



Imagining Alternative Modernity: Negotiating Islamic-Ness and Malay-Ness on Popular TV Fiction

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ABSTRACT

Malay cultural identity in Malaysia has historically been wrought by the contradictions inherent in its colonial discourses, and among the Malays themselves -a transition that was made possible by virtue of religion, language, and customs. Now, television fiction (TV fiction) has transpired debates to account for its interconnectedness and Malay identity, moving away from the established works found in most short stories, novels, poems memoirs, and (auto) biographies. Instead, this paper reveals the fragmentations of Malay cultural identity which are not simply about embracing Islam, speaking the Malay language, or believing in the Malay customs, but engage with the figurative crossings of Malayness and un-Malayness in Malaysian popular TV fiction- *Julia* and *On Dhia*. Through conversation analysis (McAdamas) of transcribed episodes, the ubiquitous alternative Malay identity issues are revealed. Specifically, this research shows that they are inextricably connected to the wider spheres of Malayness through the appropriation of media. While the issues in these TV fiction texts all strive for a degree of negotiated inclusion in their alternative Malay lives, the balance between negotiation of their subjectivities depends on the extent to which they are positioned in a wider socio-political experiences. This study lends a support to the claim that there is a dire need to position these alternative Malay realities across TV fiction in the field of postcolonial literature.

Keywords: Postcolonial literature, Popular culture, Malay cultural Identity, TV fiction, Multidisciplinary studies

1. Introduction

Khoo (2007) asserts that the reification of fiction as a unified space of discourses of Malayness is largely indebted to the contributions by the scholars in the literary studies. Such discourses studied by Khoo (2007) and other scholars contributing to the explosion of interests concerning Malay cultural identities, is also a question identical to the one raised by Shamsul (2004). Shamsul (2004) questions the current Malay construct that restrict itself within the scope of language (Malaysia Merdeka), religion (Islam), and *raja* (king). Moreover, since Malay subjectivities in Malaysia has historically been wrought by the contradictions inherent in its colonial discourses, this contention, including those raised by Khoo (2007) and Shamsul (2004) have raised the primary question concerning Malay subjectivities from the perspectives of postcolonial literature. Here, we attempt to examine the figurative crossings of Malayness and un-Malayness in selected scenes of Malay TV fiction- *Julia* and *On, Dhia*, moving away from the study of Malay cultural identities that exist in the confinement of poems, short stories, novels, memoirs, and (auto) biographies ((Hosking *et al.*, 2010; Pakri and Graf, 2012) for recent work).

TV fiction, as Dhoest has argued, is a mirror reflecting stronger realization of reality, allowing audience to recognize and identify with such realities (Dhoest, 2004; 2007; 2011). As TV fiction resides in the heart of the audiences, two factors lead to this popularity. First is the sheer popularity of *Julia* and *On Dhia*, where they are watched by over 11 million viewers (Media, 2013) and stand apart in the 2012 top 20th most watched TV programs in Malaysia (Media Prima, 2012). Both of these are broadcast in July

and December 2012 on TV3 (a private TV channel), in addition to online reruns (Tonton, 2013). Secondly, by examining selected scenes of *Julia* and *On Dhia*, it is argued that the imagining of alternative modernities concerning Malay subjectivities requires sustained interrogation of socio-political experiences and appropriation of media translated into the context of postcolonial nation-state of Malaysia. That being said, this study does not intend to generalize or elaborate the elite constructions, but explore the embodied, unconscious experience of Malay culture-related issues as displayed on TV fiction. What will be shown in this study are dynamic exchanges between men and women and among friends, compromising sentiment with negotiations between the reasoning of Malay *adat* (customs) and being Malay-Muslims. It is also the intention to illustrate that while such TV fiction serves to entertain broad issues of urban and middle-class Malays, the conversational practices used in creating identities help to establish issues that challenge the current literature of Malayness and/or its cultural identity in question.

We begin by presenting arguments across the spectrum of sociology and Malay identities where arguments of alternative Malayness with respect to Malay cultural identity are made. They are drawn from the fields of sociology and postcolonial literature in order to lay the grounds for the present study before moving on to describing conversation analysis, forming the basis for analyzing issues embodied in TV fiction's narrative exchange. These exchanges are presented in detailed in relation to the ways they contest the current available literature on Malayness; of central concern is alcohol dependence. Suggestions for future research are also presented as the outcome of the article. This approach, we must nevertheless concede some arguments, but hopefully will allow a more focused discussion on the cultural issues that characters in TV fiction encounter and the kinds of subtleties as defined, enforced, and dominated by the society.

2. Julia and On Dhia

Julia revolves around a story of the main protagonist- Julia. Issues on *Julia* begins to transpire when Julia fetishizes the idealizing of being modern and educated through pursuing her degree in Korea, who is at the same time constrained by Malay tradition, a vision by Julia's parents to become a rural-raised, modest Malay girl. Not only is this power struggle of becoming and not becoming Malay plays out between Julia and her parents, such contestation also results in bitter relationships between Julia and her prospective suitor. *On Dhia* deals simultaneously with gender relations and personal predicaments, where parents of the main protagonist- Dhia, expect Dhia to conform certain gender imaginations; through living by the Malay *adat*. This discord between Dhia and her prospective fiancé also results in a bad love life that eventually ends in frustration and early marriage separation due to different social status and gender issues. They, ultimately, signify issue of power and position in the Malay context.

3. Malay Adat: Some Background Readings

(Taib, 1974) has suggested that Malay *adat* beliefs and values is a result of the interaction between Islamic tradition with traditional beliefs and scientific inquiry. He also cautions that the readings of these three praxes do not suggest easy understanding, but entail fissures as Malay experiences are intricately woven. In his article, "Malay Behaviors," in "Malay Psychology," Mat Saad (1993) outlines some of the beliefs surrounding Malayness. The Malays, firstly, want to live in harmony (Provencher, 1972). The harmonious lifestyle is so fundamental in that any subjects attempting to disrespect the Malay *adat* as Banks (1976) has illustrated- "Kaum Muda (younger generation)" attacking their "Kaum Tua (traditional elite) (583)," will be sanctioned. In other words, the Malays would keep disagreements to the self, without going against the status quo or the hierarchical structure. For instance, children not talking over parents or wives conforming to husbands can represent adherence to the hierarchical structure of Malays. It is this silencing that sometimes results in marginalization and power struggles in the sense of giving voices.

Secondly, the socio-cultural worldview of Malay *adat* also holds that gender inequality is still inherent. Specifically, women are not expected to question principles appropriated to them by men. Ong (1990), in her anthropological study has observed that Malay women should accept any position and in one illustration, reluctance towards bearing children means "resistance against Allah giveth" (24). Although giving birth is one of the instances representing the Malay *adat* among women, the question of gender politics remains relevant and entrenched in the Malay culture. Ultimately, this Malay *adat* confirms the patriarchal elements in a typical family beliefs and realities (Zainal, 1995). The relationship between *adat* and gender politics has also vastly been documented elsewhere but that is not the central focus of this study. The contention to establish the link between *adat* and gender relations is to show that we are fully aware that the two exist alongside each other.

4. Alternative Malay Subjectivities: Some Arguments

Abdul Rahman Embong (2011) has argued for the diminishing identity and tradition in the wake of globalization. When he presided over his professorial lecture in 2013, Abdul Rahman Embong has observed that because of the diminishing identity and tradition, other Malay realities are emerging, opening up a new field of enquiry. Pressing this issue further, the same notion can be seen in some multiple realities of Malays. Dahlia (2012), in her focus groups, has illuminated that some young Malays whose parents are Muslims and of “Bajau and Kadazan (both Bajau and Kadazan being indigenous cultures) descents feel that it is offensive to be labeled Malay” (39). Similarly, Thompson (2003) has cautioned that a new Malay understands that the notion of Malayness has to break free from the constructs of class, identity, and gender levels. Critics further argue that in occasions where culture and globalization intersect, questions of identity and place are often neglected, if not dismissed outright.

The free weaving or intermingling between religion and culture is problematic, if not severe. What this means is that some new Malays feel that there is a need to deviate from the demands of politics and society. Three evidence from Dahlia (2012) research support this. Firstly, the new Malays do not want to “fall prey to authoritative depictions and societal expectations” and “...being more progressive in that they were generally pushing for openness” (Dahlia, 2012). Secondly, they demand a personal understanding to Islam, without governmental constraints as in “Being a Muslim for me is about believing in God, the Prophet, and His teachings...in Islam, you can’t drink: you’re supposed to fast, and pray five times a day, and I don’t, But I believe Islam’s more than that. It’s more personal, it’s between you and God. If I want to be a good person, it doesn’t mean I have to abstain from drinking” (Dahlia, 2012).

Thirdly and more on personally is the rejection to parental intervention in their faith. Existing readings show that “...my mother wanted me to see an *ustaz* (a religious expert), but I said no, this is my personal journey, I don’t want a mediator to tell me what’s right and what’s wrong. I want to find out myself...” (Dahlia, 2012). As Jerome (2013) puts it, “It is clear then that many Malays...do not necessarily take on distinctive markers of Malay ethnicity nor fulfill religious... as stipulated in the Malaysian Constitution, in regarding and identifying themselves as Malays.” Noritah (2011) argument also supports this line of inquiry where she theorizes that the use of Islam and sexuality is seen as “markers of national boundaries” instead and highlights the truly “liberated or modernized” notion of Malays. By highlighting these complexities, we are able to bridge our past to the present understanding of the Malay world.

This means that the project in destabilizing the constructs of Malayness seems to involve a project of emulating the West's high culture and a preference for cosmopolitanism. Ultimately, this process of destabilizing such constructs of Malay may mean the separation of state and religion, and that "religious issues (would) probably become somewhat less important" (Means, 1978; Kahn, 2006; Milner, 2008). Although critics aver that not all Malays today embrace alternative Malayness, they have a place in the larger social Malay practices where they reify the kinds of social changes concerning Malayness on TV fiction which this analysis argues. Such process of destabilizing Malayness which is shown in previous research of our on TV fiction (Idrus *et al.*, 2013) suggests new social issues.

5. Contextualization: Appropriation of Media & Forces at Work

In order to provide our arguments surrounding TV fiction, it is important to go over the regulation of TV fiction. Two background reading are the Radio, Television Malaysia (RTM) and TV3. RTM is the main forces at work, regulating the themes and issues of TV fiction. In 1970, three codes were formulated with regard to the regulations at work but today, these codes have changed. Of concern are the following changes to the mission of the RTM that led to an observation to the new realities of culture:

1970: To assist in promoting civic consciousness and in fostering the development of Malaysian arts and culture (McDaniel, 1994)

2013: Becoming a pioneering nation builder through broadcasting service in upholding the 1Malaysia concept (RTM, 2013)

and;

1970: To provide suitable elements of education, general information and entertainment (McDaniel, 1994)

2013: Benefiting information technology and new media ideas for the public maximum viewers (RTM, 2013)

Note the differences of the praxes used. In the first objective, “civic consciousness ” has been contrasted with “pioneering nation,” suggesting a shift in focus from postcolonial Malaysia to a modern Malaysia; “Malaysian arts and culture” has been changed to “ [Malaysia Merdeka \(2013\)](#)” which in turn, signals diversity, irrespective of a single domination of ethnicity. Moreover, in the second objective, “suitable” and “general” have both been shifted to “benefiting” and “new” respectively, indicating welcoming gestures to new realities. In turn, the reworkings of cultural identity in TV fiction; for instance, has no longer been born as the producer, but as a marketer for advertisers in order to gauge new audience with “modern” audiences. These new objectives by RTM guide the present study of TV fiction concerning TV3’s *Julia* and *On Dhia*.

Description of TV3 is now in order. Established in 1984, TV3 was founded concurrently with the Privatization and Look East policies. The Privatization Policy was established as a vehicle to "increase the ownership and control of government within the nation's economy," in addition to arguing for the "movements of key interests or governmental investments to the private sector." At the same time, the Look East instituted itself as a vehicle for “policies and implementation...from Japan and Korea with the intention of localizing such initiatives to suit the situation in Malaysia” ([Malaysia Merdeka, 2013](#)). In light of these policies, the actions of planning, distributing, monitoring, and privatizing in the worlds of content management industries has seen a careful localization of content following the construct of the west in Asia, governed by institutions in the postcolonial Malaysia.

Since then, TV3 has gained dominant attention from the audiences as it focuses on the local flavors of realities ([McDaniel, 1994](#)). However, the convergence of TV3 with the *Media Prima* flagship may have provided different directions, since *Media Prima* concentrates on the combination of local and international fiction targeting at larger and distinct demographic backgrounds of audiences ([Media Prima, 2012](#)). Therefore, the literature on popular culture in media, relative to TV3 has seen the proliferation of K-Pop (Popular Korean) TV fiction and reality shows from all over the world. By showing such contextualization, the present study can uncover many possibilities.

6. Research Methodology

Our interest centers on the following question- "What are issues of shifting Malay identities on TV fiction?" Caution is in order- this research does not put on full weight on generalization, but intends to uncover issues of shifting Malay identities, resonant in the selected scenes of two popular TV fiction- *Julia* and *On Dhia*. By having this corpus, issues of shifting Malay identities are problematized and therefore, add to the thickness of data. The notation of CA is given in the appendix.

7. Conversation Analysis (McAdamas)

The transcription of *Julia* in this study followed the methodology of Conversation Analysis (McAdamas) ([Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2008](#)). In particularity, this study may be characteristic to the applied CA, given its focus on specific institutional activities. The conversation episodes were transcribed in its entirety following the tradition of CA after which they were reviewed, with dominant themes identified and isolated. In line with CA methodology, the researchers sought to let the data speaks for the findings and interpretation. CA is chosen for our analysis of narrative exchanges because we can see the sequences as the interaction unfolds immediately. [Goodwin \(1986\)](#), on CA, has succinctly summarized that conversation analysis provides a framework in a narrative exchange that can form a structure through two ways- the recipients and the recipients’ interpretations. [De Fina and Georgakopolou \(2012\)](#) have underscored that CA allows us to work on narrative structure to as part of "social practices" while drawing from methods of empirical studies "through specific coding categories that allow analysts to analyze narrative as an organized set of resources" (50 & 51). By using CA, we want to show that sequences, turn-takings, overlaps, and interruptions can show how the Malay subjects on TV fiction goes beyond the border of religion and tradition.

Introduction of CA is in order. CA is a branch of critical discourse analysis that stems from the work of [Goffman \(1967\)](#). Goffman is of the view that there is a need for human beings to manage themselves in social situations and one of the ways of their carrying themselves in social situations is through social interactions. In interactions, there is always a need to negotiate and re-negotiate roles to observe control of situation. By looking at the exchanges of (MacIntyre) negotiations through CA, issues on identity ([Zimmerman and Weider, 1970](#); [Bruner, 1996](#); [Abell et al., 2000](#)) personal identities ([MacIntyre, 1981](#); [Sarbin, 1986](#); [McAdamas, 1988](#); [Polkinghorne, 1988](#)) can be illuminated. The advent of this means that the use of CA has cut across various disciplines. These multidisciplinary scholars in the likes of linguistic anthropologists, ethnomethodologists, and sociolinguists have employed CA in multiple social

interactions through the studies linked to linguistic and communicative processes. Through looking at interactions within the framework of CA, one can also illuminate the issue of cultural identity.

8. Alcoholism

Having sketched the above trajectory, we now show TV fiction displays the recurring and circulating notions of alcoholism found in *Julia* and *On Dhia*. While each consists of different nuances, understanding them in relation to Malayness offers possibilities for theorizing unconscious Malay psyche. We begin by referring to table 8.1.

Table-8.1. *On Dhia*

1	Melli: ((Meli drives into a hotel along with Rafie- who appears intoxicated))
2	Nasib ba::ik GIRLFRIEND kau ni ada lesen tau. °Sayang, °sayang,
3	bangunlah dah sampai dah.
4	We are safe and sound. °Honey, ° honey, get up, we are here.
5	
6	Rafie: Kat mana ni?
7	Where are we?
8	
9	Melli: Dah sampai rumah sayang, lah. Mana lagi.
10	Here at yours, hun.
11	
12	Rafie: °I LOVE, I HAVE BEEN MISSING YOU SO MUCH, YOU KNOW
13	I REALLY LOVE YOU, tau tak.° ((while being drunk))
14	
15	Melli: °I tahu.
16	I know.
17	
18	Rafie: °Ya::ng, i tak nak tidur kat sini lah. Tak nak balik. I tak nak mama
19	tengok I macam ni. Mati I.
20	°Hone::y, mom would freak out if she sees me like this. I can't sleep
21	here.
22	
23	Melli: Habis tu:: YOU nak pergi mana, sayang?
24	Any idea?
25	
26	Rafie: <Kita tidur kat hotel, nak tak?
27	<We check into a hotel?
28	
29	Melli: Kita?
30	We?
31	
32	Rafie: <Kitalah. Takkan I nak tidur sorang-sorang. I NEED COMPANION.
33	You know- us; you and I. I don't want to go to bed alone.
34	
35	Melli: I tahu. Sayang rileks dulu, ok? Nanti sampai, i kejutkan, ya?
36	I know. Relax and I'll wake you up when we get there.
37	
38	Rafie: OK.

The flexibility of the Malay concept associated with alcoholism has certainly been made evident in Table 9.1. Beginning with this discussion, Melli attempts to socialize in a nightclub when he bumps into Rafie. Rafie, being intoxicated, who is under the influence, tries to approach Melli, who happily looks into the possibilities of spending some nights together. Initially, Melli does not plan on going out, but because she stumbles upon Rafie along the way, Melli decides to go on wallowing in alcohol with Rafie as Rafie is alone at the time of their meeting. Driving and speeding off, Melli drives Rafie's car and arrives home.

As illustrated above, there appears to be equal turn-taking exchange. In this exchange, it appears that the exchange consist of minimal interruption and overlap. Moreover, by having approximately the same number of turns, the narrative exchange can be regarded as balanced in this respect. That being the case, the precise understanding of celebration of late-night pleasures is beginning to be clear. With quiet speech, Melli announces that both she and Rafie has arrived at their house (lines 1-4). Rafie, looking and sounding intoxicated tries to get up and clarifies the location (lines 6-7). Melli responds with "honey," trying to be intimate with Rafie who is still trying to determine their physical location (lines 9-10). Given his intoxication, Rafie retaliates, suggesting a better place before his mother queries about his lack of vigilance and normal condition. Rafie, upon consciously recognizing and acknowledging his mother's house, insists that they go somewhere more private instead (lines 18-20). By enjoying alcohol, Rafie further celebrates this event by signaling his sexual desires for Melli, who at the same time, is impressed by Rafie's attraction, using English language, and shown by quiet speech. Melli, quickly acknowledging Rafie's utterance, appreciates Rafie for doing so (lines 15-16). Melli asks for an alternative (lines 23-24), to which Rafie quickly responds "check"ing into a hotel rather than his mother's residence (lines 26-27). Melli, feeling surprised, re-cast "we" to ascertain whether she is included in the collective term (lines 29-30), and it is this question to which Rafie orients gleefully. Rafie further agrees with Melli's indirect request to include her and proposes Melli as his own companion to end the celebratory request (lines 32-33). At this point, an agreement emerges as to whether or not Rafie's wish to celebrate the night after getting drunk is approved of (line 34-35). Rafie, ultimately, elicits the help of Melli to help celebrate his nightly booze treatment. By acknowledging the presence of this in *On Dhia*, I suspect that this issue is present in *Julia*.

Table-8.2. *Julia*

1	Amir: ((Amir, looking intoxicated, sings a Malay song before passing out
2	somewhere near a park. Julia passes by the same
3	park when she suddenly sees Amir)).
4	
5	Julia: Amir! Amir! (Julia tries to help Amir by lifting him up). Ya
6	Allah! Hey::bangun lah! Kenapa macam ni? Bangun,
7	bangun! Saya hantar awak balik. Saya hantar awak balik.
8	Oh, Lord, Hey, get up! What happened? Get up. I'll get you
9	home.
10	
11	Julia: ((Arrives at Amir's house)) Slowly, slowly. Baik, baik.
12	Hang on. Slowly. Be careful.
13	
14	Perlahan- perlahan. ((They suddenly fall)). Ya Allah, Amir!
15	Bangun, bangun cepat, bangun cepat, masuk bilik.(2.4) Jap,
16	jap saya tolong awak. Ok.
17	Slowly. Oh God, get up, get up. Get in the room. I will help you
18	out.
19	
20	◦Perlahan, ◦ Jalan elok-elok. Ok:: Perlahan-lahan. Hh (2.4)baring
21	perlahan-lahan. ((Unties his shoes)). Ya Allah bersepah nya bilik.
22	◦Slowly ◦ Walk slowly, ok. (2.4). Hang on. ((unties his shoes))
23	.Oh God, this room is a mess.
24	
25	Amir: ((highly intoxicated)), I love (.)you, I love you, I love you

The trajectory of alcoholism among Malays can also be delineated in table 8.2. As can be witnessed, the turn-taking strategies in this narrative exchange reflect a very minimal speaker alternation and overlap. In this narrative exchange, Julia finds Amir along the coastline of the city, celebrating his love for Julia. However, Amir is heavily drunk when Julia sees him. Amir tries to flesh out his thoughts but is unsuccessful as he lays across a river. Approaching Amir, it is also evident that Amir's celebration by wallowing in alcohol is a glorifying act in order to support his love for Julia.

Specifically, while walking past a bridge, Julia is surprised to have found Amir (lines 5-9). As carousal to alcohol activity, Julia applies the emotional appeal, namely empathy (lines 11-12) and lifts

Amir for a change in position (lines 14-18). She even appears to further collaborate with Amir by understanding of what is required in the task of putting Amir at ease (lines 20-23), using quiet speech. With ease of relaxation after a night heavily surrounded by laughs and dances, and alongside the presence of alcohol, Amir prevails and proclaims his love to Julia (line 25) which upon closer inspection is exactly similar celebration Amir stresses on.

The narrative exchanges above reflect two important points. Firstly, as social imaginary theorists propose, these exchanges in which the Malay subjects' lives depend on alcohol in their working and relationship experiences have built their cultural and social relations. Alcohol has been used as congenial items, existing alongside Malay subjects in the narratives of happiness and frustration. Secondly, using the lens of alternative modernities, it is not the Malay-elite construction that defines their everyday experiences, but their unconscious negotiations with the presence of one another and alcohol. Specifically, [Syed and Hamzah \(2012\)](#) proposes that non-Western TV fiction (in this case Malay TV fiction) which is broadcast exists in the spectrum of negotiation of modernity and urbanization where cultural confluence is found. In this study, the negotiations include TV fiction validating its audiences' misconception about the liberatory potential of Malay subjects to embrace alcohol dependence. Using alternative modernities too, we found that being a Malay, who, by definition practices cultural tradition, also allows a Malay to transgress the border of religion and culture, as displayed on TV fiction. By linking the existing readings on Malayness and TV fiction's narrative exchanges, we bridge what we consciously know of alcoholism and what is displayed on TV fiction.

9. Conclusion

Using the work of social imaginary, this study is heavily invested in the notion that the process of projecting alternative Malay does not only involve the definition and complexification of what and who is defined as "Malay." Interestingly, as we have displayed above, the creation of alternative Malayness also involves the presence of alcohol dependence. Some audiences take issue with this extra-mile narrative and uses it to support their claim that such narrative exchanges and scenes where Malay subjects participates in nightclubs allows them to lose themselves in the process of inserting into the making of the Malay-selves. By showing them readers of this process, we argue that the discussion surrounding the Malay world should also take into account these cultural and social issues vis-à-vis alcoholism.

Relating to the inquiry set at the beginning of the study, Malaysian TV fiction witnesses a birth of alternative Malay subjectivities. To account for these issues, we argue that the understanding of contesting Malay identities in the works of TV studies involves sustained inquiries of socio-political experiences and appropriation of media translated into the context of postcolonial nation-state of Malaysia. Such inquiries will take more seeds for more research supporting the current research on contesting Malay cultural identities in the Malay world.

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Appendix

Conversation analysis transcription symbols

.	(period) Falling intonation.
?	(question mark) Rising intonation.
,	(comma) Continuing intonation.
-	(hyphen) Marks an abrupt cut-off.
::	(colon(s)) Prolonging of sound.
wo:rd	(colon after underlined letter) Falling intonation on word.
wo:rd	(underlined colon) Rising intonation on word.
word	(underlining)
word	The more underlying, the greater the stress.
WORD	(all caps) Loud speech.
CAP ITALLICS	Utterance in subject’s L1.
◦word◦	(degree symbols) Quiet speech.
word	(upward arrow) raised pitch.
↓word	(downward arrow) lowered pitch
>word<	(more than and less than) Quicker speech.
<word>	(less than & more than) Slowed speech.
<	(less than) Talk is jump-started—starting with a rush.
Hh	(series of h’s) Aspiration or laughter.
.hh	(h’s preceded by dot) Inhalation.
[]	(brackets) simultaneous or overlapping speech.

{ }	(curved brackets) translation of L1 utterance.
=	(equal sign) Latch or contiguous utterances of the same (2.4) (number in parentheses) Length of a silence in 10ths of a second.
(.)	(period in parentheses) Micro-pause, 0.2 second or less.
()	(empty parentheses) Non-transcribable segment of talk.
((writing))	(double parentheses) Description of non-speech activity.
(try 1)/(try 2)	(two parentheses separated by a slash) Alternative hearings.
\$word\$	(dollar signs) Smiley voice.