LANGUAGES
OVERCOMING BARRIERS
PAGES 6-7

Team Colours
Great! We’re all on the same page. Yes? No?
Pg 03

UNspoken Language
Does a good leader always need to talk?
Pg 04

move it RIGHT
Consciously watch your body language
Pg 09

START ‘EM YOUNG
Encouraging multilingualism at a tender age
Pg 10
A THOUSAND WORDS

IT has been a tough few days. It wasn’t the haze or the insurmountable (no nothing really is when you love what you do) tasks at work.

It was the knowledge that 298 living, breathing, fathers, mothers, bosses, doctors, researchers, flight crew, the bandida who may have made you coffee, the child you may have bent down to wiggle your fingers goofily at and say ‘hamau’, people you may have met, people you would never meet - gone.

We watched as the horribles were communicated to us. Wordlessly. We wept tears that they would never hear. We prayed as a nation for the loved ones left behind.

Language unites us. The languages we speak, but also the language of human compassion. The need to communicate, to pray, to be heard and be understood at different levels be it as a child whose mom speaks to him in Japanese and his father in Turkish, or a newbie at the office seeking acceptance.

Not being understood for not speaking the same language, and equally misunderstood as an entire community, compels at times to not let that discourage us. This will help you gain confidence in speaking the language with a native speaker. This will help you gain confidence in speaking the language with a native speaker.

Our contributors also delve into the different benefits that being multilingual can bring to the workplace that go beyond if being a ‘banana’ affects our identities.

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And others yet, look at how speaking a common language does not necessarily mean that we all have a common understanding – is the key to personal connection – is the key to personal connection.

Our youngest intern wrote about how we can, in simple ways, appreciate the people we spend so many hours with at the workplace.

Sometimes it is not about speaking. Sometimes it is just about being.

From Leaderonomics to you, Selamat Hari Raya to all who celebrate!

Have a fantastic weekend all. Please drive safe!

KAREN NEOH
Editor
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-language tricks-

By SARAH TAN
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**EVEN** Malaysian knows at least English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil, no matter how limited their vocabulary may be. How else are we going to order our roti canai, nasi lemak or roti canai? In our largely diverse country, there are so many languages and dialects spoken daily.

As we are encouraged to pick up new languages in this week’s pullout, here are a few tips that will help you in learning your desired language:

**HAVE SHORT CLASSES DAILY**

Language is learned through practice. Having daily classes will ensure what you learnt in your previous lesson won’t be forgotten easily. When it comes to learning anything, quality has better value over quantity. Hold short classes ranging from 30–60 minutes every day. This allows you to use your time optimally by putting in proper concentration during classes.

**LEARN THROUGH CREATIVE MEDIUMS**

All students who study smart are sure to know one of the best study secrets: learning through song. I used to sing the first 20 elements of the periodic table in my head to save time from flipping to the reference sheet. The same method can be applied to learning language. Interested in learning Malay? Listen to some of Zee Avi’s songs, or even watch P Ramlee’s legendary movie work. Not only are they guaranteed to work, they can also learn in a fun way.

**USE FLASHCARDS**

Get language flashcards and skim through them every day. Flashcards come in handy as they are small enough to bring along with you, and succinct enough to not require too much time to look through.

Bring a few cards along with you everywhere you go and take them out while waiting in line or for a bus, and turn your time into something productive.

An even better way is to list down 100 of the most common words and make your own flashcards. Writing down the words will help in committing them to memory.

**USE IT**

Chances are, you are learning this new language in hopes of using it one day. While reading, listening and writing your target language are great ways to learn, nothing beats practising the language with a native speaker. This will help you gain confidence for future use, as well as improve your fluency.

Our first time speaking a new language will sound weird and probably a little funny. The most important thing is to not let that discourage you. Don’t be afraid to embrace your mistakes!

**KEEPING THESE TIPS IN MIND, I URGE YOU TO GO BEYOND YOUR CURRENT KNOWLEDGE-OF ANY ONE OF THE LANGUAGES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SPEAKING, AND TRY TO PICK ONE UP AS A SECOND TONGUE. HAVE FUN ON YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY!**

Want practical tips for success on your way home from work? We’re on every Tuesday from 6pm to 7pm.

TUNE IN CAPITAL FM 88.9FM in the Klang Valley

You can also learn in a fun way. Having daily classes will ensure what you learnt in your previous lesson won’t be forgotten easily. When it comes to learning anything, quality has better value over quantity. Hold short classes ranging from 30–60 minutes every day. This allows you to use your time optimally by putting in proper concentration during classes.

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ET’s be honest, especially the men. For those of us who grew up in Malaysia and went to school with friends from different language backgrounds, we were all multilingual in our language in the school playground (and very often the classroom as well), just in more hushed tones with the teacher within earshot.

How many of you would admit not knowing swear words of a different language? Okay, you had better wipe that grin off before your loved ones start asking questions.

But the reality in corporate Malaysia is that we all conduct business in English, however broken it may be. Mangle it here and there with a few Malay, Tamil and Chinese words and you would most likely be able to get the message across, whatever the situation is. To be honest, I have ceased to be amused when an ang moh (caucasian) tells me to “Relax la.”

To summarise, you don’t have to be Dr Evangelos Katsioulis to understand the language of business. You have goods and services, someone has money and a need for it, and you transact. It becomes a tad harder when you have to manage the groups of people who are involved in the transaction though. People interact in many languages, not just verbally. They interact in many languages, not just verbally. It becomes the leader’s role to bring these various perspectives into a common corridor of synergy and allow it to grow the business.

I can think of many different approaches to life that people translate into their daily lingual representation, and I’m going to discuss two different paradigms here.

I have a team filled with people who speak the language of optimism and pessimism. I also have introverted linguists, as well as people who are always speaking the language of vision.

Then there are the ones who speak the need to be in the present besides many other divergent points which actually represent worldviews within a microcosm. I believe you need all of these perspectives to grow and thrive!

PESSIMIST VS OPTIMIST
Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist theorist once said, “I’m a pessimist because of intelligence, but an optimist because of will.”

How apt a description of the struggle of a world that finds it difficult to be comfortable with greyness. The key for me is to balance all these perspectives into the area of “healthy doses”.

We need healthy doses of both pessimism and optimism; likewise, futurists and present-focused perspectives to grow the team and organisation.

Now, the moment we read the word pessimist, we jump to the usual denominator of broody and worried personalities who tend to be more a harbinger of doom rather than a ray of sunshine. But that’s cliché to the hilt.

I have people in my team of a “pessimistic nature” who are full of life; vibrant and dynamic in their relationship with others, yet always have a caution to take on the plans that are afoot in whatever work we do.

I have found that there are two key things that are within my area of control to move their perspective into a less pessimistic viewpoint.

Acknowledgement of their point of view
Very often, a lack of appreciation can lead to a trip down sorrow-lane for people who sometimes feel their point of view is never considered in a discussion.

I am assuming a healthy proportion of these people are, or become, pessimistic in their nature when it happens once too often.

Your role then, dear leader, is to ensure everyone has a fair shot at getting their views across.

“Reframe” the conversation
Instead of getting drawn into the “can’t do” discussion, try rephrasing the statements into “can do” perspectives.

For every “you can’t do that” that comes tumbling out within seconds of an idea being discussed, counter it with “okay, how can we do it?”

Try to put a positive tinge to the language used, thereby subtly drawing the pessimist into the realm of the optimist. This tactic links back to the first point, i.e. people want to get their opinions across, so giving them the opportunity helps not just to move the discussion forward but also helps draw people into taking ownership of the issue at hand.

A team that has a pessimist will always be able to anticipate undesirable outcomes, therefore putting in place a system of work that has a safety net built into the projects. For a manager, how can that be a bad thing?

And what about the pessimist’s counterpart, the optimist? To quote a much used cliché, the person who sees the glass as perpetually half full?

This person is always going to help you think about how to build on the positives of an idea and not dwell on what could go wrong. The danger? Plenty of blind spots left unattended forming potential dangerous pitfalls.

The key then is to move the discussion into the middle path for both these groups. The leader thus needs to develop the ability to balance viewpoints and take the best of both worlds to form the path forward. Leadership is easy, says no one, ever.

FUTURIST VS PRESENT-FOCUSED
The other common theme discussion that happens when considering the way forward is the struggle between those who speak the language of present-state and use that as a stepping stone for the future versus those who want to imagine the future and leave current issues to sort themselves out.

In fact, the vibrant new future technically should make the current issues debate irrelevant as far as they are concerned.

Not so easy though. The human mind is not evolved enough to balance both extremes of a situation, and still be coherent enough to channel it usefully. So, that then becomes the leadership conundrum, i.e. speaking the language of consensus building to bridge the viewpoints.

I have people in the team who are always describing the wonderful pot of gold under the rainbow, and on the other hand, people who are; while wanting that pot of gold; wary of the treacherous journey and can see the valleys; and the predators that lie along the journey.

My role as leader thus forces me to become the bridge builder. How do I as a leader, keep the vision of the pot of gold at the end alive, while keeping the team within the project yet help them to put in place the bridge structure to make their way to the promised pot? Balance is the answer. Feed reality checks and dream potions in equal measures to both sides respectively.

IN CONCLUSION
That’s just two examples of paradigms that exist within the realm of communication in organised structures. There is always going to be a push and pull factor with multiple variables. Thus, leaders need to be in sync with the “language” that is being spoken by their team members. You don’t want to be in a position of trying to stick a square peg in a round hole, so understanding the thoughts that are being verbalised and becoming “multilingual” makes your leadership decision-making skill more effective!

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H OW many times have you heard someone walk into the room uttering the words: “It’s not what he said, it’s how he said it”?

This phrase is usually voiced in negative reaction to messages said by bosses, who seem to be the primary reason why good employees leave a company, as research would indicate. Could they have been simply misunderstood?

The workplace of the millennium has changed whereby there is greater integration of diversity. We now have multigenerational perspectives, gender and varying levels of cultural and ethnic diversities.

This makes the workplace more dynamic for leaders who want to communicate as being able to communicate strategic direction or maintain the delicate balance in the working environment.

At other levels, being able to communicate extends beyond the doors of the office. You can be on the phone with a client or even working environment.

Being able to communicate strategic direction or maintain the delicate balance in the working environment.

As a leader of your organisation, you should look at your employees as consumers of your leadership. Thus, there’s more to communication than the spoken language.

Words seem to fail us, and even if I consider myself to be a pretty good writer, I still find myself having to meet face to face in order for me to accurately convey what I mean.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

There are studies which suggest that a majority of how we communicate is “non-verbal.” This is literally beyond words (pun intended) where most of our messages are construed due mostly to its delivery rather than the words themselves. So goes the familiar phrase again: “It’s not what you say, but rather how you say it!”

A long-term study conducted on communication by researchers Mehrabian and Wiener (1967) and Mehrabian and Ferris (1967) resulted upon the often quoted 55/38/7 formula. The numbers represent the percentages of importance of varying communication channels, with the belief that 55% of communication is body language, 38% is the tone of voice and 7% is the actual words spoken.

While the percentages are often misused, many would agree to the point that the majority of what we perceive are non-verbal cues over the actual words used.

This validates the issue that non-verbal communication and the spoken language are equally, if not more, important than words in communication. This argument behooves leaders to take a closer look at how they say things rather than “what” they say.

THE ART OF ORATION

Years before email came to the picture, there was a classic tradition called oration. Oration or oratio (Latin for speaking in public linked to an inherited tradition from Greece). Oration was considered a highly developed profession that was necessary for leaders to learn. Even the young Julius Caesar was said to have been schooled by masters in Greece to learn this fine art.

In modern times, this Greco-Roman art remains to be a highly developed professional competence that is traditionally mastered by lawyers and politicians.

With persuasion and influence being the desired effects of these speech skills, it is easy to think that effective delivery goes beyond just words but everything else that delivers a persuasive argument.

MORE THAN WORDS

In my own formal study as a speaker, we were also taught that delivery is much more than words and that delivery in the non-verbal aspect can be broken down into the following elements:

- Vocalics or paralinguistic

Beyond words, this could include inflection, tone and pronunciation. This is “how” things are said and therefore perceived or received.

Pay attention to your tone of voice and the volume. Paralinguistics can also refer to sounds which are non-words such as yeeah, hoo hoo! Even if these sounds are not really words, they could be equally as, or even more communicative to the receiver.

- Kinesics

This includes gestures and facial expressions. For example, the way you wave your arms around could affect the type of attention and reaction from your audience.

When extremes are placed within a comfort zone (like when arms are crossed or placed behind your back), it could suggest formality, diplomacy or sometimes defensiveness. A simple point of a finger could mean either specification or culpability.

- Oculics

It is the use of your eyes or eye contact. This somehow is the primary point of connection with your audience. In some cultures and context, looking directly into someone’s eyes could be rude, while in other cultures if one does not look directly into the eyes, it could mean you’re hiding something and thus erodes trust.

In public speaking, it is good to make eye contact with those who seem to be in agreement. It also helps ease pressure from the speaker as he feels like he’s connecting and conversing with his audience.

- Proxemics

It is the use of space between the speaker and the receiver. There are appropriate conventions to this that ranges from intimate (0–15cm), personal (15cm–120cm), social (120cm–360cm) and public (360cm and beyond).

Cultural norms apply. Speakers usually stay within a three-feet bubble. However, using the space within a stage or a room by moving around could give the speaker a stronger presence. The movement also leads the audience to follow him, therefore creating more attention.

- Haptics

It is the use of touch. This type of body language is powerful, although it could be inappropriate and counterproductive.

A touch on the wrist, the elbow or shoulder is a physical form of persuasion. Often used to connote a certain level of closeness and sympathy with the receiver, the touch is used to signal a receiver towards a concurring response.

Please use this with extreme caution! It can also be misconstrued as a form of flirting.

- Chronemics

It is the use of time and sequence. While it is expected for people to be prompt, in Latin cultures tardiness tends to be more acceptable; thus the term “fashionably late”. Tardiness is frowned upon in Anglo-American cultures, thus in a bilingual Hispanic American context, appointments are usually specified as “Hora Latina” (Latin Hour which is ±30 minutes) or “Hora Americana” (on the dot, or en-punto).

On another note, for experienced speakers, “the pause”, which is a momentary moment of silence at the height of expectation, is also used to draw tension, attention and control for the speaker.

- Objectics

It is the use of objects such as rules (as teachers would use), props and illustrations to drive a point. Clothing, accessories and even vehicles could be used to communicate a role and social status to direct an audience towards a desired response. This too is a form of non-verbal persuasion.

As a leader and communicator, one must recognise the importance of the unspoken language for effective communication.

In the worst case, “conflicting” messages are a result where non-verbal cues are inconsistent or at odds with the verbal message. This often leads to misconception and mistrust.

The results could be extreme. It could even lead an employee to leave. On the other hand, a combination of proper verbal and non-verbal cues could make a compelling message or a persuasive presentation that leads to positive action.

Do remember that action speaks louder than words. Learning the “unspoken language” could make you a more effective and persuasive leader in the workplace.

John Walter Baybay is a regional management consultant who has worked more than 17 years in the areas of corporate strategic planning and economic planning. He is a competitive athlete who balances his time between business coaching, family and working with communities.

By JOHN WALTER BAYBAY
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IT’S THE HOW, NOT THE WHAT

SPEAKING THE UNSPOKEN LANGUAGE
There are many lessons that we can bring to our relationships with our colleagues. As everyone speaks a different “language”, it may be difficult to identify who speaks what lingo. Taking an online test together as a team can not only help you understand each other, but it also serves as a fun team activity.

However, as it is understandably difficult to do so if you are in a large team, here are a few ways to identify the love languages of your colleagues, and how to speak it.

1. Words of Affirmation

Usually appreciated by extroverts, complimenting and acknowledging the hard working employees in the office can really give them a much needed motivation boost. In the workplace, words of affirmation are best given in groups. Praising your colleague in front of others makes them feel important, as their work would be recognised by others as well.

2. Acts of Service

Work mates who speak this language tend to be the ones who slave away at their table, trying to finish as much work as possible to help. Most of the time, these are the employees who never seem to not be working. Late night at the office for one of your team mates? Appreciate them by asking if you can help take on some of their tasks. If you are already full on your workload, offering to buy dinner for them can go a long way as well.

3. Gifts

This is the colleague who leaves presents at your table to surprise you every once in a while. Chocolates, sweets, or even little notes, their appreciation for you shines through that cocoa covered almond waiting on your desk. Take heed of the saying, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, and in return, shower them with appreciation by doing the same! Buy them a cup of coffee on long days, or even a snack in the middle of their work.

4. Quality Time

There is always one person in the office who wants to bring everyone out for lunch, and is willing to wait for others to finish their work first. To this group of people, show appreciation by stopping by their desks every once in a while to spend a few minutes catching up with them. Going out of your way to speak to them shows that your care and are thoughtful.

5. Physical Touch

Saving this as the last, and, in this context, also the least, physical touch is not normally used as a form of appreciation in the workplace. The reason is obvious, as there are certain limits in our workplace relationships, and crossing such limits is inappropriate for professional settings. Nonetheless, certain actions such as high fives and pats on the back can still be a great form of recognition towards your colleagues.

If you are familiar with Chapman’s book, The 5 Love Languages, this article may ring a bell. However, it is also mentioned to not mistake the two “dialects”, as our primary love language in our personal relationships is usually not the same as our language of appreciation in the workplace.

Keeping all of the above in mind, let’s show appreciation in our workplace, and go the extra mile by speaking it in the language of those around us. As you appreciate your colleagues, you will be in turn appreciated!

Sarah Tan is a firm believer in appreciating everybody who contributes in the workplace. You can contact her at sarah.tan@leaderonomics.com
**A SIGN OF SHEER DETERMINATION**

A LANGUAGE WORTH LEARNING

By LIM LAY HSUAN

**LET US TELL YOU ABOUT OURSELVES**

Deaf Boleh! Malaysia community member. I was born in Taiping, Perak. I am the only child in a family of three. Both my parents are teachers. I consider myself an advocate for the hearing-impaired. I am also an active blogger at Selina Wing (www.selinawing.com) and Selina Wing - Deaf Boleh! Malaysia (www.deafboleh.blogs- pot.com).

**TELL US MORE ABOUT DEAF BOLEH MALAYSIA?**

Deaf Boleh! Malaysia community member. I am also an active blogger at Selina Wing. I was born in Taiping, Perak. I am the only child in a family of three. Both my parents are teachers. I was born deaf. I am the only child in a family of three. Both my parents are teachers. I was born deaf. I am also an active blogger at Selina Wing.

**A SIGN LANGUAGE AND THE HEARING COMMUNITY**

It is not difficult to learn the basics of sign language. It is a language for the deaf, and it is a language for the hearing. It is a language for the deaf, and it is a language for the hearing. It is a language for the deaf, and it is a language for the hearing. It is a language for the deaf, and it is a language for the hearing. It is a language for the deaf, and it is a language for the hearing.

**SILENCE IS GOLDEN WHEN YOU DO NOT REALISE THERE ARE HEARING-IMPAIRED PEOPLE (OKU) IN MALAYSIA.**

There are many types of disability, and hearing impairment is just one of them. However, it is often not realised that there are hearing-impaired people in Malaysia. As a result, they may feel isolated and excluded from society. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired. However, if you take the time to learn about sign language, you can communicate effectively and build relationships with people who are hearing-impaired.
ENGLISH 101: AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER LANGUAGES?

By ANDREW LAU
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ACT. The undisputed language champion of the business world is English. It’s embedded in businesses’ culture, vision, missions, processes, organisational structure, communications, systems and supply chain. There’s simply no escape from it. The English language itself has been unchallenged for hundreds of years and will continue to be the primary language in business for many more.

The emergence of Mandarin through the vast population of China is ironically helping to fuel the growth of English as the Chinese government is pushing mastery of the latter. Malaysia is one of the many countries that is pushing for the same mastery. While it is important to note that the mastery of English is critical to compete in a globalised and interconnected business world, should it be done at the expense of other languages or dialects?

In worrying scenes across major capitals of the world, children are becoming increasingly monolingual in the pursuit of English. Students study, take extra classes, sit for exams, watch TV, browse the web, use social media, listen to music and converse with people using English. Other languages especially dialects are dying an increasingly fast death. We don’t have to imagine very far as we witness children in urban areas all over the world leading the way of monolingualism by speaking only English. While everyone makes the case for English, let’s make a case for languages that may not garner as much attention.

ENGLISH THE LANGUAGE OF CREATIVITY?

As innovation becomes the key differentiator in businesses, creative thinkers are highly sought after. How much does language contribute to the creativity of a person’s mind?

It is a widely known fact that logic is attributed to the left hemisphere of our brains while creativity is attributed to the right hemisphere. It is also known that the left hemisphere of our brains control the right side of our bodies and vice versa. This physiological uniqueness makes our brain contralateral. When we raise our left hand, the right hemisphere of the brain commands it. This is contralateralization at work.

Here’s where it becomes interesting. Contra lateralization does not only work when we kick a ball or grip something, but also when we move our heads and our eyes.

Turn your head slowly to the left – the right side of your brain steered it. Now turn your head to the right – the left side of the brain steered it. Let’s think of another activity that has the same effect. Here’s a hint, you are doing it right now. As you read, your eyes are moving from left to right.

In western languages, writing and reading involves the motion of left to right – therefore making the brain’s right (logi cal) hemisphere dominant. In certain languages like Arabic, Hebrew and Mandarin; the languages are written from right to left – therefore making the brain’s left (creative) hemisphere dominant.

With language determined by which hemisphere of the brain is being used – a right hemisphere-trained mind is highly likely to be more creative due to daily practice. As such, it is no surprise that many early scientific and artistic discoveries were made by the Arabs, the Jews and the Chinese in ancient times.

ENGLISH A BETTER COGNITIVE THINKING LANGUAGE?

The other highly prized way of thinking in the business world is cognitive thinking. Cognitive thinking skills are routinely used in breaking down and solving complex business problems. So which language contributes more to cognitive thinking?

Studies have found that the left (logical) hemisphere of the brain specialises in text while the right (creative) hemisphere specialises in context. English as a language is about text. A word usually carries a singular meaning. Bringing languages such as Tamil, Mandarin, Hebrew and Arabic into play opens up new possibilities. In these languages, a single word brings multiple meanings according to the tone and context in which it is pronounced.

In a sense, the other languages have deeper “musicality” embedded in both speaking and writing compared to English. This provides a more complex structure of language, which also stimulates deeper understanding and cognitive thinking. This is where the other languages once again gain an advantage over English.

UNIFIED MONOLINGUAL VS DIVERSIFIED MULTILINGUAL?

If the language of business is English, why is there a need for other languages? While some people may point towards the need to serve different markets, there is a more fundamental and important reason. To know the reason, we need to ask this question. Why is diversity at the workplace valued? We hear that diversity of culture is important for organisational growth, but why?

To answer this, we need to look into biodiversity. Within a species of plant, there are many different sub-species. Take, for example, the humble corn. While corn looks pretty similar for the most part, in 1903 we had 307 types of corn. By 1983, we only had 32 species left. This startling data by the United States (US) National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation raised important questions. While a lot of the different types of crops were wiped out due to extinction, there is a new man-made threat.

As plant diseases become more prevalent, genetically modifying crops to withstand diseases has become an acceptable practice in agriculture. Such super crops are called Genetically Modified (GM) Crops. While GM Crops are more resistant, they have also narrowed the diversity, and more plant DNAs within the species become identical.

What scientists were not prepared for was the side effect of GM Crops. As diseases evolve, a single efficient attack can kill off an entire species due to the lack of diversity. Such an attack would have only affected certain types of crops before they were genetically modified.

Now, coming back to languages. Language is deeply rooted in the culture in which it was formed. Think about it – expressions, quotes, idioms, context and vocabulary are unique to each language. All of these came from the way of life or culture of the people. As the culture grew, so did the language. A language is an outgrowth of a particular culture. If there is diversity of languages in the workplace, then there is diversity of culture.

Using the analogy of biodiversity, the more diversified culture is in the workplace, the more resilient the business is to negative shifts in the environment. In short, having a diversified culture through different languages ensures that a business is better equipped to survive.

Here’s the bonus. While having a single language might denote a unified culture, having two languages in the workplace does not denote two diversified cultures. Instead it denotes three cultures – two from the native languages and one that is a hybrid of the two native cultures. Having many languages does not just signify an addition, but a multiplier effect. It is often said that people are the biggest asset of a company. However, allowing me to paraphrase that – people who are of different languages and cultures form the biggest asset of a company. In languages and cultures lie the business differentiator. As such, languages do not only ensure the survival of an organisation, it also gives the organisation a big edge to win.

MY TWO CENTS

While I continue to advocate mastery of the English language in the business world, it must not be at the expense of other languages.

The push towards “monolingualism” (whether intended or not) is bringing us down the path whereby firstly we begin to lose our language, followed by our culture and then our identity. In Malaysia, we live in a diverse culture with many different languages and dialects – it is my hope that we embrace that and be proud of our unique heritage.

Andrew Lau is head of Leaderonomics Campus. He can be reached at andrew.lau@leaderonomics.com
SOMEONE once asked me if I’ve ever been late for classes. Not unless my three alarm clocks die on me simultaneously.

After a decade of conducting various training programmes, it would really only take me 10 minutes to get myself ready so, why am I always earlier than anyone else? Body language. When I’m early, it allows me to “read” my participants as they walk in.

From the moment the person greets me, whether it’s a soft “hello”, a loud “good morning” or a reluctant “hi”, it allows me to do a quick profiling of them.

When seated together, whether participants carry out small talks, or choose to have their noses buried in their smartphones, also give out signals on whether they signed up for training voluntarily or had their names hand-picked by management. We step into unfamiliar ground when we attend public seminars or workshops. Most of the time, we won’t know who the speaker is or whom we will be seated with. All these uncertainties cause us to display real and involuntary movements which speak volumes about us.

Now, imagine if you have to attend or make a presentation in an important board meeting - the fear will be heightened 10-fold! If you make a conscious effort to be aware of every gesture you make, especially in times of stress, then you can control and make your body language work for you.

Below are real-life behavioural examples that I see in every class. Check if you are guilty of any.

1. **ARE YOU THE ONE TO GREET FIRST?**

   When a person walks in, I will usually pause a few seconds to see if he/she greets me first. A more confident person will usually take the initiative to announce his/her arrival, whereas a shy individual will usually smile or only reply after I initiate the first move.

   **Lesson:** The one who greets first will always have the upper hand. It sends a signal that you are assured and confident.

2. **DO YOU STOP TO LOOK OR SLOUCH TO SEEK?**

   After signing in at the registration counter, two things happen.

   A participant will either walk in with an upright posture, scan the room, and take his/her seat. Or, he/she will stoop a little, with the neck and head stretched forward slightly, as if seeking for a familiar face to sit with, before heading towards a seat (which is usually the furthest from the speaker).

   **Lesson:** Your posture speaks a lot about you. Each part of your body works separately as well as together to send non-verbal cues.

   In creating an executive presence, walk with an upright posture! Keep your chin parallel to the floor, your shoulders straight and take your time to pan across the room.

   Keep your head straight and walk specifically towards your chosen seat. Don’t turn your head and avoid darting your eyes everywhere. Aim to maintain a calm and collected look.

3. **DO YOU INITIATE A HANDSHAKE?**

   As my participants enter the classroom, I will wait to see who extends a hand, or who will just greet me with a “hello”.

   If nothing happens (exception for Muslim men to whom I will usually greet with a smile and nod), I will then move forward to shake their hands.

   Apart from creating rapport, the first physical contact with a person by a handshake is a good indicator of your level of confidence.

   **Lesson:** Cultural norm dictates that a person of a higher standing, in age or in rank, should initiate a handshake. If both are equal, the person who offers the handshake first will be perceived as one with more confidence.

   So when someone extends his/her hand to you, reciprocate with a confident, web-to-web touching, full palm grip if you want to project an image of poise and professionalism.

   Anything that is weak or soft indicates that you may be a timid person lacking self-esteem. Anything that is too strong may result in the other person resenting you for hurting their hand!

4. **FRONT OR BACK SEAT?**

   In any seminar or workshop, it is common to see people occupying the back seats first. One of the many reasons is to make a quick escape if the lecture is dull.

   However, for those whose attendance is compulsory, the shy or reluctant individuals will usually take the back seat. The more outspoken or eager ones will head straight to the front.

   **Lesson:** In the business world, we spend a great deal of time in various meetings. Where you sit, how you sit and whom you sit with play an integral role in how you are perceived by your fellow colleagues.

   For example, a person seated at the head of the table is generally perceived as someone of a higher status.

   However, if you want to be seen as influential, then make a conscious effort to sit next to a leader. If you continually hide behind, you will gradually fade into the background.

5. **ARMS AND LEGS FOLDED OR STRETCHED OUT?**

   A common phenomenon observed at the start of every session is where people would either fold their arms or hide them under the table, lean towards the table or slump back with their legs crossed.

   These are indicators of people who are defensive or resistant.

   Even the way a person places his/her tent card – whether he/she keeps it close to her or pushes it further away from the body – shows the level of openness.

   **Lesson:** During meetings, have a relaxed posture. You don’t have to be so stiff that you look unnatural. Just sit on half your chair, lean forward slightly and place your arms on the table.

   Keep your eyes on the speaker. Don’t flip through the papers and don’t doodle. Don’t scroll through your messages either. If you need to gesture with your hands, keep them controlled, and preferably no higher than your chin level.

   If you come across similar negative gestures with people you are trying to connect with, then hand out your business cards or offer the person a cup of tea – anything as long as they uncross their arms and legs.

   Body language is a very powerful tool for influencing others in many ways. So hone your skills in this area, be aware of all the silent signals you are sending. Learn also to decipher what other people are “saying” by reading gestures and expressions.

**By WENDY LEE**

**editor@leaderonomics.com**

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**Image:**

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**Lesson:**

- Even the way a person places his/her tent card – whether he/she keeps it close to her or pushes it farther away from the body – shows the level of openness.
STARTING THEM YOUNG

RAISING MULTILINGUAL CHILDREN IN A LINGUISTICALLY-DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT

By CINDY YAP
editor@leaderonomics.com

Busting the myths surrounding multilingualism:

1. Multilingualism delays language acquisition
   In the past, bilingualism was considered the culprit in problems with language development, but research indicates that bilingualism does not cause delays in either speech or language acquisition. Even when a child has already been diagnosed with any form of speech delay, raising the child in a bilingual environment won't delay his/her speech.

2. Multilingualism creates confusion
   "There doesn’t seem to be any limit to the number of sounds a human mind can store at a young age," explains François Thibaut, director of The Language Workshop for Children in New York City. "Children have an innate ability to tell one language from another."

3. Multilingualism delays in either speech or language acquisition
   "From just days after birth, all infants can tell the difference between many languages," says Pearson.

4. Immersion
   A good way to introduce a second language is through immersing yourself and your little ones in it. Going through an immersion environment entails you to listen, absorb and speak that language. This approach requires the language to be the medium of instruction as well as the object of instruction, enabling language learners to pick up the language in a more natural environment.

5. Build a support system
   Support from like-minded parents is needed to exchange and share both language and acceptance of that language. Some common myths and scepticism on multilingualism:

6. Persevere
   It is important to keep a positive attitude towards the learning and use of a second language. It's a long-term commitment and there will be ups and downs, especially during the initial years and if your child doesn’t speak multiple languages as quickly or adeptly as his/her peers.

When doubt sneaks in, keep pressing on and focus instead on the development of the child's brain. Always encourage and praise the child for his/her effort in speaking up or attempting to use the second language to express himself/herself.

■ To engage with Cindy Yap or to send your feedback on this article, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com

TIPS TO ENCOURAGE MULTILINGUISM

1. Timing
   The earlier a child starts, the easier it is for both parents and child, as the child’s brain absorption is akin to a sponge during his/her early years.

2. Family consensus
   Among parents and the main caregivers, there should be a unanimous decision and amicable agreement on who speaks what to the child, and that all parties endeavour to stick to it.

3. Be realistic
   According to Bosemark, it is possible to successfully introduce as many as four languages simultaneously to a child, provided you can offer enough exposure and create the need for each language for at least the first five years of the child’s life. She suggests that a child needs to be exposed to a language 30% of his/her waking time to actively speak it.

4. Immersion
   You may also wish to set play dates with other children fluent in the targeted language in order to provide your child with the opportunity to hear, speak and interact in that language.

5. Build a support system
   Get support from like-minded parents in order to exchange and share both your doubts and your triumphs.

6. Persevere
   It is important to keep a positive attitude towards the learning and use of a second language. It’s a long-term commitment and there will be ups and downs, especially during the initial years and if your child doesn’t speak multiple languages as quickly or adeptly as his/her peers.

When doubt sneaks in, keep pressing on and focus instead on the development of the child’s brain. Always encourage and praise the child for his/her effort in speaking up or attempting to use the second language to express himself/herself.

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Contrary to some common myths surrounding multilingualism, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain by arming oneself with more than one language.

■ To engage with Cindy Yap or to send your feedback on this article, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com
By MARCUS LIM
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Being multilingual has proven useful in more than one instance. However, doing the work that we do, being able to converse in three languages is sometimes not enough.

To provide some context, our camps and school clubs also include youths from underprivileged backgrounds who are not so fluent in English or even Bahasa Malaysia.

However, the amazing thing is, despite being inarticulate in Bahasa Malaysia, these students were still eager to learn and find more than one way to communicate. This would allow you to easily access information gathering about the conflict in another language. This comes from the ability to focus on information and the ability to identify which language is being used in the conversation, and actively inhibit the activation of the other languages.

The detail to obtained from being multilingual will help in better information about the conflict in order to better identify which approach is best to resolve the issue.

On the other hand, should the conflict be between two individuals speaking a different language, being multilingual would obviously put you in a position to mediate the situation.

5 ADVANTAGES OF BEING MULTILINGUAL

1 CONNECT AND NETWORK
Being multilingual has proven useful when it comes to networking with clients or potential employers. Being able to speak and connect with them in their preferred language moves you up in their circle of trust.

2 BRAIN HEALTH
Numerous research has shown that being multilingual allows your brain to be upgraded a few notches, allowing you to be ahead of your peers.

On a general note, having a “multilingual” brain not only makes you rambler, quicker, and better at dealing with ambiguities, it also helps prevent Alzheimer’s disease and other brain diseases such as dementia.

Older multilingual individuals tend to enjoy improved memory and enhanced brain function as compared to the older monolingual individuals.

In terms of learning benefits, your overall cognitive and sensory processes improve drastically due to your multilingual experience.

Research shows that it is easier for an adult to learn a third language as compared to an adult trying to learn a second language. This comes from the ability to focus on information about a new language while reducing interference from the languages they already know.

This would allow you to easily access newly learned words leading to a larger gain in vocabulary compared to others who may be monolingual and are not as skilled at inhibiting competing information. This means being multilingual helps you learn new skills and concepts faster than most.

3 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
Research has shown that being multilingual also helps in the area of conflict management.

The multilingual brain is forced to handle and deal with the activation of the many languages that results in enhanced executive functions, i.e. a regulatory system of general cognitive abilities that includes processes such as attention and inhibition.

That means when you are using one language, the other languages you know are also active at the same time. So, for example, during the phase of word recognition, when you hear the sound “ca”, your brain not only activates words such as “can”, “cat”, “care” or “candy” but also all the other languages you know.

Now to cope with the persistent linguistic competition, the speed of conversation and information transfer between individuals, the multilingual brain relies on executive functions.

It needs to learn to pay more attention to the sounds and stimuli to carefully identify which language is being used in the conversation, and actively inhibit the activation of the other languages.

Hence, constant practice strengthens the control mechanisms involved and changes the associated brain regions, which are also used in conflict management.

The attention to detail obtained from being multilingual will help in better information gathering about the conflict in order to better identify which approach is best to resolve the issue.

On the other hand, should the conflict be between two individuals speaking a different language, being multilingual would obviously put you in a position to mediate the situation.

4 EMPLOYABILITY
Seeing that you are able to connect and network better, learn new concepts and skills faster, and are good at conflict management due to your evolved brain, this really puts you as a potential asset in a company.

In our globalised industries, most companies now deal with many clients from abroad. Being able to speak a variety of languages definitely puts you way ahead of your peers who are monolingual.

Also, it saves the company cost to hire an additional translator just for business discussions and meetings.

Another benefit of being multilingual in the workplace is that you are usually more creative and innovative in thinking of new strategies. This is due to your enhanced focus on information and the ability to identify noise from relevant information.

In addition to that, your multilingual capabilities allow you to talk to a variety of people to gain different perspectives and information regarding a single problem. Best of all, it has been found that positions requiring multilingual employees are paid between 5% and 20% more.

5 DECISION MAKING PROCESS
Combining all that has been mentioned, the final benefit of being multilingual is the ability to make better decisions. Research has shown that individuals who are multilingual tend to make better financial decisions as compared with monolingual individuals.

This is mainly due to a multilingual person's abilities to focus on information, make sound judgement on what is noise and what is valid information, compare competing data and seek assistance about an issue from a variety of perceivers.

Here’s a thing to celebrate about living in a multicultural country with so many languages and dialects we all can come to appreciate.

So make the right decision, and I know you are thinking about it now, to learn a new language if you haven’t already and enjoy the richness of using it daily. I’m sure you will make new friends along the way like how I have made new friends in our mamak restaurants.

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Marcus Lim is a part of the youth division of Leaderonomics, he is excited by new ideas, concepts and challenges. Being a practitioner of the art of movement, Parkour, he believes in building confidence and self-awareness through physical representations and movement of the body. He plays an active role in developing young leaders by coordinating and managing the Leaderonomics Club in high schools around the Klang Valley. If you are interested in developing yourself as a young leader, you can email him at marcus.lim@leaderonomics.com or visit our site at www.leaderonomics.org/youth/leaderonomics-club/
LIving in this day and age, we are all interconnected with each other. Every action that we take or think that we share is recorded on social media sites. Communicating with people living far away is a breeze, resulting in video call meetings occurring regularly, despite the problems that may pop up. My brother studying 2,500km away can still find methods to initiate me because of the convenience of communication.

With all the readily available tools around us, we are presented with this insane privilege to connect to the world easily, which raises a question: why should we connect?

In Dr Edwin Gerard’s TED Talk entitled Citizens of the World: The Multilingual Child and Adult, he encourages us through various amusing and touching anecdotes to use languages as a platform to give us a better understanding of the cultures that they represent.

You may wonder, how does language represent culture?

In Gerard’s talk, he stresses on the importance of the ability to speak multiple languages. “What you learn when you learn languages is not just vocabulary and grammar, you’re also learning codes of communication,” says Gerard.

These codes of communication teach us the lifestyles of people of different tongues, and not merely how to speak in their language.

As an example, Gerard tells us about the French. It may be normal for some of us to speak of our sicknesses easily, but the French do not believe in sharing their sicknesses. Gerard mentions, “Unfortunately, human beings have this tendency to think if people don’t speak the language you speak, well they probably don’t have much to say,” he mentions. However, if we are able to speak even a small amount of someone else’s language, this gesture shows that we are acknowledging the other person’s history, memory and their dignity.

As a result, the quality of listening and relationship between both people will change, and a mutual respect is formed. Giving an example, Gerard tells a story about his former colleagues who taught alongside him in Tunisia. Eager to do their job well, they willingly woke up early in the morning to learn some Arabic before going on to teach their English classes.

Through their effort and thought, these teachers prove to be exemplary citizens of the world, ready to connect with others by reaching across language and culture barriers.

In Gerard’s talk, he stresses on the importance of the ability to connect with the world.

1. Ability to connect

Unfortunately, human beings have this tendency to think if people don’t speak the language you speak, well they probably don’t have much to say,” he mentions. However, if we are able to speak even a small amount of someone else’s language, this gesture shows that we are acknowledging the other person’s history, memory and their dignity.

As a result, the quality of listening and relationship between both people will change, and a mutual respect is formed.

According to Gerard, “the child’s mind, until the age of six, is changing more and learning more through language acquisition than through any cognitive processes in its life.” He backs this up by quoting a statement from the American Psychological Association, the largest scientific and professional organisation representing psychology in the United States, saying “early childhood language immersion not only makes better speakers, but better thinkers. Multilingual kids have superior focus than through any cognitive processes in its life.”

If we, the next generation, desire to be successful global citizens and leaders, we need to keep ourselves informed about the world. By picking up a new language as a method of connection, we are opening ourselves to a larger exposure of the people living around us.

Gerard ends his talk with this: “Inter-cultural bonding comes more easily to kids who are multilingual because through their openness, and their contact with other cultures and other people, they are more informed, more empathetic, and that makes them better citizens of the world. As someone who has always been too lazy to bother to pick up even my own mother tongue, this talk resounded with me. Reflecting on what I have written, I ask you now what I asked myself at the end of Gerard’s talk: Are you willing to be a citizen of the world?

Sarah is the youngest intern in Leaderonomics with no idea what she wants to do with her life, but is pretty sure being a citizen of the world is on the list. You can contact her at sarah.tan@leaderonomics.com.

Who knows how many great people we may have failed to get to know due to language barriers? Taking up a new language, learning more about unfamiliar cultures, and building relationships can be difficult. So why should we make the effort?

The answer is simple. As we are living in an increasingly globalised society, it is clear that our Gen Y will be the ones standing at the forefront, building businesses at the global level. Working for international companies, with employees from many cultures, as well as building international collaborations will eventually become commonplace, if not already so.

If we, the next generation, desire to be successful global citizens and leaders, we need to keep ourselves informed about the world. By picking up a new language as a method of connection, we are opening ourselves to a larger exposure of the people living around us. Gerard ends his talk with this: “Inter-cultural bonding comes more easily to kids who are multilingual because through their openness, and their contact with other cultures and other people, they are more informed, more empathetic, and that makes them better citizens of the world. As someone who has always been too lazy to bother to pick up even my own mother tongue, this talk resounded with me. Reflecting on what I have written, I ask you now what I asked myself at the end of Gerard’s talk: Are you willing to be a citizen of the world?”

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