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2 State the full address of the second author’s affiliation here

3 State the full address of the third author’s affiliation here

\*Corresponding author: myemail@university.edu.my

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# ABSTRACT

*This paper is part of a larger study investigating teachers’ engagement in social support process on a networking site. It concentrates on the social and discursive practices of 20 Malaysian English language teachers as they co-construct social support on Facebook Timelines. The main data generated from participant observations were analysed using discourse analysis approach. The findings revealed that the teachers mainly post about negative experiences at school, such as facing colleagues and students whom they perceived as problematic and time pressure. By posting their negative experiences, teachers can be seen to initiate the co-construction of both emotional and informational support with Friends they believe are like-minded and supportive. This paper thus argues that teachers' postings on social networking sites are more than just an account of mundane teaching-related experiences, but serve as a mechanism for them to obtain social support to help them reflect on their practice and cope with the emotional turmoil arising from day-to-day challenges at school.*

**Keywords:** Social support, Malaysian English language teacher, Facebook Timeline, co-construction, discursive identity.

**Cite as:**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Introduction section is meant for research background, problem statement, justification for conducting the research, and the review of recent literature related to the study.

**1.1 Taxonomy of social support**

There are two dichotomies of support in the social support literature, structural versus functional support and emotional versus instrumental (tangible) support (Beehr and Glazer, 2001). The taxonomy of social support is presented in Table 1 below.



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Table 1: Table format in HBOE

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| No. | Title | Author | Publication | Year |
| 1 | A Day at The Market (*Market*) | Becka Rus | Penerbit Enam | 2012 |
| 2 | The Greedy Cat (*Cat*) | Maria Kay | Mostgain Resources Publications | 2010 |
| 3 | The Buffalo and The Tiger (*Buffalo*) | Akmar Effendi | Junior Pages Publication | 2010 |
| 4 | Helping Flood Victims (*Flood*) | - | Early Learner Publications Sdn Bhd | 2005 |

1. **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a broadly ethnographic qualitative approach and closely focused on the participants’ unfolding discourse as they interact on Timelines. To some extent, the ethnographic approach employed in this study can be associated with ‘linguistic ethnography’ (Wetherell, 2007; Copland and Creese, 2015) since it closely focuses on the discursive behaviour of the participants. As highlighted by Wetherell (2007), linguistic ethnography ‘brings together [linguistic and ethnographic approaches], in the same analytic space [to] study the discursive patterns found in everyday interactions and aims to situate these in the dynamics of wider cultural settings’ (p.661).

Figure 1: Insert your figure

One possible way to obtain support is by engaging in social networking sites (SNS), such as Facebook and Twitter, which have opened up new opportunities for all manner of people - including teachers - to communicate with each other (Rashid and Rahman, 2014). This communication includes seeking advice and information through the means of an online support community.

1. **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The analysis of teaching-related Status updates and Comments obtained on the teachers’ Timelines reveals that the teachers go through two simultaneous phases in the social support process: the discursive construction of shared identities and the co-construction of support. For expository clarity, we discuss these two phases separately in this section, though in reality, teachers go through these two phases repeatedly, in that they collaboratively construct and reconstruct their identities as they engage in the co-construction of support.

1. **CONCLUSION**

Co-constructing social support is a complex process. The teachers need to craft their postings carefully to encourage Friends to take up the topic they have introduced thus enabling the co-construction process to occur. The co-construction process consists of two simultaneous phases within which teachers need to find ways to fit themselves into the community to manage supportive conversations. Fitting themselves into the community is done by discursively constructing socially-acceptable identities so that they present the image of being 'one of the crowd’.

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