manage to finish all discussion topics by the scheduled finish time ten-thirty. Instead of asking the participants to stay and finish the discussion, Angela offers the opportunity for Connie and Snowy to leave if they need to.

She also asks Connie and Snowy if it is okay for her to move on to the next discussion point before she transits the topic as in turn 91:

Example 6.72

Context: Angela seeks agreement for topic transition from Connie and Snowy

| Turn | Speaker | |
|------|---------|--|
| 91 | Angela | Okay cool alright. Let's move on now to (XXX). Is that okay? |

Analysis of VTM B5 shows that Angela adopts a normatively feminine interactional style which characterised by abundant use of mitigating devices and allowing flexibility to her interlocutors when she delivers directives. However, it can also be argued that her interactional style allows room and paves the way for objections and challenges posed by Connie, especially when the topic is regarded by the participants as intrusive and offensive.

6.2.7.4 Emotional Expressions

As stated previously, the topic of VTM B5 can be intimidating to Connie and Snowy as it can be perceived as a check-up on the regional Hong Kong office from the upper management in Australian. This explains why Angela keeps offering accommodative Emotional Expressions such as affective and emotional assurance to Connie and states repeatedly that the exercise is just a process, and it is not personal and that they should not have any hard feelings, as illustrated in Examples 6.40 , 6.41, 6.42, (p. 198) and Examples 6.68 and 6.69 (p.240).

CAT strategies employed by VTM B5 participants are presented in the table below:

| | Angela | Connie |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Interpretability | (+) check questions (Table 6.1) (+) signposting (Ex. 6.10) (+) intertextual reference (Ex 6.10) | (+) signposting (+) intertextual reference |
| Discourse Management | Opening and closing (Ex. 6.39, 6.71) Topic transition (Ex 6.72) (+) Greeting and small talk | (+) Greeting and small talk |
| Interpersonal Control | (+) non-restrictive role by allowing autonomy and agency (Ex. 6.22, 6.40, 6.41, 6.42, 6.68, 6.69, 6.71) | |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Emotional Expressions | (+) Care and assurance (Ex. 6.40, 6.41, 6.42, 6.68, 6.69) | |
|------------------------------|---|--|

Table 6.29 CAT strategies in VTM B5 (+ Accommodative; - Nonaccommodative)

Summary

Section 6.1 in this Chapter (Chapter Six) has explored how VTM participants employ various CAT strategies to achieve their goals in virtual meetings and Section 6.2 discussed how contextual factors such as meeting purposes, meeting topics, number of VTM participants, English proficiency (and the perception of English proficiency) of VTM participants, relationships and familiarity between VTM participants, different cultural norms on leadership as well as interactional styles can impact CAT strategies employments in the seven VTMs respectively. A detailed discussion and summary will be provided in Chapter Eight: Discussion Chapter.

Chapter Seven

Applying Discursis to Virtual Team Meetings

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the use of Discursis, a Computer Aided Qualitative Discourse Analysis Software (CAQDAS) and a visual text analytic tool in complementing qualitative discourse analysis outlined in the previous chapter. Discursis uses the Leximancer (Smith, 2000; Smith & Humphreys, 2006) conceptual modelling algorithm to generate data-driven concepts and provides visualisation of exchanges over the entire text as well as on turn-to-turn level. The term ‘concept’ in Discursis is defined as “a set of terms that repeatedly occur together within a two-sentence window of the input text. The most frequently occurring term from this “bag of words” is used to name the concept” (Watson et al., 2015:62). Interpreting Discursis visual plots provides analysts quick overview on turn-taking dynamics, conceptual content, conceptual coherence as well as speakers’ engagement in an exchange.

Since its development, Discursis software has been successfully implemented to analyse healthcare communication (Angus et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2015; Chevalier et al., 2018; Watson et al., 2015). However, it has not yet been applied to the meeting genre. Thus, Discursis analysis in VTM contexts will present a novel application of this new technology in other communication settings.

This chapter begins with discussing key features in interpreting a Discursis plot (section 7.2). Comparisons of Discursis plots of various VTMs will be made in section 7.3 to investigate level of engagement between VTM participants and how it is revealed by the application of Discursis.

7.2 Interpreting a Discursis Plot

Discursis plot of VTM A1 is presented in Figure 7.1. Key features for interpretation are presented below:

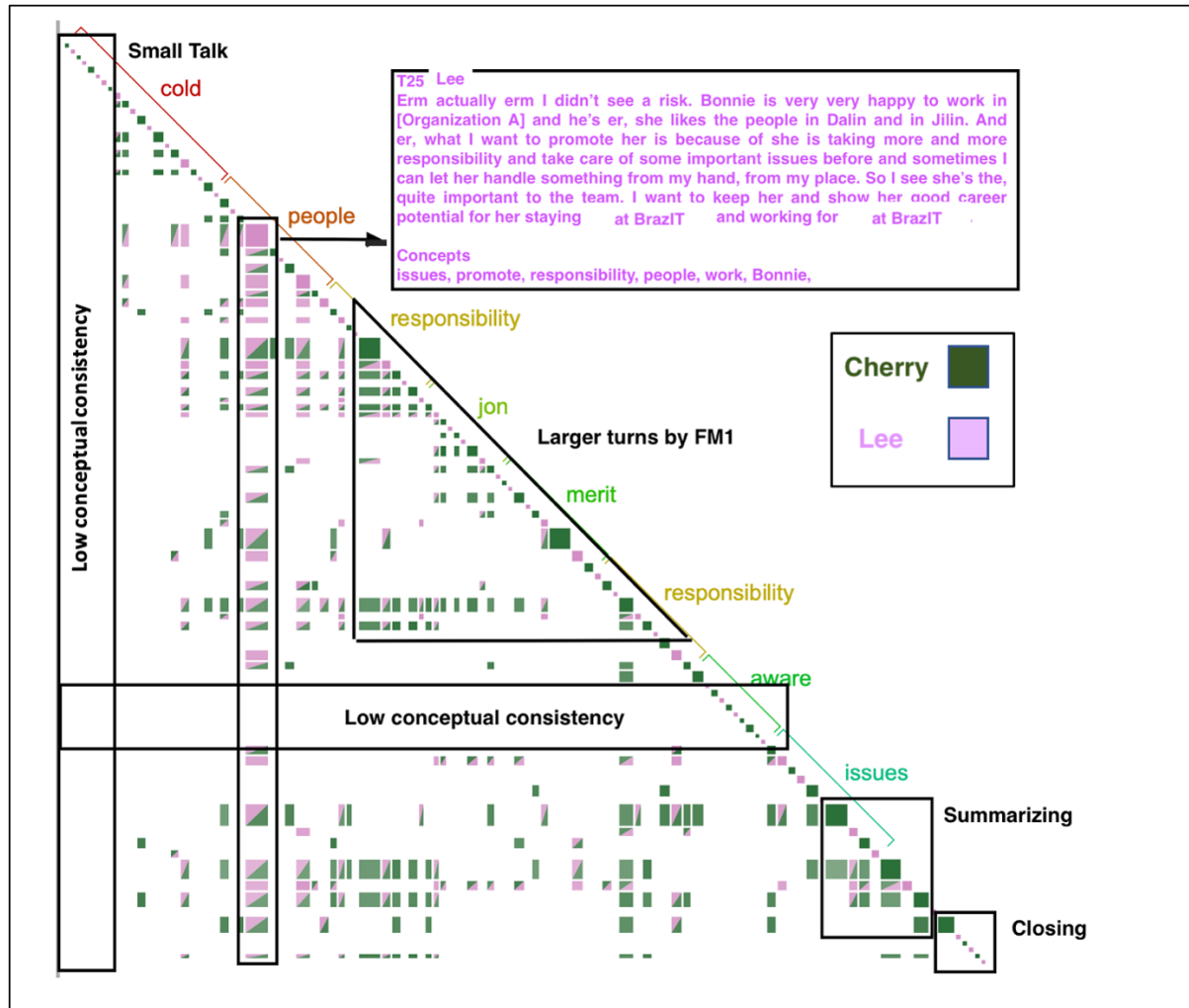


Figure 7.1. Discursis plot of VTM A1

Features of Discursis Plot:

- 1) The meeting exchange starts from the top left corner and progresses diagonally towards the bottom right corner. The first block in the top left corner marks the first turn in the meeting, and the last block in the bottom right corner marks the last turn of the meeting.
- 2) Speakers' turns are represented by different colours. In the case of A1 Discursis plot, Cherry is marked as green and Lee is marked as light purple.

- 3) The size of the block represents the length of speaker's turn (by number of words).

Hence, the bigger the block, the longer turn speaker takes.

- 4) Off-diagonal block represents turns when one speaker takes on previous speaker's concepts. For example, half-coloured purple/green block illustrates Cherry picks up concepts in Lee's turn while constructing and developing her subsequent turn. The colour opacity of the blocks represents the strength of concept linkage. The more opaque the colour, the stronger the link of concepts between the turns.

- 5) Vertical strip illustrates how concepts are repeated (or not) throughout the exchange. It can be seen from the VTM A1 Discursis plot that the first few turns of the exchange do not contain conceptual consistency with the rest of the meeting (marked by blank white space) because this meeting starts with small talk concerning the weather, and this concept is not associated with the rest of the meeting topics, hence conceptual consistency is low and is illustrated as blank.

Conversely, vertical strip originates from Turn 25 illustrates high conceptual consistency throughout the meeting. Concepts identified in Turn 25 by Discursis include issues, promote, responsibility, people, work and Bonnie. As this meeting concerns Human Resource matters and is about the promotion of a staff, Bonnie, concepts Lee mentions in turn 25 are picked up and developed either by herself (full colour purple blocks) or co-constructed (half-coloured purple/green blocks) as the meeting progresses.

Horizontal low conceptual consistency is found when connection lost during VTM A1 occurs. Speakers during that time are checking if they can be heard by their interlocutors, hence conceptual consistency is low and it does not have relations to the topics previously discussed.

- 6) Lee's contribution to the meeting can mainly be found in Turn 25 and Turn 29. From then on, Cherry becomes the main contributor in the meeting. It is illustrated by bigger green blocks (as compared to purple blocks) starting at around Turn 36 till the end of meeting. Also, it is demonstrated that she largely repeats her own concepts which are illustrated by full-coloured green blocks.
- 7) Towards the end of meeting, Cherry is also seen to make major contributions. Cross reading of the meeting transcript reveals that relatively big green blocks mark the summarising and closing phases conducted by Cherry. Cherry's summarising statement is also seen to repeat many of the concepts she discusses previously during the meeting, which is indicated by the green blocks to the left of those statements.

The purpose of VTM A1 is to discuss promotion issue. Lee, who is the manager of Operations in China office, wants to promote one of her staff, Bonnie, and she needs to give justifications to Cherry, who is the Human Resources Manager in Manila. She gives her justifications in Turn 25, which is information and concepts rich, and these concepts are discussed throughout the meeting. Cherry then takes charge of the meeting and becomes the main contributor as she starts to explain company policies and procedures for the promotion which is marked by the larger green blocks along the diagonal timeline on the Discursis plot. The plot also shows that Cherry mainly engages in her own concepts in her explanations. Cherry's role as meeting chair

is also depicted on the Discursis plot in which she contributes most in summarising and closing the meeting. Having discussed a Discursis plot from a macro perspective, a more micro and detailed view of how topics continue will be discussed.

Figure 7.2 below shows a zoomed-in view of an excerpt and illustrates how topics are picked up and developed between speakers, and how are they indicated on a Discursis plot:

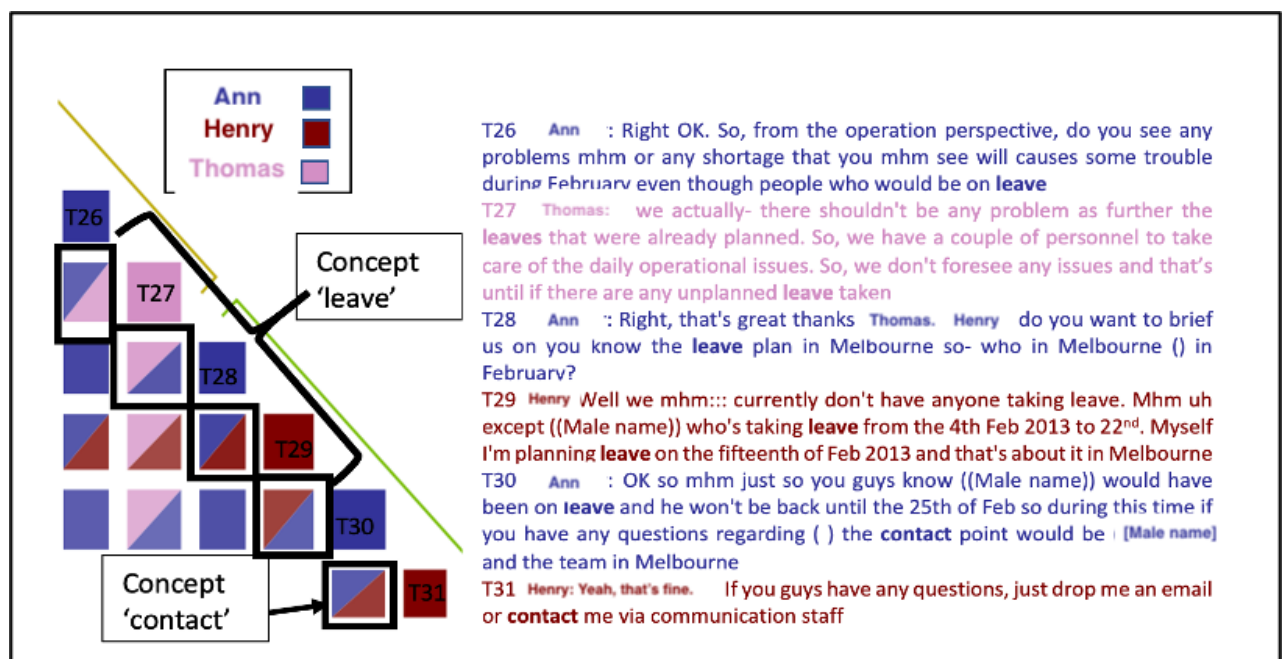


Figure 7.2. A section of Discursis plot of VTM B2 which indicates repetition of concepts between turns

Discursis plot in Figure 7.2 shows high conceptual engagement and high degree of immediate topic repetition (ITR) between turns. According to Watson et al. (2015), ITR refers to a turn which repeats the concepts immediately before it and may be regarded as immediate approximation in CAT term.

The concept 'leave' is initiated by Ann, the manager, in Turn 26 and it is immediately picked up by Thomas in Turn 27, which continues to circulate until Turn 30 by various speakers. This

series of tight conceptual engagement is illustrated by off-diagonal blocks (in black squares). The discussion of topic ‘leave’ ends in Turn 30 by the manager, and she introduces a new topic ‘contact’ which is picked up by Henry in Turn 31 and is marked by the half-coloured blue/brown block in the intersection of Turn 30 and Turn 31. After the discussion of Discursis plot interpretation, the focus will now switch to comparisons of VTM Discursis plots to investigate speaker engagement in the meetings.

7.3 Level of Engagement Between VTM Participants

Comparison of the high engagement plot and the low engagement plot between VTM participants in VTM B5 and B3 respectively is shown in Figure 7.3.

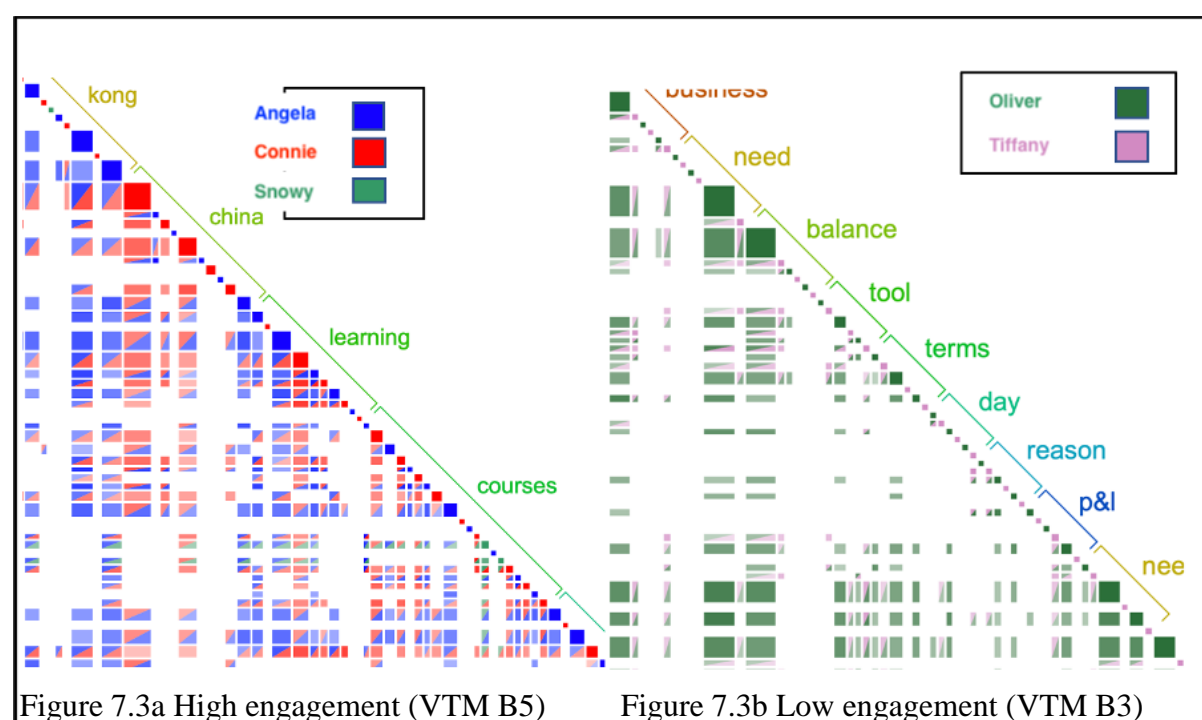


Figure 7.3. Comparison between high and low engagement Discursis plots

High Engagement (VTM B5)

High conceptual engagement is depicted in Figure 7.3a which is marked by numerous clusters of off-diagonal blocks. Angela (in blue) and Connie (in red) both pick up concepts from each

other (blue/red and red/blue half-coloured blocks) and co-construct them throughout the meeting. High degree of ITR is found in the middle of VTM B5 in which Angela and Connie discuss the topic about ‘general learning data’ and the concept ‘learning’ is picked up and repeated during the engagement episode.

Angela and Connie’s contribution to the meeting is relatively even, which is marked by relatively even turn numbers and turn size.

Although, at a glance, there seems to be only two speakers involved in this exchange as the plot is dominated by the colours of blue and red, there is a third speaker in this meeting, Snowy, who makes minimal contributions. Reading the transcript reveals that Snowy is brought into the VTM by Connie and she is not a regular member of this virtual work team which explains her low involvement and engagement in the current meeting. Although high engagement is observed in VTM B5 Discursis plot, it only exists between Angela and Connie and the engagement of Snowy is very low.

Low Engagement (VTM B3)

Figure 7.3b depicts a low engagement Discursis plot of VTM B3. The plot is dominated by Oliver, the manager (in green), and he also takes much longer turns compared to Tiffany (in purple) who only gives minimal response. Oliver is also observed to repeat his own concepts throughout the meeting (full coloured green blocks). Picking up concepts from Tiffany’s turns is rare, potentially because Tiffany’s contribution to this meeting is low.

The stark contrast of Discursis plots between VTM B5 and B3 can be explained by the purpose of the two VTMs. VTM B5 is a task-oriented meeting which involves discussion between the two managers Angela and Connie; thus, conceptual engagement between them is high. While VTM B3 is an instructional meeting with the aim for Oliver, the manager, to provide

instructions and information to his subordinate Tiffany, which explains bigger manager turns and repetition of his own concepts during the meeting. Tiffany occupies a compliance role in VTM B3.

Comparison of Engagement Episodes of Meetings with Same Nature

The previous section discusses how the different nature of VTMs can influence conceptual engagement between VTM participants and how are they depicted in Discursis plots. This section compares Discursis plots of VTMs of the same nature, how are they illustrated differently and discusses possible reasons for the different Discursis patterns.

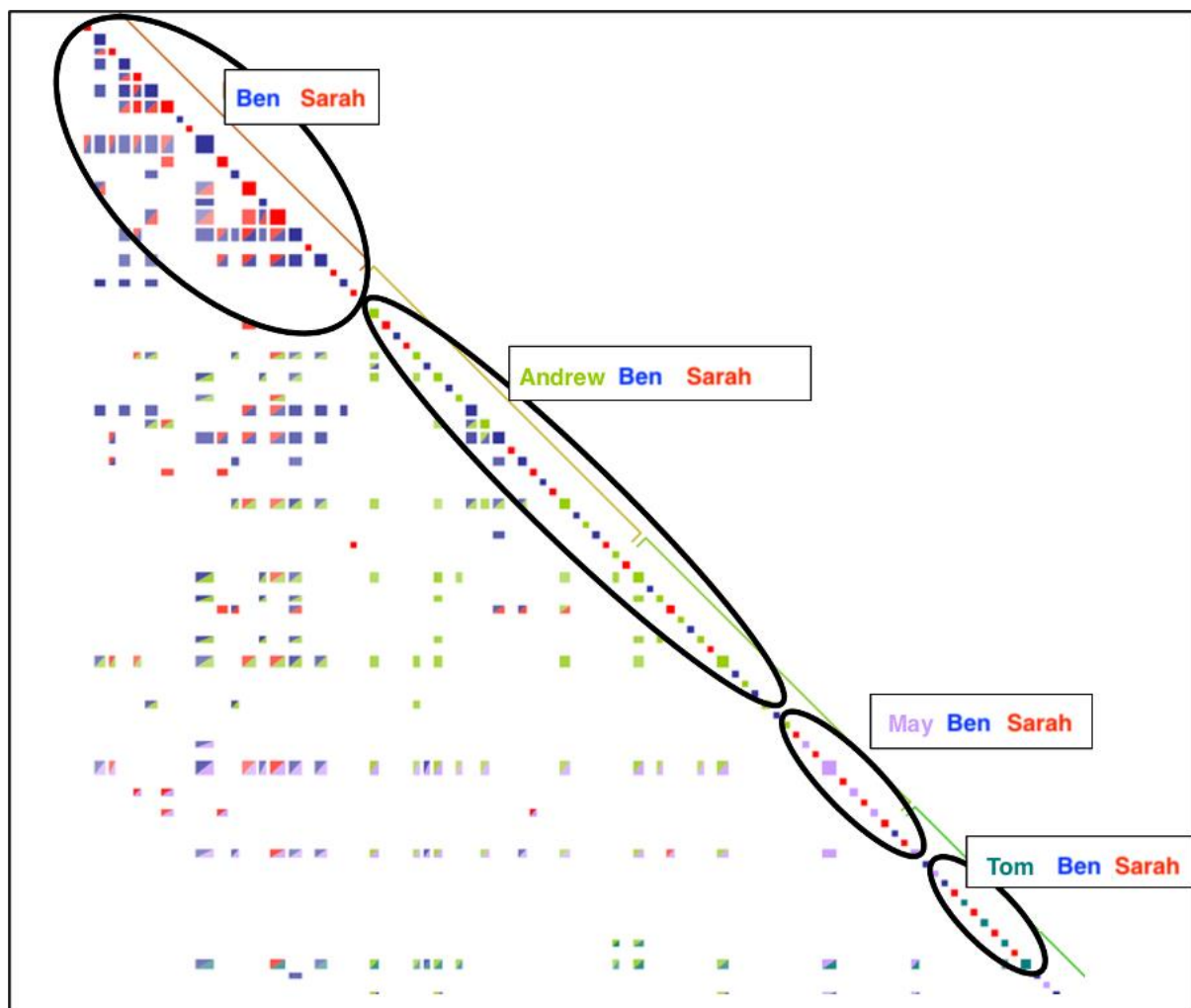


Figure 7.4. A section of Discursis plot of VTM A2

VTM A2 is a progress report meeting with reviewing purpose that involves nine meeting participants. Sarah is an American female based in the US and is the most senior manager in

this virtual work team. Ben is a Filipino male and is the manager in Manila office. The rest of seven VTM participants are Filipino agents in his work team co-located in Manila.

The seven Filipino agents take turns to present their progress to the two managers in the VTM. As depicted in Figure 7.4, agents (Andrew, May and Tom) take charge to present periodically, and this forms the overall patterns of VTM A2. Sarah and Ben's involvement can be seen during each agent's presentation, while other agents' involvement is absent. In other words, agents mainly exchange with Sarah and Ben when they conduct the progress report, but exchanges between the seven agents themselves are not evident. High conceptual engagement is observed to be more common between Sarah and Ben (as shown in the top left corner, clusters of half-coloured red/blue and blue/red blocks) and these phenomena are consistent throughout the whole meeting. Reading the meeting transcripts of VTM A2 together with the Discursis plot shows that this meeting applies a strict turn-taking mechanism with Ben selecting agents to present and there is low flexibility for other agents to join in the discussion. Sarah and Ben have greater flexibility to self-select the turns when they want to ask for more information or clarification from the agents while they present. Discussions and decision-makings are only present between the two managers but not with the agents.

Figure 7.5. depicts a section of Discursis plot of VTM B4. While VTM B4 is also a report progress meeting with reviewing purpose which also involves nine meeting participants, the participation and engagement level between the manager and agents as well as between the agents themselves are seen to be different as compared to VTM A2.

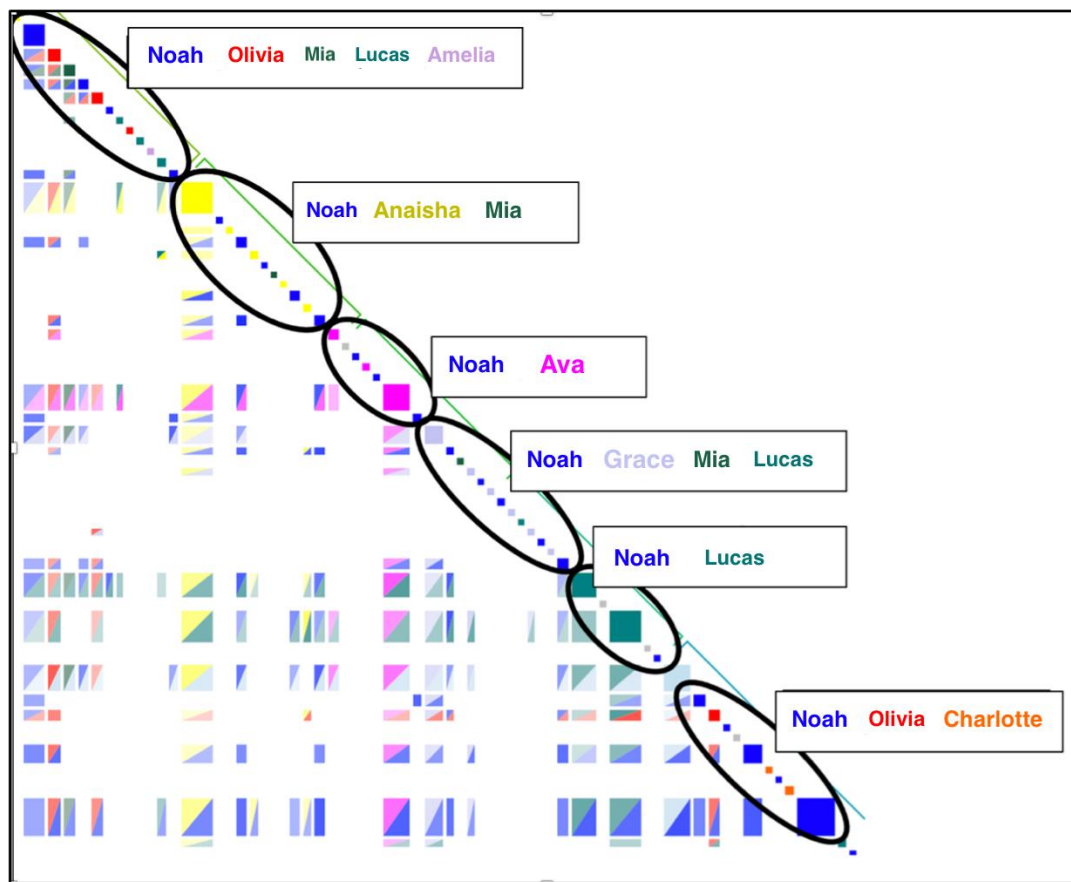


Figure 7.5. A section of Discursis plot of VTM B4

Agents also take turns and present their progress to the team in this meeting. Agents' turn-taking is also selected by the manager. However, it can be seen that agents have greater flexibility in joining in their teammates' presentation episodes, which is illustrated by multicolour blocks during each presentation episodes along the diagonal meeting timeline. The discussion episode in the top left corner also shows a more inclusive environment with contributions made by multiple meeting participants (illustrated in multiple half-coloured blocks).

The differences in agents' level of engagement in VTM A2 and B4 respectively can be explained by three reasons: 1) The number of decision-making personnel present in the meeting; 2) Agents' perception on organisation hierarchy and 3) Manager's management style.

It is not uncommon to find more engagement between the two managers (Sarah and Ben) in VTM A2 as they are the ones who have decision-making power. Thus, discussion related to decision making only evolve around them while the agents are confined in the compliance role and listen to their discussion during the meeting. While there is only one manager (Noah) in VTM B4 and decision-making discussion among the upper manager does not exist in this meeting, agents are seen to be more open to engage with each other. Hence, the number of decision-making personnel present in the meeting may affect the power dynamics and engagement patterns among the meeting participants during VTMs.

Agents' perception on organisation hierarchy can also affect their participation and engagement in VTMs. Hofstede (1991) suggests that there is higher power distance between superiors and subordinates in Filipino organisational contexts as compared to Australian organisational contexts, and that Filipino professional culture tends to sustain and stabilise hierarchical differences in professional discourse. Previous studies on Filipino organisational hierarchy have also suggested that Filipinos place high values on authority and organisational hierarchy (Andres, 1981; Arce & Poblador, 1979; Wilson, Callaghan & Wright, 1996), which may explain why the Filipino agents in VTM A2 only talk when they are selected by the managers. They are seen to be more willing to comply with the meeting norms and constrain their engagement with other speakers in the meeting.

A flatter social distance between Noah and his subordinates is observed in VTM B4 in which the agents joke with the managers and have greater flexibility to self-select turns to speak when they wish. Noah, being an Australian leading a team of Australians (except Anaisha, who is an Indian female based in Bangalore) may be more likely to value egalitarian values as seen in VTM B4, and they are manifested in the discourse.

Chapter Eight

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. Section 8.1 discusses the thematic analysis of interview data, Section 8.2 is concerned with the discourse analysis of VTM transcripts, and Section 8.3 deals with the application of Discursis to enhance qualitative discourse analysis.

8.1 Thematic Analysis on VTM Participants' Experiences

A considerable amount of literature has investigated the challenges faced by virtual work teams in recent years. The issues virtual work teams encounter mainly evolve around communication, culture, logistics and technology. Leidner, Kayworth and Mora-Tavarez (1999) have summarised the types of challenges outlined in the existing literature, and their findings are presented in Figure 8.1 below:

| Type of Challenge | Description |
|-------------------|---|
| Communications | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traditional social mechanisms are lost or distorted (Townsend et al, 1998)• Less exchange of socio-emotional information (Walther & Burgoon, 1992)• Communication dynamics such as facial expressions, vocal inflections, verbal cues, and gestures are altered (Kiesler & Sproul, 1992; Warkentin, Sayeed, & Hightower, 1997)• Distinctions among member's social & expert status lost or distorted (Dubrovsky, Kiesler, & Sethna, 1991).• Inhibition in building trust (Jarvenpaa, Knoll & Leidner, 1998) |
| Culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for multiple cultures requires greater communication skills (Townsend et al, 1998)• Unrealistic cultural expectations (Solomon, 1995)• Communication may be distorted through cultural misunderstandings/biases (Solomon, 1995) |
| Logistics | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple time zones make scheduling meetings as well as travel very difficult (Solomon, 1995) |
| Technology | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technophobia (Townsend et al, 1998)• Need for proficiency across a wide range of technologies (Townsend et al, 1998)• Computer mediated communication systems (CMCS) impose constraints on communication (Warkentin et al, 1997)• Comments from synchronous CMCS may appear out of context (Warkentin et al, 1997)• Conversation may lack focus (Warkentin et al, 1997)• Delays with asynchronous CMCS make it difficult to maintain a theme• Lower levels of richness requires more time for virtual teams to achieve mutual levels of understanding (Daft & Lengel, 1986) |

Figure 8.1 Challenges of virtual work teams (Leidner, Kayworth & Mora-Tavarez, 1999, p. 6)

Interviews conducted with the twelve VTM participants at BrazIT reveal that these challenges are also present in the virtual work teams at BrazIT. For example, information-rich non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures, are not present and this can lead to misinterpretation of the messages delivered (Townsend, DeMarie & Hendrickson, 1998). Social information of virtual team members may not be available due to geographical dispersion, and this in turn could hinder social interaction, relationship building and trust building in virtual teams (Dubrovsky, Kiesler & Sethna, 1991). The diverse ethnic, national as well as organisational backgrounds of virtual team members may also cause misinterpretation of issues at hand as members tend to make their interpretations with biases (Solomon, 1995). The lack of real-life encounters and experiences with other virtual team members may lead to national stereotypes being used to assess and make judgements about their colleagues (Ladegaard, 2011c). Interviewees also mentioned that different time zones among virtual team members often cause long working days as they need to cater for their US and Europe counterparts, and this would impact their energy and morale. Interviewees also reported problems with unstable and unreliable internet connections as “frustrating”, and it would likely influence the flow of VTMs. What Leidner, Kayworth and Mora-Tavarez, 1999 have not included in their list, however, is language issues, which is one of the VTM challenges expressed by my informants.

8.1.1 Answers to Research Question 1a: What are the Challenges faced by VTM Participants?

The present study argues that the challenges faced by VTM participants are very context specific and target specifically virtual team meetings. As discussed earlier, some of the issues the VTM participants face also coincide with the ones reported in the virtual team literature.

However, they also reported challenges (Table 8.2) that focus specifically on VTM dynamics as discussed in Section 5.1.

| Theme | Subtheme |
|----------------------|--|
| Meeting Deficiencies | Lack of Structure Domination/Avoidance Attendance Redundancy |
| Virtual Environment | Technology Time Zone Differences Loss of Focus and Attention Confusing Speaker Turns |
| Language | Productive -Lack of Expressions or Vocabulary Receptive -Accent -Misinterpretation due to Intonation -Idiomatic Expressions -Jargon -Pacing |
| Team Diversity | Conflicting Norms and Practices among Different Regions Ethnocentrism and Prejudice |

Table 8.1 Themes and subthemes of VTM challenges encountered by interviewees

One can argue that the issues evolve around meeting deficiencies, such as lack of structure, speaker dominance or avoidance, and attendance redundancy of certain participants can also be found in real-life meeting settings. However, the context of the virtual team meeting acts as a melting pot in which the challenges about meeting deficiencies, virtual teamwork, language as well as team diversity all come together and create a particular challenging environment for virtual team members, and together with the pressure to achieve team and organisational goals, the demands for VTM participants to perform effectively are high.

Given the vast amount of literature on the challenges faced by virtual teams, a number of studies have also been conducted in the attempt to tackle the challenges. One of the main foci in the literature is effective leadership and management of virtual teams. For instance, Leidner, Kayworth and Mora-Tavarez (1999) propose four dimensions of effective virtual team leadership, which involve effective communication skills, understanding and caring for team members, the ability to define roles clearly, and the ability to show leadership attitude in an appropriate manner. While much of the literature on effective virtual teamwork tends to cast the responsibility onto the managers and assess their performance against the effectiveness of virtual work teams, interview data with the twelve employees from BrazIT demonstrate that virtual team members themselves also take on pro-active roles and come up with strategies to tackle the challenges they face in virtual work teams as well as virtual team meetings.

8.1.2 Answers to Research Question 1b: What Are the Strategies Adopted by VTM Participants to tackle VTM Challenges?

The strategies adopted by VTM participants to tackle VTM challenges are discussed in Section 5.2 and illustrated in Table 8.3 below:

| Theme | Subtheme |
|--------------------|---|
| Meeting Behaviours | Preparation Small talk/Jokes Speak up |
| Language | Complement with Written Documents Active Listening Translation Software |
| Team Diversity | Open communication and Mutual Respect Sensitivity and Adaptation |

| | |
|--|--|
| Establishment of Interpersonal Relationships | Meet in Person Develop Friendly Relationships -Conduct Videoconferencing -Use of other Media and Social Platforms |
|--|--|

Table 8.2 Themes and subthemes of VTM strategies adopted by interviewees

A number of strategies have been proposed by the interviewees and they can address some of the issues they encounter as discussed in section 5.1. For instance, the issues of lack of meeting structure and dominance/avoidance in VTMs can be addressed by effective meeting preparation and speaking up during VTMs. The challenges concerned with language during VTMs can be tackled using other intertextual resources as assistance to avoid information loss. This tactic is also suggested by Shachaf's (2008) study on communication technology's impact on virtual teams, and he states that in order to overcome the challenges of teleconferencing, one of the tactics includes "restating arguments and agreements and creating written summaries of agreements during a teleconference or immediately afterwards" (p. 137). Concerning the issue of misinterpretation of messages due to intonation, interviewees expressed that it can be compensated with active listening, the use of written documents as well as the use of videoconferencing. Since teleconferencing is regarded as a "lean" form of communication channel (Leidner, Kayworth & Mora-Tavarez, 1999), which means that the exchanges rely heavily on vocal cues, other meaning-making elements, such as facial expressions and gestures, are not present and this may lead to misinterpretation of messages. The use of videoconferencing can ensure a 'richer' form of communication and provides more information to the VTM participants when interpreting a message. Interviewees also expressed that meeting their VTM counterparts in real life settings, and/or establishing interpersonal relationship on social media, help because they can provide richer social and contextual information to the VTM participants. This will allow them to better understand their VTM

counterparts and avoid misinterpretation of their personalities, which is likely to lower the risk of misinterpretation of messages during VTMs.

Thematic Analysis of the challenges faced by VTM participants reveals that some themes are directly related to CAT strategies while others are related to the context of the VTMs. For instance, the issue of meeting deficiencies is associated with Discourse Management strategies, and the issue of language can be related to Interpretability strategies. The issue of team diversity is related to the sociocultural context of the VTMs, while the virtual environment of meetings is concerned with the immediate situational context of VTMs.

A Thematic analysis of the interview data not only helps us understand colleagues' experiences in the VTM contexts, but it also helps to lay the foundation for the discourse analysis in Chapter 6 and provide interpretations to the communicative behaviours performed by the VTM participants during VTMs.

8.2 Discourse Analysis of VTM Transcripts

8.2.1 Answers to Research Question 2a: To what extent do VTM Participants employ CAT Strategies in VTMs?

VTM participants employ a wide range of CAT strategies to fulfil transactional as well as relational purposes in VTMs. Their communicative behaviours are categorised and discussed with respective CAT strategies in Chapter 6.1. Table 8.4 below summarises the CAT strategies in VTMs, which can provide a conceptualised coding framework for CAT analysis in (virtual) organisational meeting discourse:

| Approximation | Interpretability | Discourse Management | Interpersonal Control | Emotional Expressions |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| *(+) Matching intonation *(+) Matching pauses *(+) Matching speech rate *(+) Matching syntax *(+) Matching dialects/accents *(+) Repetition of word/phrases | Decrease Complexity of Speech *(+) Decrease diversity of vocabulary *(+) Simplify syntax *(+) Avoid jargons/abbreviations/technical terms Increase Clarity of Speech (+) Use of signposting (+) Use of repetition (+) Rephrase (+) Use of frame markers (+) Use of intertextual references (+) Provide explanations (+) Provide examples Topic Selection (+) Select appropriate topics (+) Select familiar topics Check Questions (+) Use of check tokens (+) Use of check questions Summary Statement (+) Provide summary statements | Meeting Structure (+) clear meeting structure Turn-Taking (+) clear turn-taking mechanics Turn Allocation (depends on types and goals of meetings) Topic Selection (+) Select appropriate topics (+) Select familiar topics | Explicit Enactment of Authority (-) Implicit Enactment of Authority Discourse control (complementary because of meeting norms) (-) Align with authority/policies (-) Hedge-free interrogatives /Directives Address Form (-) Use of honorifics (+) Use of first names Other Relational Discursive Strategies (+) Mitigating force/authority (+) Self-deprecating comments/humour (+) Co-constructed positive humour sequence | (+) Empathy and care (+) Assurance (+) Recognition of individual team member's achievement (+) Recognition of team achievement (-) Dissatisfaction (-) Contestive humour |

Table 8.3 Communication Accommodation Strategies in virtual team meetings (+ Accommodative; - Non-accommodative; * Not apparent in the current data set)

Approximation

The CAT strategy analysis in the current study suggests that Approximation accommodation strategy is not the most apparent strategy employed by the VTM participants. Possible reasons for this phenomenon are 1) non-native English speaking VTM participants' inability to understand different English accents; 2) Linguistic repertoire limitations in L2 contexts; 3) Potential negative consequences caused by inappropriate use of Approximation strategies; 4) Prioritising cognitive-based trust rather than affective-based trust and 5) Participants' preference for employing other accommodative strategies to achieve meeting goals. They have been discussed in Section 6.1.1 Approximation. In fact, the development of the CAT framework and strategies has addressed the fact that speech variables accommodation is only one of the many ways speakers can accommodate to each other, and it may not be always present in interactions. Gasiorek, Van de Poel, and Blockmans (2015)'s study of doctor-patient interactions in a multilingual hospital shows this possibility. They found that doctors employed other communication strategies such as gesture, using translation software, cater more for patients' emotional needs in order to compensate for the lack of Approximation and linguistic accommodation.

Interpretability

Interpretability strategies employed by VTM participants include decreasing complexity of speech, increasing clarity of speech, selecting appropriate topics, use of check questions/tokens and delivery of summary statements. Section 6.1.2 has shown that decreasing complexity of speech is not the most salient strategy found in the VTM data. Instead, VTM participants employ various other Interpretability strategies to aid comprehension and ensure information is delivered successfully and accurately. As organisational meetings are very transactional and goal-oriented, it is not surprising to see VTM participants make much efforts to deliver their messages and to be understood. While relational work is also important in meetings,

comprehensibility is paramount in successful business meetings. Bell (1984) claims that “in concentrating on approval seeking as a reason for style shift, accommodation has often overlooked a more transparent motivation: a speaker’s desire to be understood” (p. 199). Various factors have effects on the choice of strategies which include the nature of VTMs, the perceived English proficiency of the interlocutors, the roles and relationship between VTM participants, as well as the complexity of the messages to be delivered.

Discourse Management

Attuning Discourse Management strategies in the CAT framework advocates for inclusion, speakers’ engagement and attendance to interlocutors’ conversational needs. However, this view may not be applicable in business meeting settings in which speaker engagement is heavily dependent on the goal of the meeting. I would argue that VTM participants practice Discourse Management in a complementary fashion. Street (1991) describes complementarity as “interactants mutually attempt to maintain their social differences” (p. 135), and it is usually present in situations where there is role, power or status differences between interactants. Complementarity is different from divergence because interactants mutually attempt to maintain their social differences via dissimilar discursive practices, which discursively reinforce their differences. A business meeting is a site in which there is inherent power differences between manager and subordinates, and between meeting chair and participants. Placing high values on hierarchy and authority by a particular cultural group also plays an important role in sustaining such complementary manner in interactions involving power difference. Meeting participants behaving in a complementary manner can reflect the social and cultural differences among them, reinforce them as well as keeping the exchanges stable. In other words, their complementary speech styles are cooperative to the attainment of a common goal.

Section 6.1.3 has illustrated Discourse Management strategies used in VTMs. The examples shown in this chapter have illustrated how the overall structure of VTMs, turn-taking, turn allocation, as well as topic choice associate with VTM participants' engagements in virtual meeting contexts. It is observed that the purpose of meetings, the number of participants, the role and power of the chair, VTM participants' perception of hierarchy, the manager/meeting chair's interactional styles as well as the relationship between VTM participants have direct impacts on Discourse Management strategies.

Interpersonal Control

Non-accommodative Interpersonal Control strategies include explicit and implicit enactment of managers' authority while delivering tasks to their subordinates. However, it is also found that managers generally make use of mitigating devices to tone down their directives. This phenomenon is also illustrated by Holmes and Stubbe (2015) who argue that:

people at work simultaneously achieve many different workplace objectives which include getting things done efficiently while constructing and maintaining collegial relationships. These two demands, sometimes labelled transactional vs interpersonal, social or affective goals, are frequently perfectly compatible, since good workplace relationships facilitate many aspects of work (p. 53).

Although business meetings are goal-oriented and heavily transactional, managing good collegial and interpersonal relationships is also paramount to the success of a work team (Vine, 2004). Section 6.1.4 has also shown that contextual elements of VTMs, such as the relationship of team members, the familiarity between team members, the cultural norms, the manager/meeting chair's management styles and whether the team is co-located or not, can also influence the employment of Interpersonal Control strategies as well as mitigating devices which counter the force.

Emotional Expressions

Section 6.1.5 discussed various emotional expressions observed in VTMs. Accommodating Emotional Expressions includes offering assurance and care as well as recognition of achievements. Expressing care and assurance is found to enhance interpersonal relationship between VTM participants especially when the topic of discussion is perceived to be potentially intrusive to some meeting members. Another widely studied and used form of expression is recognition of individual team members as well as team achievements with the goal to enhance team trust and cohesion which are essential but also challenging to obtain in virtual work teams. Although rare, negative emotional expression such as dissatisfaction is also found in one of the VTMs. Albeit the speaker tries to mitigate the face-threatening effect of her negative emotional expression by concealing it as a joke, it is not perceived positively by her interlocutor and can be regarded as non-accommodating within the CAT framework.

Through studying all five CAT strategies in various virtual team meetings, a coding scheme of communicative behaviours and their associated CAT strategies has been conceptualised and developed (Table 8.3, p.263), which can inform future studies on discursive strategies used in (virtual) meeting genre within CAT framework.

8.2.2 Answers to Research Question 2b: To what extent do Contextual Factors affect Employment of CAT Strategies?

The analysis of CAT strategies employment in seven VTMs reveals that they are affected by the broader sociocultural norms and are especially sensitive to immediate situational contexts. Gallois, Ogay & Giles' (2005) model on CAT intergroup/interpersonal communication provides a concise illustration of their framework which identifies the relationship between contextual factors and employment of CAT strategies (Figure 8.2). Gallois, Ogay and Giles

(2005) propose communication accommodation theory as a general theory of intergroup/-interpersonal communication which highlights interpersonal as well as intergroup history, alongside with societal norms and values. Their model suggests that interactants' psychological accommodation stance is constrained by immediate interaction situation norms which are embedded in wider sociohistorical contexts. Interactants' psychological accommodation stance (accommodative or non-accommodative) would influence their communication accommodation strategies and communicative behaviours. This then leads to perception and attribution about his/her motivations for their communicative behaviours from their interlocutors and influence evaluations and intentions for further exchanges.

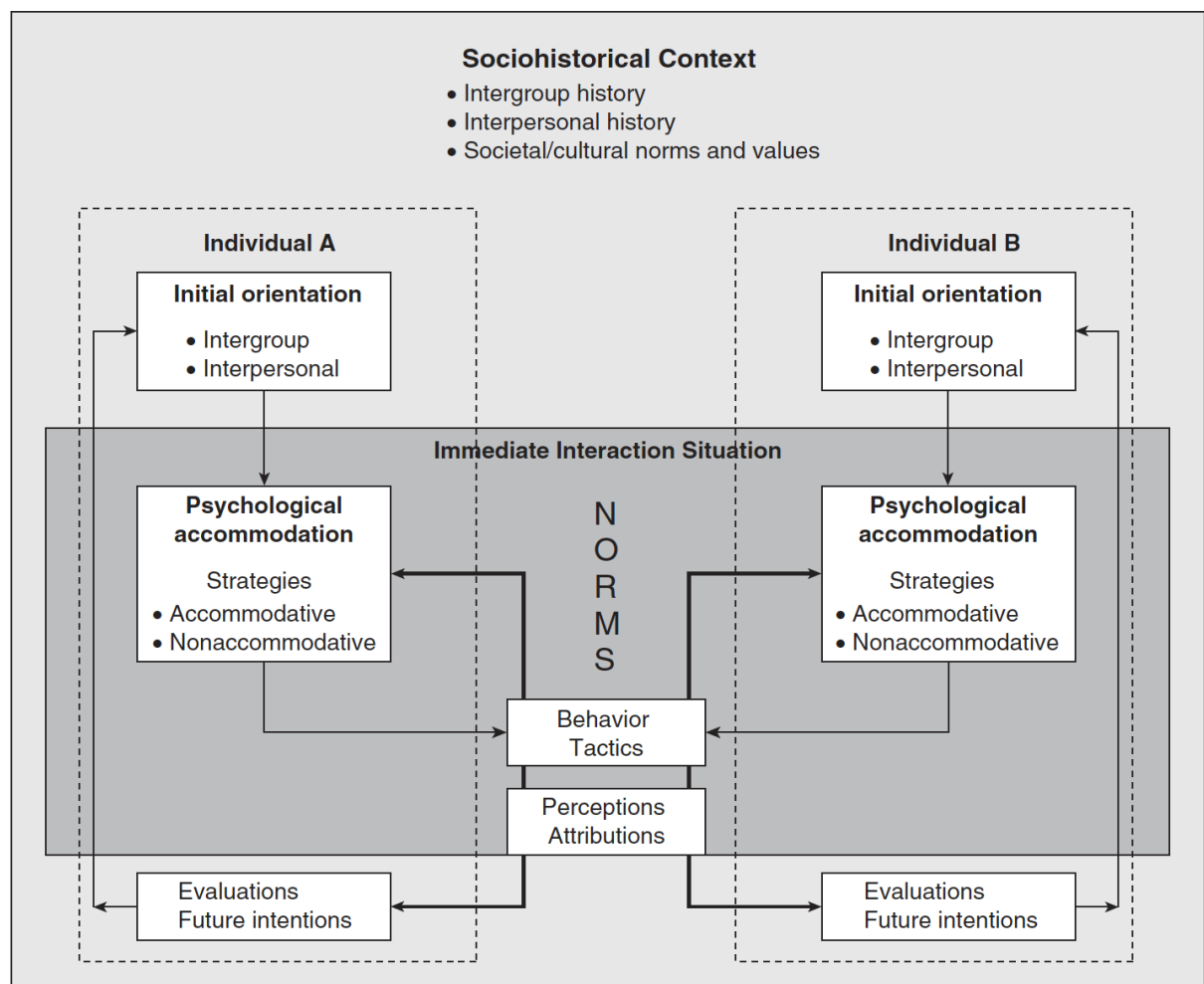


Figure 8.2. Communication Accommodation Theory as a General Theory of Intergroup Communication (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005, p. 135)

The analysis of the seven VTMs' CAT employment strategies reveals that in VTM contexts, such employment is highly sensitive to the immediate interaction situation of the VTMs. The immediate situational factors identified in the analysis are 1) Meeting purpose; 2) Meeting topics; 3) Power asymmetry between VTM participants; 4) Language proficiency (actual or perceived) of VTM participants and 5) Manager's management style. The correlations between VTM immediate interaction situation factors and CAT strategies are illustrated in Table 8.4 below:

| | | Approximation | Interpretability | Discourse Management | Interpersonal Control | Emotional Expressions |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Immediate Interaction Situation | Meeting Purpose | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Meeting Topics | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| | Power Asymmetry | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Language Proficiency | | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| | Managerial Styles | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

Table 8.4 Correlations (indicated by ✓) between VTM immediate interaction situation factors and CAT strategies

Meeting Purpose: VTM managers tend to employ a higher frequency and wider range of accommodative Interpretability strategies in information/instruction giving meetings (Section 6.1.2). Meeting purpose also has direct impact on the overall structure of VTMs. For instance, a spiral meeting structure is used for planning and task/problem-oriented meetings, while a more linear structure is used for reviewing meetings. The purpose of meetings can also affect turn distribution and allocation dynamics in VTMs (Section 6.1.3). Interpersonal control through constraining one's compliance role is also more salient in instruction giving meetings.

Meeting Topics: Accommodative Interpretability strategies such as giving examples and explanations are employed when a VTM participant is perceived as lacking knowledge of the meeting topics. This can also limit one's engagement and contributions in VTM and thus, affecting Discourse Management strategies. The employment of Emotional Expressions strategies can also be affected by meeting topics, for example, more assurance is seen to be given by meeting chair if the meeting topic is regarded to be 'intrusive' (Examples 6.41, 6.42, p. 198).

Power Asymmetry: Domination of speaker turns and speaker time can appear in VTMs with great power asymmetry and thus, impacting participants' engagement in the exchange; these are regarded as non-accommodative Discourse Management strategies. Power asymmetry also contributes to Interpersonal Control in which managers take an authoritative stance and constrain subordinates in compliance roles which is considered to be a non-accommodative communicative strategy.

Language Proficiency: Actual or perceived language proficiency level of VTM participants can have a direct impact on their employment of Interpretability strategies. As shown in Section 6.1.2, a wide range of accommodating Interpretability strategies are employed in VTMs in which non-native English speakers are in attendance. The prime reason for the use of accommodating Interpretability strategies is to fulfil the transactional purpose of VTMs and to ensure information is accurately delivered and understood.

Managerial Styles: Inclusive and empowering managerial styles tend to encourage VTM participants' engagement in meetings by allowing opportunities for them to speak (Accommodating Discourse Management strategy), by using more relational language to mitigate their managerial authority (Accommodating Interpersonal Control strategy) and by

motivating and recognizing the team's achievement (Accommodating Emotional Expressions strategy).

It is worth noting that the immediate situational factors mentioned above are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are usually found to impact VTMs simultaneously. Likewise, CAT strategies also work together simultaneously and interchangeably, depending on the communicative or relational needs that are enacted.

In order to conceptualise a communication accommodation theory framework that is more suited to VTM context, more specific context-driven theories using CAT propositions should be formulated. As noted by Gallois and Giles (1998),

CAT has become very complex, so that the theory as a whole probably cannot be treated at one time. This means that researchers using CAT must develop mini-theories to suit the context in which they work, while at the same time keeping the whole of the theory in mind (p. 158).

In view of this, Gallois, Ogay and Giles' (2005) model is revised to suit VTM context, as illustrated in Figure 8.3:

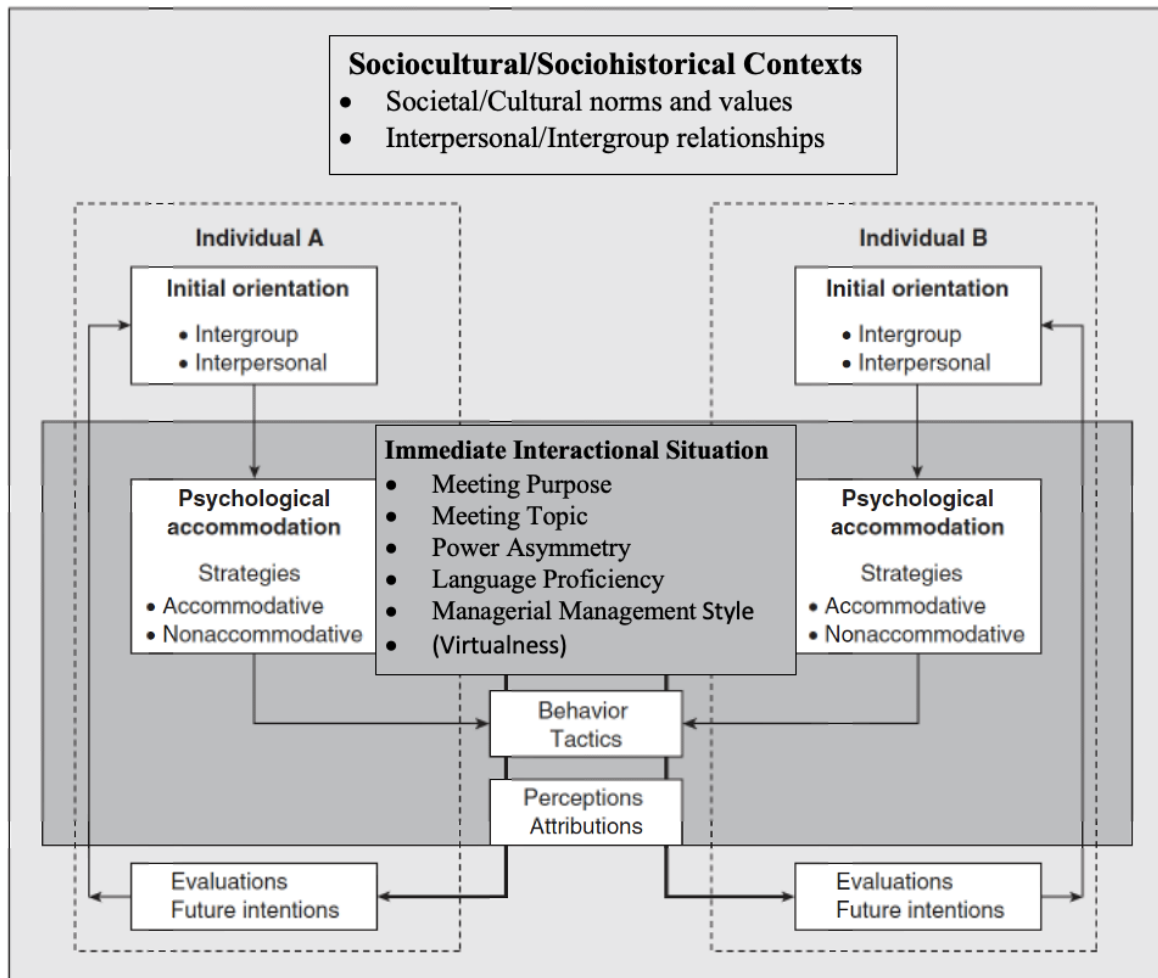


Figure 8.3. Communication Accommodation Theory in VTM setting (Revised and adapted from Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005, p. 135)

This revised model suggests societal/cultural norms and interpersonal/intergroup relationships serve as wider sociocultural/sociohistorical contexts, which can influence VTM participants' orientation towards other virtual team members. While meeting purpose, meeting topic, power asymmetry, language proficiency and managerial styles serve as factors in the immediate interaction context which can influence the CAT strategies employment by VTM participants.

A Discourse analysis of the seven VTMs in the current study suggests that language and discursive strategies used in VTMs share a lot of similarities with more traditional forms of face-to-face meetings, and this confirms the findings from many other research studies on

meeting discourse. After all, VTM also fits into the meeting genre, but its ‘virtualness’ may affect the frequency and intensity of the employment of CAT strategies. As expressed by the interviewees: they need to be more sensitive and cautious when it comes to VTMs as compared to face-to-face meetings. This can imply that they may use more Interpretability strategies to ensure understanding, they may opt for a stricter control of meeting discourse to ensure the VTMs are run smoothly, they may use more relational discursive strategies to develop collegiality and/or they may express positive emotion and recognition more overtly and frequently to enhance team cohesion. Comparisons of language and discursive strategies used in traditional face-to-face meeting and VTMs will need to be conducted in order to verify whether there are any differences between the strategies used in different contexts.

8.3 Applying Discursis to enhance Qualitative Analysis

There is a growing trend to utilise visual text analytics which can generate visual accounts of textual data to supplement text and discourse analysis (Risch et al., 2008). As argued by Angus et al. (2012), the use of computer aided qualitative discourse analysis software is not to replace traditional analysis and methodologies. Instead, they aim to provide additional insights into the data. The novel visual text analytic software Discursis is used to examine VTM transcripts because it allows us to observe temporal structure of an exchange, the turn-taking mechanisms, the level of engagement of various speakers as well as conceptual coherence among speakers, which are highly relevant in understanding the dynamics in VTM contexts, particularly the discourse management accommodation strategy.

8.3.1 Answers to Research Question 3a: How does Discursis Enhance Qualitative

Discourse Analysis of VTMs?

First, Discursis can provide a quick overview of some of the turn features, for instance, who speaks, when, and for how long. Turns are indicated by different colours assigned to various speakers, and the length of a turn is indicated by the size of blocks in each speaker's turn. Thus, overall turn-taking pattern in an exchange can be observed at a glance from the Discursis plot.

Second, VTM participants' levels of engagement in VTMs can be quickly identified in Discursis plots. Figure 7.3 (p. 251) provides an example of this. The high occurrences of red and blue blocks signify high engagement between Angela and Connie in VTM B5, while the high occurrences of full green blocks in VTM B3 signals low participation of the subordinate and low engagement between the manager and the subordinate. It also reveals that the manager dominates in VTM B3, which can be regarded as nonaccommodative behaviour.

Third, the use of Leximancer conceptual modelling algorithm to generate data-driven concepts allows Discursis to determine conceptual relations as well as consistency, and visualises them on Discursis plots. This can help researchers to understand how concepts are picked up and continued between speakers and how strongly the concepts are related through the visualisation of conceptual consistency (as shown in Figure 7.2, p. 250). As topic management and maintenance is one of the discourse management strategies that can be employed by interlocutors in an exchange, investigating conceptual consistency between speakers' turns on Discursis plots can help researchers pinpoint episodes of engagement that are worth further and more detailed analysis.

While Discursis can provide visualisations for researchers to quickly identify exchange patterns, structures, levels of engagement as well as conceptual consistency among

interlocutors, it is best regarded as an initial analytical step before detailed discourse analysis. To be able to interpret how and why a particular pattern occurs, researchers still need to understand the specific context of an exchange and ‘drill down’ to a detailed reading of the transcripts.

8.3.2 Answers to Research Question 3b: How are CAT Strategies visually represented on Discursis Plots?

Discursis’s strong focus on overall exchange patterns, turn mechanics, turn-taking patterns, topic maintenance and conceptual consistency between interlocutors makes Discourse Management strategies in the CAT framework easily identified on Discursis plots. In the CAT framework, accommodative discourse management strategies entail that interlocutors in any exchange should attend to each other’s conversational needs (Ayoko, Härtel & Callan, 2002; Coupland et al., 1988; Dragojevic, Gasiorek & Giles, 2016; Jones et al., 1999) and encourage engagement in an exchange by all parties to co-construct the discourse, that is, how topics are chosen, introduced, and developed, and whether conversational partners share talk time and turns in an equitable manner (Gallois & Giles 2015). Interactants are regarded to be accommodating if they can engage each other in the conversation and recognise the needs of others.

Figure 7.1 (p. 247) illustrates how the meeting chair manages the meeting by transiting through meeting phases: from small talk, to the main transactional discussion, and finally, to summarising and closing the meeting. Figure 7.2 (p. 250) shows how topics share strong conceptual consistency and how they are maintained and developed by various VTM participants. Figure 7.3 (p. 251) depicts the different engagement levels by VTM participants through comparison of VTM B3 and B5 and explains how different purposes of VTMs can

influence participants' engagement levels and how are they represented in Discursis plots. Comparisons of VTMs of the same nature (Figure 7.4, p. 253 and Figure 7.5, p. 255) reveal that even VTMs that share same nature of meeting purposes, level of engagements can still be influenced by other contextual factors. It is worth noting that Discursis plots do not provide contextual information of the exchanges, and researchers need to go beyond the plots and transcripts to understand the factors affecting the communicative behaviours in VTMs.

Various CAT scholars (Gallois & Giles, 1998, Gallois et al., 1995; Giles & Smith, 1979; Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982), have identified repetition or 'same saying' as one of the accommodative Approximation strategies. The rationale is based on Similarity-Attraction Paradigm (Byrne, 1971), which proposes that by making one's speech similar to the one of their interlocutor's, social approval and liking may be achieved (Gallois, Ogay & Giles, 2005). While repetitions do occur and are illustrated as immediate topic repetition (ITR) on Discursis plots (for instance, Figure 7.2, p. 250), I argue that the motivations of such repetition behaviours need to be identified in order to distinguish if it is an Approximation strategy or Discourse Management strategy. Different CAT strategies can manifest themselves in the same speech behaviour, and it is important to understand the motivation behind a particular speech behaviour. If such speech mirroring behaviour is observed to gain social approval from one's interlocutor, either from the text or from the context, then it can be regarded as an Approximation strategy. However, as shown in Figure 7.2 (p. 250), the repetitions of the topics 'leave' and 'contact' occur because those are the main topics the VTM participants are discussing at a certain meeting phase and thus, they should be treated as topic maintenance and continuation and regarded as a Discourse Management strategy. Apart from Approximation and Discourse Management strategies, repetition can also be regarded as an accommodative Interpretability strategy if the motivation of repetition is to increase clarity which attends to

his/her interlocutor's competence needs. Interpretability strategies as such can also be identified in Discursis plots.

One of the many ways meeting chairs can exercise their managerial power in meeting contexts is by controlling the discourse through selecting who to speak, how long they should speak, what topics they should discuss, how much they should be discussed, how meeting phases should be transited, and when meetings should end. These behaviours can also be mapped onto Discursis plots and interpreted as interpersonal control under CAT framework. A dominating meeting chair who constrains his/her interlocutors in a passive, complying role and limits his/her contribution in meetings would be regarded as nonaccommodative through Interpersonal Control strategies, and this is illustrated in Figures 7.3b (p. 251) and 7.4 (p. 253).

Emotional Expressions is a relatively abstract strategy in the CAT framework and can be expressed in various ways such as intonation and verbal expressions. This strategy cannot be illustrated on Discursis plots because emotional support given by a VTM participant may not be conceptualised and directly repeated by its recipients. Therefore, Emotional Expressions cannot be identified by Discursis and displayed in Discursis plots.

Discursis has been effectively implemented in healthcare communication studies (Angus et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2015; Chevalier et al., 2018; Watson et al., 2015) since its launch, but its application to the meeting genre is novel. The attempt to implement Discursis in the current study aims to discover its applicability in business meetings as well as VTM contexts. The current section reveals that Discursis offers numerous practical and theoretical applications to professional communication research and teaching.

Discursis plots can easily be generated from meeting transcripts. Although it can take some time for researchers to familiarise themselves with the software and utilize it confidently, once achieved, it can offer quick overviews of turn-taking dynamics, engagement episodes and conceptual consistency, which are important areas for investigation for researchers. Since Discursis plots can be generated easily from transcripts, their advantage of accessibility can also serve as ideal teaching materials for communication studies. With its high relevance of Discourse Management strategies in the CAT framework, Discursis also complements the analytical construct of CAT and serves as a preliminary investigation tool prior to detailed CAT strategies analysis.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion

This chapter will discuss the main findings (Section 9.1) of the current study, the implications of the study (Section 9.2), the limitations of present study (Section 9.3), and directions for future research (Section 9.4).

9.1 Main Findings

One of the aims of the present study is to discover VTM participants' experiences with virtual team meetings with specific focus on the challenges they encounter as well as their strategies to cope with the challenges. It is found that they generally have issues on meeting deficiencies, the virtual environment, language issues and team diversity (Section 5.1). These findings echo with existing literature on VTM challenges and thus, build on existing knowledge in understanding the issues that evolve around VTM settings. While much of the literature links the responsibility of virtual team effectiveness to the manager's role in virtual teams, the current study finds that virtual team members are also aware of the challenging environments in virtual settings and take on a pro-active role in overcoming the difficulties. A Thematic Analysis of VTM participants' interview data reveals that they have developed strategies (Section 5.2) targeted at meeting deficiencies, language issues, team diversity issues as well as ways to establish interpersonal relationship with their virtual team members to tackle the VTM issues they encounter.

Another overarching aim of the current study is to investigate VTM participants' employment of CAT strategies in VTMs, how they adapt to each other in order to fulfil the transactional as well as relational goals of the meetings. This study proposes a modified version of CAT framework that fits the virtual team meeting environments. VTM participants' communicative

behaviours are analysed, coded and associated with specific CAT strategies based on the motives behind their behaviours (Section 6.1, p. 103; Table 8.4, p. 269). It is found that VTM participants make use of a wide range of linguistic resources interchangeably and complementarily during VTMs in order to deliver their messages accurately, to ensure the meetings are run smoothly, to enact their managerial roles, or to mitigate their managerial force for relational building with the team as well as expressing positive emotion to enhance team cohesion and team trust. These goals not only match with the motives of CAT strategies use, i.e., cognitive and affective, they also fulfil the meeting goals which are transactional and relational. The analysis of the use of CAT strategies in the seven VTMs (Section 6.2) sheds light on how contextual and immediate situational factors can influence VTM participants' choices in adopting CAT strategies. With overarching and wider cultural and organisational norms influencing VTM participants' psychological perception of the context and of their interlocutors, the use of CAT strategies tends to be sensitive to immediate situational contexts (such as meeting purpose, meeting topics, power asymmetry (perceived and/or actual), language proficiencies of VTM participants, and managerial styles) of VTMs (Figure 8.3, p. 272).

The third objective of the current research is to examine how visual analytic tool Discursis can assist qualitative discourse analysis, which focuses on communication accommodation theory in current research. Discursis's strengths in visualising turn mechanics, turn-taking and turn-allocation patterns as well as conceptual relevance between turns are particularly useful and convenient in analysing Discourse Management in the CAT framework which has its focus on interactants' engagement level in a discourse as well as the exchange processes.

9.2 Research Implications

This section discusses the practical, methodological and pedagogical implications that are brought about by the current study.

9.2.1 Practical Implications

This research was conducted during the outbreak of Covid-19. Due to the shutdown of national borders and offices, millions of workers have to change the way they work from real-life settings and resort to virtual work teams. This has caused tremendous pressure on both companies and employees with regards to coping with the challenges that are brought about in the virtual environment, as well as the linguistic requirements needed to effectively communicate in virtual work teams. This study has highlighted the challenges and strategies in virtual team meeting contexts, which may help new VTM participants and companies to predict the potential issues, as well as possible solutions to tackle the challenges. Discourse analysis of VTM transcripts using the CAT framework can also inform VTM participants on how to utilise various linguistic devices to achieve their meeting goals, while maintaining good relationships with other virtual team members.

9.2.2 Social Implication

Another implication that is brought about by the current study concerns with its potential social impact. As revealed by one of the Filipino employees at BrazIT, there seems to be ethnocentrism and prejudices (Section 5.1.4.2, p. 86) from his US and European counterparts which makes him feel that Filipino employees working in satellite offices are somehow marginalised, which can have serious consequences on intergroup relationships and work practices. To tackle this problem and for better intergroup relationships in global organisation settings, Ladegaard (2011c) advocates that researchers:

[...] who work in collaboration with practitioners in organizations, work, not only on but also for and with their respondents and consider it part of their obligation to share their findings with organizational members. The key issue here is empowerment through knowledge and awareness, and this is where researchers can make a difference to organizational processes and intergroup communication (p.104)

The results and implications of the current study will also be shared and discussed with the employees and managements at BrazIT with the aims to improve intergroup communication and work practices.

9.2.3 Methodological Implications

Much of CAT research focuses specifically on Approximation strategies in various settings. As far as I know, applying the whole range of CAT strategies to virtual team meeting contexts is absent in the literature. Through studying all five CAT strategies in various virtual team meetings, a coding scheme of communicative behaviours and their associated CAT strategies has been conceptualised and developed (Table 8.3, p. 263). The sociocultural/sociohistorical as well as immediate situational norms have also been integrated into the existing CAT framework (Figure 8.3, p. 272). The coding scheme as well as a revised CAT framework that targets VTM settings can inform further studies on VTMs, including recommendations about appropriate methodologies.

This study has also implemented Discursis and discusses its potential to enhance qualitative discourse analysis of VTM data. Future studies that wish to investigate the turn-taking dynamics and speakers' engagement in other contexts may also make use of the software to inform their qualitative analysis.

9.2.4 Pedagogical Implications

Results of this research have implications for both professional communication students and practitioners. CAT communication skills could be integrated into training workshops in order to raise students' and practitioners' awareness of how to communicate in multicultural settings with interlocutors coming from multilingual backgrounds. The identification of communicative devices associated with CAT communication strategies also provides a concrete framework that can be readily applied to the study of (virtual) meeting discourse and implemented to training materials.

9.3 Limitations of the Present Study

The outbreak of Covid-19 in 2019 had posed various challenges to the current study. Due to international travel bans and cities lockdown, it was impossible for me to visit and conduct fieldwork at AusBank in Melbourne and revisit BrazIT in Manila for follow-up data collection which had impacted the amount of data that could have been collected for this study. Nevertheless, this study tried to cope with the adversities and restrictions with the available collected data in the best possible ways.

It was also difficult to shadow and record the VTMs in the organisations due to confidentiality issues. Many of the VTM participants were reluctant to allow their meetings to be recorded and analysed, and this has implications for, and constraints on, the collection of authentic virtual meeting data. Also, the VTMs collected for this study were all 'one-offs' and collected at a specific time which means that how the maturity of virtual work teams would affect their communicative behaviours and employment of CAT strategies over the life cycle of the work teams has not been observed, yet, it provides directions for future research.

Post meeting interviews with VTM participants on their linguistic choices during the VTMs would have been useful for me to assist my interpretation and help me explain their communicative behaviours. However, it was difficult to administer because the VTM participants were geographically dispersed around the world and there was no familiarity between me and them, which made it impossible for me to ask them to discuss their language choices in a meeting during work hours. Also, another potential problem is that they may not be conscious of, or remember the linguistic choices they made in a particular meeting. If I were to conduct post-meeting interviews with the VTM participants, that would have been after the initial transcription and analytical phase, which means that would leave a potentially problematic time gap between the occurrences of VTMs and post-meeting interviews.

Another limitation concerns the self-reported interview data which is a common and inherent problem with interview data analysis. The interviews are self-reported data, and many studies have shown potential discrepancies between reported and actual language behaviours (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Kvale, 1996; 2006; Oppenheim, 1992). However, triangulation has been adopted in the present study which also includes evidence of actual language behaviours in VTMs. Therefore, the present study is arguably stronger than many of the early CAT studies that focus exclusively on interview data or questionnaires, and it has added an important component to the current CAT literature.

The present study analyses authentic VTM discourse but how authentic and ‘naturalistic’ these VTMs are can also be a concern. Most of the managers/meeting chairs informed their VTM counterparts at the outset of the meetings that the meetings would be recorded for research purposes. Noah, the manager in VTM B4 even jokingly told his team that they were “monitored”. It could therefore be a potential problem if their awareness of the recording would

affect their actual communicative behaviours during VTMs, and if this would affect the authenticity and ‘naturalness’ of the VTM exchanges.

9.4 Directions for Future Research

The VTM data set of the current research is relatively small and currently there is no existing VTM data corpus available for systematic discourse analysis. A corpus of VTM which contains VTMs from various types of meetings and different team compositions can help to identify distinctive features which are prominent in virtual settings. A collection of VTMs from the same teams through their life cycle would also help researchers investigate how the maturity of virtual teams might influence their communicative behaviours. Comparative studies between traditional face-to-face meetings and VTMs should also be conducted to investigate whether there are any differences in the use of language and discursive strategies, and if any, how and why are they different?

Another possible area for future study is to incorporate multimodal studies into the CAT framework. While much CAT research focuses on Approximation strategy and in particular, how speakers change their intonation and pitch to match their interlocutors, these studies tend to be impressionistic without the objective measurements of voice quality, and how attitudes are manifested through them. It would be fruitful to implement objective measurements of voice quality and how they can be incorporated into CAT strategies, not only to Approximation strategy. For example, interesting questions would be how managers enact Interpersonal Control strategy through voice qualities? How do they establish rapport or mitigate their managerial power through the use of voice? How do VTM participants use voice to express their positive or negative emotions during meetings? Of course, such implementation is not only limited to VTM settings and can be widely applied in other meeting contexts, but given

the fact that VTMs via teleconferencing rely solely on verbal linguistic features and paralinguistic cues, the investigation of voice quality should be regarded as highly relevant.

Another potential for future research would be to use video in the recording of VTMs to allow for an analysis of non-verbal cues such as body language, gaze and posture. Although many of the VTMs are carried out through teleconferencing (such as the data collected for this study from BrazIT and AusBank), a lot of the virtual work teams also hold regular virtual meetings via new computer applications such as Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business, and Zoom. The use of virtual meetings via videoconferencing will no doubt continue to rise with the advancement of technology and internet connection networks and thus, effective communication in this area is a promising field for further investigation.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Virtual Communication Questionnaire

A survey on employees' virtual team meeting practices and perceptions in a multinational company

Virtual communication is a kind of communication that has limited face-to-face contact and is done by electronic media. The aim of this questionnaire is to understand the employees' internal virtual communication practices within a multi-national company (Part I) with specific focus on virtual team meetings (Part II). As this questionnaire aims to understand participants' experiences with regards to virtual communication, there is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions listed below. This questionnaire contains 4 pages and should take about 15 minutes to complete.

The information collected through this questionnaire will be used as a part of my doctoral (PhD) research project on virtual team communication.

Confidentiality: The responses you provide are anonymous and strictly confidential. The research outcome will not include reference to any individuals. Completed questionnaires will only be accessed by me.

For enquiries, please contact Carol Yu at carol.wm.yu@.

Thank you very much for your time.

Part I: General Internal Virtual Communication Practices (Virtual communication here refers to communication that has limited face-to-face contact and is done by electronic communication media)

- 1) What is the proportion of virtual communication and face-to-face communication in your current job?

| | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| Virtual communication | % |
| Face-to-face communication | % |
| Total | 100% |

- 2) How much do you use the following virtual communication tools in your current job?

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Emails | % |
| Telephone | % |
| Video-conferencing | % |
| Web messaging | % |
| Others (please specify) | % |
| Total | 100% |

- 3) What is your most preferred virtual communication tool. Why?

- 4) What is your least preferred virtual communication tool. Why?

- 5) How important is virtual communication in performing your current job?

| Extremely Important | Very Important | Moderately Important | Slightly Important | Not at all Important |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | |

(please ✓ as appropriate)

- 6) How effective is virtual communication in performing your current job?

| Extremely Effective | Very Effective | Moderately Effective | Slightly Effective | Not at all Effective |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | |

(please ✓ as appropriate)

- 7) How satisfied are you with your virtual communication practices?

| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Moderately Satisfied | Slightly Satisfied | Not at all Satisfied |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | |

(please ✓ as appropriate)

Part II: Virtual Team Meeting practices (virtual team here means work arrangements where team members are in different geographical locations, have limited face-to-face contact, and work interdependently through the use of electronic communication)

- 1) How much do you participate in the following types of meeting in your current job?

| | |
|-----------------------------|------|
| Virtual team meeting | % |
| Face-to-face meeting | % |
| Total | 100% |

- 2) How much do you use the following virtual team meeting tools in your current job?

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Telephone | % |
| Video-conferencing | % |
| Others (please specify) | % |
| Total | 100% |

- 3) What is your most preferred virtual team meeting tool? Why?

4) What is your least preferred virtual team meeting tool? Why?

5) How many virtual team meeting(s) do you usually have in a week?

6) How long do your virtual team meetings normally last?

7) How much do you do the following duties while you participate in virtual team meetings?

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Regular Reporting | % |
| Ideas Sharing | % |
| Decision Making | % |
| Others (please specify) | % |
| Total | 100% |

8) Who do you usually have virtual team meetings with?

9) In your opinion, what is the advantage(s) of virtual team meetings in your current job?

10) In your opinion, what is the disadvantage(s) of virtual team meetings in your current job?

11) Have you experienced any problems/issues with virtual team meetings? Please specify.

12) In your opinion, what makes a virtual team meeting successful?

13) In your opinion, what makes a virtual team meeting unsuccessful?

14) How important are virtual team meetings in performing your current job?

| Extremely Important | Very Important | Moderately Important | Slightly Important | Not at all Important |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | |

(please ✓ as appropriate)

15) How effective are virtual team meetings in performing your current job?

| Extremely Effective | Very Effective | Moderately Effective | Slightly Effective | Not at all Effective |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | |

(please ✓ as appropriate)

16) How satisfied are you with your virtual team meetings?

| Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Moderately Satisfied | Slightly Satisfied | Not at all Satisfied |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| | | | | |

(please ✓ as appropriate)

Part III: Demographic Details (Details provided below are for research purposes only. The responses you provide are anonymous and strictly confidential. The research outcome will not include reference to any individuals)

Name: _____ Nationality: _____

What is your age group? (please ✓ as appropriate)

☐ Below 19 ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ 60 & Above

Gender (please ✓ as appropriate)

☐ Male ☐ Female

What is your highest education qualification? (please ✓ as appropriate)

☐ Diploma ☐ Graduate degree ☐ Post graduate degree ☐ Others:

Where are you located? Please specify.

☐ N. America: _____ ☐ Asia-Pacific: _____ ☐
☐ EMEA: _____ ☐ Latin America: _____ ☐ Europe: _____
☐ Others: _____

Company Division/Department: _____ Position: _____

Years of experience at Stefanini: _____ years

Native Language(s): _____

If English is not your native language, please indicate your English proficiency level below:

| | Speaking | Reading | Writing | Listening |
|------------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Superior | | | | |
| Proficient | | | | |
| Competent | | | | |
| Functional | | | | |

(please ✓ as appropriate)

End of questionnaire
Thank you very much for your time

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Date: _____

Time: _____

Setting: _____

Participant details

Name

Years of experience

Job position and duties

VTM context and details

- 1) How many virtual team(s) are you currently involved in?
- 2) Can you recall any challenging VTM experience?
(Probing questions: How long has it been established? Who are involved? What is your role in it? Why challenging?)
- 3) Can you recall any 'Successful' VTM experience?
(Probing questions: How long has it been established? Who are involved? What is your role in it? Why successful?)

Language

- 4) What is the usual language used in VTM?
- 5) Have you encountered any difficulties regarding the language use in VTM?

Intercultural issues

- 6) Have you experienced any intercultural differences among VT members?
(Probing questions: If yes, do you think they influence the effectiveness and aims of VTM in any ways? Can you describe an experience to illustrate this?)

(possible probing areas: Big C: National culture; Small C: Corporate culture; age; gender etc.)

Group dynamics

- 7) What do you think of the interpersonal relationships in your VT? Why?
- 8) Do you think there are any in-group/out-group establishments? How and why?
- 9) Do you think VT works better if it has a longer history?
- 10) How important is the idea of 'trust' in VT working environment?
(How is trust established?)

(have your VTs successfully established trust among team members? Why/why not? How)

11) Do you think there are fair and even contributions among VT members? Do VT members contribute fairly and evenly in VTMs?

12) Do you have any suggestions on how to establish more effective VTMs?

Is there anything else you would like to add? Is there anything I should have asked?