

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**ONLINE ARGUMENTATION IN
SOPO BLOGS: A CROSS-CULTURAL
ANALYSIS**

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of the requirements for the degree of
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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of Universiti Teknologi MARA. It is original and is the results of my own work, unless otherwise indicated or acknowledged as referenced work. This thesis has not been submitted to any other academic institution or non-academic institution for any degree or qualification.

I, hereby, acknowledge that I have been supplied with the Academic Rules and Regulations for Post Graduate, Universiti Teknologi MARA, regulating the conduct of my study and research.

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ABSTRACT

This study falls within an important area of cross-cultural digital development in online argumentation. Engagement in this form of discourse across borders is exceptionally high given the advent of new technologies. Within online argumentative discourse, socio-political (Sopo) blogs are a powerful medium for the expression of dissenting voices which may in turn activate socio-political change. Such blogs serve as platforms for pervasive cross-cultural communication, impacting a global readership. Bloggers, therefore, find themselves in a unique position to shape opinion through their persuasive or dissuasive writings. The aim of the study is to analyse the structure of argumentation in socio political blogs across two cultural dichotomies; Malaysian and American sopoblogs as sites for a critical examination of cross-cultural argumentation discourse. A cross-cultural analysis, centring on the use of linguistic devices, was undertaken to analyse argumentative structures within selected texts. The analysis involved five progressive stages, namely, the analysis of argument structure, identifying linguistic features within each structure, identifying title framing, examining spoken features and distancing strategies. The results revealed significant differences in the structures of argumentation used by Malaysian and American bloggers. Among others, it was found that more Malaysian bloggers presented their arguments through complex structures with the assertion of multiple arguments while American bloggers presented more linear arguments with the use of simple arguments. It was also found that writings in both Malaysian and American bloggers did not make full use of prescribed argument indicators in most stages of presenting their arguments. The analysis also revealed that the structure of online argumentative text did not comply with most existing written or face-to-face argumentative models. Drawing on the analysis, a process-oriented online argumentative framework for enhanced meaningful cross-cultural communication is proposed. The proposed framework is presented in four sequential stages: title framing, orientation, argument and concluding stages. Each stage with prescribed strategies provides users with guidelines for producing online argumentative texts. The framework has implications mainly in the following areas: cross-cultural communication, social political blogs, pedagogy, workplace settings as well as technology. The cross-cultural implications drawn here are for the enhancement of cross-cultural argumentation in a globalized world. Pedagogical implications are drawn as the framework serves as a useful tool for the teaching of argumentation within a cross-cultural context. It can also be adopted to develop a foundation for training programmes for cross-cultural professional workplace communication. Technological implications relate to the use of the proposed framework to facilitate adherence to the demands of the cyber community and blogging participation in new web applications that are created progressively.

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