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PP 16156 / 08 / 2012 (030605)



South East Asia Research Centre for  
Communication and Humanities

# SEARCH

The Journal of the  
South East Asia Research centre for  
Communication and Humanities



ISSN 2229-872X

Volume 5, No. 1, March 2013

**SEARCH: The Journal of the South East  
Asia Research centre for Communication  
and the Humanities**

**Vol. 5, No. 1, March 2013**



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*Printed by*

Selangor Printing Company

2 & 4 Jln PBS 14/11, Taman Perindustrian Bukit Serdang, 43300 Seri Kembangan Selangor

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for Communication and the Humanities**

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## EDITORIAL

This issue of *SEARCH: The Journal of the South East Asia Research centre for Communication and Humanities* includes four articles which examine various issues related to language and linguistics in Southeast Asia. The articles included in this issue are, 'The research imperative in the evolving environment of public universities in Malaysia'; 'Dog whistle journalism of racialising Myanmar refugees'; 'Media Coverage: The Bukit Antarabangsa Landslide' and 'Identity construction and code switching in English newspaper advertisements'.

The first article by Parvinder Kaur Hukam Singh, Thavamalar Thuraisingam, Maya Khemlani David, and Vikneswaran Nair investigates the importance of original scholarship as proposed by Humboldt which has shaped the research mission in universities worldwide. The paper specifically examines the factors impacting educational convergence and Malaysian universities' adoptive response to this convergence at multiple levels: transnational, national and within the universities.

The second article is a critical discourse analysis by Yeoh Pei Lee. The paper examines the journalistic practice of representing refugees which is commonly performed by erecting symbolic boundaries that depict their differences from the dominant group. The castigation of such symbolic marking enables new racism to be understood, formed, and naturalised. The study demystifies the insidious form of racism found in three news reports in *The Star*, the most-read English daily in Malaysia, that frame the Myanmarese refugees in a negative exclusionary angle.

The third article is a critical discourse analysis by Prasanna Rosaline Fernandez, Lean Mei Li and Khor Yoke Lim. This paper examines a Malaysian newspaper's coverage of a landslide tragedy to determine the voices that are privileged, those that are excluded and how they are re-contextualised and framed in the writer's voice.

The fourth article, which focuses on written discourse analysis by Deborah Ashabai Fredericks John and Francisco Perlas Dumanig, examines identity construction through the use of code switching in English newspaper advertisements in Malaysia. The study explores the occurrence of code switching in print advertisements and how the advertisements help to construct ethnic identities in Malaysia.

It is hoped that readers will find the rich information contained within the above four articles both stimulating as well as enriching. I would like to thank the authors for their contributions, the reviewers for providing valuable feedback, Ms. Sumangala Pillai of Taylor's Press for her work in ensuring quality for this journal and the management of Taylor's University for financial support in publishing this journal.

We welcome suggestions for improvements to this journal and hope that all readers benefit through the contributions of this issue.

**Associate Prof. Dr. Lokasundari Vijaya Sankar**  
Editor-in-Chief



## **The Research Imperative in the Evolving Environment of Public Universities in Malaysia**

Parvinder Kaur Hukam Singh, Thavamalar Thuraisingam and Vikneswaran Nair  
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### **ABSTRACT**

The importance of original scholarship as proposed by Humboldt has shaped the research mission in universities worldwide. Universities in Malaysia which are the pivotal organisations of a knowledge society are mandated to fulfill the aspiration of the government for Malaysia to be a regional and international education hub. To meet this challenge, organised research has become an imperative in Malaysian universities. This study examines the factors impacting educational convergence and the Malaysian universities' adoptive response to this convergence at multiple levels: transnational, national and within the universities. We analysed both the standard-setting macro structures and the micro adoptive mechanisms, processes and agents which contribute to shaping the discursive space of research in Malaysian public universities. The theoretical framework preferred for the synthesised analysis draws on the neo-institutionalist theory (Meyer and Ramirez, 2000), self-referencing the social system theory (Luhmann, 1982) and the externalisation thesis (Schriewer, 2003). The neo-institutionalist theory helps explain the exogenous structural forces and general trends and the two latter theories examine the contextual, that is, the social, cultural, historical, political and economic factors which help to understand the idiosyncratic trajectories, processes and meanings of the responses of Malaysian public universities to the international research imperative. The data was collected through interviews with local academics from five public universities. The themes which emerged from the data were: (i) the role of the global and local convergence and divergence in the shaping of the research mission of public universities; (ii) the research policies and their unintended consequences; (iii) discipline differentials in the research output; (iv) innovative research in the service of the community; and (v) the bind of bias – problems of publication. It is hoped that the dialectic theoretical framework and the multilevel analysis will contribute towards an understanding of the research culture in Malaysian universities and advance research discourse in Malaysia.

**Keywords: Higher education, research mission, public universities, dialectic theoretical framework**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The currents of globalisation and information technology which have gained momentum in recent times have led to the alteration of formal education institutions worldwide. At a time when change is the only constant, it is indeed challenging for universities, whose main scholarship used to be to promote original inquiry or research since the times of Humboldt, to remain relevant and productive, yet flexible in responding to emerging social demands, technological change and economic realignments (Scott, 2006). As a result, almost all universities today have a mission statement which is generally based on the triad – teaching, research and public service (Scott, 2006). These mission statements mirror the ever changing philosophical ideals, educational policies and cultures of particular societies or institutions (Scott, 2006). Scott (2006), in his historical analysis of university missions, identified six core missions of universities due to state, national and global influences: state – teaching and research missions; national – nationalisation, democratisation and public service missions; globalisation – internationalisation mission.

In Malaysia, the democratisation of higher education has been mainly state-driven and has been adopted as the principal avenue for upward socioeconomic mobility and national economic development. This democratisation of higher education was the major component of the affirmative action prescribed in the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1970, which sought to restructure society and eradicate poverty. As outlined in the five year blueprints of the National Mission – the 9th Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) and 10th Malaysia Plan (2010-2015), Malaysia hopes to realise its aspiration of becoming a high-income, innovation-led, knowledge-based economy and developed nation by 2020. In line with this national agenda, the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) implemented a plan for the Development of Innovative Human Capital at the Tertiary Levels in 2010 (MOHE, 2010). The mission of this plan is to “develop and put in place a higher education environment that encourages the growth of knowledge centres and individuals who are competent and innovative with high moral values to meet national and international needs” (MOHE, 2010). Notwithstanding these national and international ideals, none of the Malaysian universities made it to the top 200 places of the *World University Rankings* published by the Times Higher Education Supplement in 2011/2012. One of the public research universities which was ranked 168th in 2010 fell 40 places in 2011. Another three premiere public (research) universities followed suit – sliding about 40 to 80 places respectively. In sharp contrast, many universities from other Asian countries – namely South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, China and Taiwan – improved in their rankings. The MOHE attributed the poor performance of the public universities to the lack of maturity in research and citations which account for more than 50% of the ranking criteria. This attribution, however, has resulted in Malaysian public higher education institutions coming under greater public scrutiny.

Thus, MOHE has been left with limited choices but to be the driving force of research, innovation and commercialisation endeavours. At present, there are about 20 public universities in the country (MOHE, 2012) with at least one public university in each of the 14 states. Malaysian public universities are generally categorised into three: research universities which focus on research activities and teaching based on research and development (R&D), comprehensive universities that offer courses in various fields of

studies for all levels of education including pre-undergraduate, undergraduate, and postgraduate degrees and focused universities which place emphasis on specific fields such as technical, education, management and defense. These public universities have been urged by all parties (the higher education ministry and both the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister alike) to rise adequately and transform to meet these challenges and become reputable universities in the region. The Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in a recent news report stated that, “university lecturers and professors should be at the forefront of implementing commercially viable, high-impact research and innovation” (*New Straits Times*, 11 October 2011).

This recent accelerated emphasis on research is significantly affecting the public university culture in Malaysia and directly altering the lives of academics. In order to be reputable in the international landscape, that is, globally competitive, the universities in the country have been urged to establish a solid research base, have a number of pioneer researchers amongst their faculty, generate and produce high-impact, pure and applied research, attract and retain the best researchers, increase the number of postgraduate students and provide a conducive research and educational environment for both its staff and students. All public universities have thus, set up mandatory research and commercialisation activities for the promotion and assessment of academic staff. Several studies have been carried out in international universities outlining the seemingly new academic culture in institutions of higher education in different parts of the world. Tural’s (2007) study focuses on the changing academic climate in universities in Turkey, whereas Gregorutti’s (2010) study outlines the cultural conflicts experienced by professors in the United States and Mexico due to the pressure to produce more research in higher education. Another study by Salazar-Clemena and Almonte-Acosta (2007) examined the developing research culture in Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Thus far, studies involving public universities in Malaysia have mainly focused on publication output (Jusoff *et al.*, 2009) and the demands of research, teaching and learning in research universities (Gill, 2007). None of the studies have focused qualitatively on the plight of public universities and their faculties in keeping up with the “publish or perish” maxim. This study hopes to explore the impact of exogenous and endogenous factors on the research mission and activities of universities through the use of neo-institutionalist theory, Luhmann’s self-referencing social system theories and Schriewer’s externalisation thesis.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The intensification and acceleration of global forces in the educational industry have legitimised neo-institutionalist (Meyer and Ramirez, 2000) beliefs about the presence of evolutionary, universalistic convergence of rationalised ‘best practices’ and ‘education world models’. The history of university missions across Europe and the United States testify how they are determined by macro influences like nationalisation, democratisation and globalisation (Scott, 2006). Others like DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Dey *et al.* (1997) in more specific reference to the research mission of universities talked about ‘isomorphism’- homogenisation trends among universities driven by economic and professional consideration.

Those who favour the neo-institutionalist macro determinism cite as evidence the impactful existence of international and global bodies like ‘World Association for Educational Research’, ‘World Education Market’ and ‘The European Educational Research Association.’ These are seen as providing global developmental trends and international standards. In the post-industrial or knowledge societies, the research mission of universities is driven by the demand for knowledge production, economic logic and the prestige of the world rankings of universities. In spite of the global dissemination of standardised educational models and the universalistic assumptions of the positivists, there is evidence of diversification in different social, cultural, political and economic contextual conditions.

Less deterministic perspectives like Luhmann’s (1982) Self-referencing Social System Theory (SRST) acknowledge global convergence and national and local variations as well. A primary distinction of Luhmann’s Social System Theory is that its focus of analysis is not individuals, groups, behaviours or institutions but the communication that occurs within and across systems. It recognises the agency of national and other endogenous factors in responding to international structures and pressures. Perry and Tor (2008: 515) sum up the SRST as “assuming the existence of multiple worlds and the idiosyncrasy of meaning within the local social context.” They acknowledge the “liberty and autonomy of local actors in selecting and evaluating international models and adapting them to internal needs for supplementary meaning (Perry and Tor, 2008: 515).” As Bordieu (1989) puts it, endogenous agents ‘refract’ external pressures into their own logic.

The Luhmannian scheme of ‘societal differentiation’ is explained, in part, by concepts like ‘self-reference’, ‘reflexivity’ and ‘reflection’, “which conceptualise networks, processes and organised fields of sociocultural activity as a meaning-based social reality that observes and describes itself and uses its self-descriptions to organise itself - autopoiesis” (quoted in Schriewer, 2003 : 276). The self-referential nature of the subsystem, in this case the education system, allows the specific problems, particular intellectual traditions, national value system and other social and logistic constraints (Schriewer, 2003) to interplay with international pressures to filter them and make them relevant for the local scene. In complementing Luhmann’s ‘autopoiesis’ process (self-organising), which refers to ‘looking within’, Schriewer puts forward the concept of ‘externalisation’. Externalisation “calls attention to the interpretative reception and transformation, within the educational discourses of different nations, of relevant world situations, bodies of knowledge, and educational models that have taken shape at the international level” (Schriewer, 2003:277).

While the above may provide some justifications for the proposition of the neo-institutionalist theory, the ‘creative deviations’ (Schriewer) are equally obvious in the policies and ideologies of Malaysian education actors. The government policies have often been driven by a major agenda of national integration, to create social cohesion between numerous ethnic communities of Malaysia. The issues of social justice, of equitable distribution of opportunities, of fairness in socioeconomic and employment policies shape many decisions related to the quantity and orientation of public education in Malaysia. The New Economic Policy (1970) directly influenced the racial composition of university population because of the affirmative action for the *Bumiputera*. In spite of the nationalistic fervour (including the linguistic pride) and a determination to keep the sociocultural sensitivities intact, the many

shocks to the Malaysian economy encouraged the neoliberal ideology to allow market forces to organise the economic activity, side-stepping other priorities like the government's monopoly over education. All this pushed further the academics towards market requirements, industrial linkages and research-supported, innovative knowledge society. The response of the academics to this challenge is further explored in the results.

Both the neo-institutionalist and Self-referencing Social System Theory may be used to analyse the policies and ideologies of the Malaysian education actors namely, the government, the Ministry of Higher Education, the university administrators and the academics.

The Malaysian government has not been immune to the universal influence of globalisation, internationalisation, the prominence of the tertiary industry and neoliberalism. For example, education is now seen as a tradable commodity as proposed by the new General Agreement on Trade and Services Framework (GATS) which was negotiated by World Trade Organisation (WTO). The global influences are also evident in MOHE's emphasis on the development of innovative human capital for a knowledge-based society. This top-down approach has created parallels between the aims of public universities and the national development goals. In Thong's (1995) words, the Malaysian public universities have adopted the utilitarian model to achieve the national goals. In tandem with the rest of the world, the Malaysian government funding has also been regressing, resulting in the corporatisation of the public universities in accordance with the 'Universities and University College Act 1996'. More research-oriented and entrepreneurial academic staff is thus the requirement of a more self-supportive university.

The Malaysian public universities have responded thus far by using 'adoptive mechanisms' and 'semantic constructions' (Schriewer, 2003) in dealing with the research imperatives at the international level. As such, externalisation allows autonomy to the local institutions to select and evaluate international models, which account for differences and idiosyncratic meanings. It is hoped that the above dialectic theoretical framework and multilevel analysis mentioned earlier (at the international, national and university levels) will help explain both isomorphic tendencies and 'creative deviations' (Schriewer, 2003) of the research culture in Malaysian public universities.

### **3.METHODOLOGY**

This study uses qualitative methodology to gain insights into the exogenous and endogenous factors influencing the research landscape of Malaysian public universities. A semi-structured interview approach was used to elicit responses on various focal areas – namely research output, publication, incentives, commercialisation, and language issues to name a few. A total of nine academics comprising seven from three research universities and one each from a comprehensive university and a focused university respectively were interviewed for the purposes of this study. Informants were selected to represent the academic staff from different disciplines and designations. The data collection process took a period of three months. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Each transcript was closely read and analysed using a three step formula proposed by Bazeley (2009) – describe, compare and relate. In the description stage, the demographic

features of the data were set out in order to provide the necessary backdrop against which further analysis would be read.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study is an attempt to understand how the exogenous and endogenous forces converge to impact the Malaysian national higher education agenda. MOHE describes the agenda as the development of innovative human capital in a knowledge-based society. The research mission of public universities is instrumental in achieving this. To examine this agenda, the dialectic theoretical framework and multilevel analysis were used to study how world educational ideologies and models shape the conceptions of Malaysian education actors (politicians, planners, MOHE, administrators and the faculty) at the public higher education institutions. The analysis further looked at the micro level for a deeper understanding of the processes of translation, adaptation and implementation as perceived and responded to by the faculty of the public universities. Their agency could help explain the divergences and idiosyncratic trajectories, construction and reconstruction of meanings that characterise the complex implementation processes of the transformation that the nation envisions. The analysis will also sensitise us to the symbiotic relationship between structure and agency that emerges from the data.

By integrating the understanding from the copious literature on the changing scene in education and the many readings of dataset, the following themes were identified:

1. The role of the global and local convergence and divergence in the shaping of the research mission of public universities
2. The research policies and their unintended consequences
3. Discipline differentials in the research output
4. Innovative research in the service of the community
5. The bind of bias – problems of publication

The themes above reflect the views of academics from five public universities. As mentioned earlier, only 5 of the 20 Malaysian public universities have been designated as research universities and the others as comprehensive or focused universities. This study sampled 9 interviewees, 7 academics from three research universities and one each from the comprehensive and focused universities for purposes of comparison. It was considered important that at least half of the academics were senior by designation or by years of service and half were lecturers with less than five years of service. It was hoped that this would provide us with an evolutionary perspective and an overall insight into the research culture of the universities while the junior academics' experiences and perspectives were still taken into account. This was indeed the case since the issues raised by the two groups varied a great deal. The data was drawn from various disciplines – medicine, accounting, business, social sciences, humanities and sciences and mathematics. The disciplines also appeared substantively related to research output. There were strong appeals for re-evaluation of research Key Performance Index (KPIs) to be discipline-specific. Academics from professional fields were torn between investing in sub-specialisation or research. The following thematic analysis is better understood against the background of the above demographic features of the sample.

#### ***4.1. The Role of the Global and Local Convergence and Divergence in Shaping the Research Mission***

This theme is better analysed at the global, national and intra-university levels. There is much to be gained by recognising the reality of global forces in shaping the national, educational policies and reforms and the missions of the universities.

##### *4.1.1. Triadic Missions of Convergence and Divergence*

The triadic missions of the universities to propagate knowledge (teaching), create and advance knowledge (research) in the service of the public (commercialisation) have been institutionalised worldwide. The missions are acknowledged as a matter of course by the interviewees directly or indirectly.

*“...as an academician you have a few roles to play: as a teacher, researcher, consultant or community worker” ~ Interviewee 5*

*“Our KPIs include 40% teaching, 40% research and 20% service to the community...” ~ Interviewee 7*

*“You need to have a PhD, you need to publish and have industrial linkages” ~ Interviewee 2*

However, other interviewees emphasised teaching and research and conspicuously ignored public or community service.

*“The prescribed ratios are roughly 50-60% teaching and 30% research” ~ Interviewee 1*

*“My KPIs are 50-60% research, 30% of teaching and clinical practice, but in reality 80-90% goes into clinical practice, 5-10% on teaching and 5% on research” ~ Interviewee 3*

The first interviewee, a less experienced faculty member from the humanities lacked any exposure to public service mission. Interviewee 3 from the medical faculty could perceive clinical practice as community service or is unaware of the third mission, which the government promotes as commercialisation of research.

In accordance with the neo-institutionalist theory, there should be worldwide convergence of the university missions and indeed the triadic mission is professed by the Malaysian universities. Although the public service mission or commercialisation of research has been a source of concern for MOHE, it would be interesting to conjecture with the help of the micro theories why some of the academics were not aware of the public service mission. The public service mission first evolved in the United States to meet its defense needs, making university research ‘useful’. The process (reinterpretation, indigenisation and re-contextualisation) of its incorporation into the Malaysian universities’ mission has not filtered down uniformly. In recent years, MOHE has seriously emphasised the commercialisation of research and in order to legitimise it at home, it refers to world models of public service. In Schriever’s (2003) terms, it gets externalised.

#### 4.1.2 University Rankings – Convergence and Divergence

Another source of convergence between the global and national institutions of higher education is the pursuit of university rankings. Malaysia aspires to attract international students and faculty for which it has to compete internationally. University rankings serve as a good indicator of high standards. Research output is one of the most significant determinants of rankings and is used as a reputation tool which in turn translates into economic advantages. There is great deal of consensus among the interviewees about the importance of rankings to the government and the universities.

*“The Malaysian government might outwardly say that they are not too bothered by rankings but I think it matters a great deal to them...” ~ Interviewee 3*

*“... there is a full new exercise of Higher Education where they are ranking and rating higher education institutions – SETARA and MyRA etc. With that being implemented, the universities are forced to move in the direction of research because the KPI is all by evidence” ~ Interviewee 5*

*“We are very ranking driven” ~ Interviewee 2*

*“...lots of emphasis on rankings” ~ Interviewee 7*

It is interesting to note that interviewees from the comprehensive and focused universities did not mention rankings of the university. It does not seem to be the buzzword on their campus because the comprehensive and focused universities neither lay much store by rankings nor insist on publications in ISI journals:

*“Some lecturers do not bother with it because it does not matter very much at the end of the day” ~ Interviewee 6*

On the other hand, the research universities insist on ISI journals which have created frustration and discontent in certain quarters especially among the more junior lecturers:

*“They are quite rigid. They tell you that should they fund the paper, it should have the criteria to get published in an ISI journal” ~ Interviewee 1*

*“It is ISI or SCOPUS, it gives me sleepless nights. ~ Interviewee 7*

*“They are not given a tutor post until they get an ISI publication, PhD is not enough” ~ Interviewee 2*

*“I should be an associate professor but since I don't have that many paper publication in ISI journals, I remain as senior lecturer” ~ Interviewee 3*

Both, the rankings of the universities and publications in high impact journals, converge towards objective standard setting and world educational culture (Perry and Tor, 2008). And yet there is evidence of what Luhmann (1982) refers to as self-referencing or ‘looking within’:

*“Last year it was high impact ISI publication only, this year they have toned it down” ~ Interviewee 2*

*“Now publications in SCOPUS are also accepted” ~ Interviewee 8*

The international standards were negotiated to allow some adoptive mechanisms (Schriewer, 2003) towards greater flexibility to accommodate the limitations and constraints experienced by the faculty.

#### **4.2. Research Policies and their Unintended Consequences**

Often economic and political motivations legitimise the policies borrowed from the world education models as mentioned in the previous theme. The local universities benchmark their research output against international standards. There is much to be said for acknowledging the importance of agency which will draw our attention to examining the local context (Schriewer, 2003). Such understanding (of the local context) provides cognizance of implications of the policies, possible responses of the academics, their constraints and opportunities and the unintended consequences of the policies.

##### *4.2.1 Research and Teaching not a Zero Sum Game*

A very significant unintended consequence is the loss of focus on teaching as research comes to occupy a pivotal position within the university structure and in the reward structure:

*“We are always talking about research and trying to get things done to the extent I sometimes feel that we de-emphasise teaching” ~ Interviewee 1*

*“You can see that the interest level to discuss teaching has been diluted as the main thing on their minds is that I have to publish” ~ Interviewee 2*

*“...so the time to put aside for teaching is minimal” ~ Interviewee 8*

*“Due to the research agenda, the teaching agenda is getting cast aside” ~ Interviewee 6*

*“We could now have good researchers but they are not necessarily great teachers” ~ Interviewee 9*

Historically, tension between teaching and research missions have always existed in higher education but it has received fresh attention recently. Even “US universities are currently under some pressure to improve undergraduate instruction especially in the 125 institutions designated as research universities” (Serow, 2000: 450). Altbach and Lewis (1997) point out that faculty is regularly evaluated on the basis of both teaching and research. In spite of teaching awards and establishment of teaching and learning centers, there is hardly any doubt that promotions, salaries and bonuses reflect research productivity more than teaching performance (Hearn, 1999). Often it is contested that research enriches teaching and does not interfere with its effectiveness but a series of researchers such as Braxton (1996) point out that the overall relationship between faculty members’ scholarly productivity and their performance as teachers is much less a zero sum game than critics have suggested (Serow, 2000 : 450).

These views coincide with the concerns of the Malaysian faculty as well. Junior faculty raise the issue of time constraints for teaching and the deterioration in quality of teaching compared to the senior faculty whose teaching is more research-focused anyway.

#### 4.2.2 Games Academics Play

Other senior faculty members discussed how dysfunctional the ‘number game’ is:

*“when they play the number game, they are compromising quality. Each faculty starts to produce their own journals. You are not competitive enough to publish in top-notch journals, so you publish to meet the minimum requirement.” ~ Interviewee 5*

*“The researchers at the lower end have gotten creative and started up their own journals and publishing houses – these publishing houses could create problems of quality” ~ Interviewee 2*

The ‘number game’ has resulted in the unsavory practice of:

*“...supervising 15-20 graduate students and getting each of them to write and publish somewhere and get their name on the paper.” ~ Interviewee 5*

Another insight provided by a senior faculty member is:

*“people from research universities, are leaving to join teaching universities, you get the same salaries so the KPI policies have to be appropriate” ~ Interviewee 5*

The unintended consequences have the potential to render a policy dysfunctional. Policies are necessary. If they are made in consultation with academics, they minimise the negative element of the latent consequences. As such a dialogue between the policy makers and the faculty would improve the interpretations and adaptations to the policies.

#### 4.3 Discipline Differentials in Research Output

Disciplines have become deified. Faculty even define themselves in terms of their disciplines - I am a Psychologist or I am a Chemist. So academics work in isolation and may in fact feel superior to academics in other disciplines. They have their own paradigms within which their research is located.

##### 4.3.1 Systematic Bias

Some disciplines have been traditionally more powerful than others; particularly engineering, natural sciences, medicine and business. Many interviewees feel there is a systematic bias in favour of engineering and the sciences:

*“There should not be blanket (research) KPI across the board because in social sciences, unlike natural sciences where you can just vary the variables in a confined lab and provide a new paper, ours is the open world with people in it. They have to understand the context of social sciences” ~ Interviewee 5*

*“...science departments do more research, I think it is because of the nature of the discipline” ~ Interviewee 4*

*“It is said that sciences get more grants which is because they buy equipment that are very expensive. Easier to get money to buy machinery or products. But we need data and for that we need money for field work ~ Interviewee 2*

*“I felt that the Arts get very little whereas the sciences, engineering, IT etc. get more so there is possibility to commercialise their work, hence the university is more willing to invest in such projects as it could bring returns. Even when you look at the grant award list, you will only notice very few names from the arts, humanities etc. and most of the names are from the medical, sciences and engineering faculties” ~ Interviewee 1*

*“Most of the people who design these things (KPIs and policies) are from engineering and medical backgrounds. They don’t understand the background of social sciences when they came up with KPIs, they are probably achievable in natural sciences but not in social sciences” ~ Interviewee 9*

*“They have to reevaluate their policies with regard to various disciplines” ~ Interviewee 8*

*“Many opportunities are being given to the science faculties, there is greater availability of grants” ~ Interviewee 6*

*“From what I hear the engineering or natural sciences departments only have to emphasise the findings and the report is quite simple, whereas our reports are far more demanding” ~ Interviewee 7*

Interviewees are almost unanimous in what they perceive as an advantage for the engineering and science departments both in terms of ease of research output and in procuring grants. The KPIs are seen as being tailored with them in mind and ignoring the realities of conducting research in social sciences, humanities or business.

#### 4.3.2 Dilemma of the Professional Schools

The professional schools (medicine and accounting) face a unique predicament:

*“We are employed by the hospital and that consumes 80-90% of our time. According to the university though my KPIs should be 50-60% research, 30% teaching and 10% clinical practice while in reality 80-90% of my time goes into clinical practice and 5-10 % in teaching and 5% in research” ~ Interviewee 3*

*“The sad thing is that the university does not recognise the sub specialty but the hospital does so there we go again with the peculiarities of being employed by the university but working in the hospital” ~ Interviewee 3*

*“Furthermore, if it is accounting faculty, you need some faculty members who will also be professionals. It is difficult to attract them. They will earn less here and have to keep publishing – for what?” ~ Interviewee 2*

The discrepancies in the KPI policies should be examined in terms of discipline specific requirements of research output and the peculiar position of the various professional schools so that academics feel they are being fairly appraised. In the knowledge society, research in language, humanities and social sciences cannot be undermined, as information is replacing material objects as primary economic and social forces. These subjects have concerned themselves with issues that affect our culture, examining, among other issues, how power and ideologies structure the way we see the world” (Duderstadt, 1999 : 259).

Only one interviewee made reference to the lack of interdisciplinary research.

*“These groups do not work across fields and do interdisciplinary research. There is a lot of expertise but they think that their field is superior...” ~ Interviewee 5*

There are concerns about the fragmentary nature of knowledge and the need for flexibility and fluidity in research. New funding policies favour multidisciplinary teams of scholars because “new ideas are often birthed in the collision between disciplines” (Duderstadt, 1999: 259).

#### ***4.4. Innovative Research Commercialised in the Service of Community***

Historically, it was with nationalisation and democratisation that knowledge and research were made available for the benefit of the nation or society – the public service mission of the university. Most developed countries deployed research and knowledge produced at the universities for the purposes of national economy, defense and health industry etc. Faculty thus became research entrepreneurs. As Malaysia moves from a resource-intensive to a knowledge-intensive economy, it aims at developing innovative human capital in its tertiary institutions.

##### ***4.4.1 Growing Aspirations toward Commercialised Research***

Researchers at the universities are thus expected to be not just creative and innovative but also entrepreneurial and collaborative. These aspirations are reflected in the responses of the interviewees of this study:

*“My research is coloured by my industry experience and my collaborations are mostly with people in the industry” ~ Interviewee 2*

*“They had patented a few instruments through the university. They have learnt from previous mistakes and this time they have done it more correctly. Previously they were short changed here and there but they have learnt from it. The infrastructure is there but it is very bureaucratic” ~ Interviewee 3*

*The accounting practices are moving so fast that instead of we informing them they are informing us. But in the US, they have grants for research informing standards for example in our faculty only a few researchers do research to inform the standards- I am involved in such research at the moment” ~Interviewee 2*

*“Yes, innovation. They are looking at industrial linkages – the research is more commercial and more applied” ~Interview 4*

*“Your research should be relevant to the industry, but this group is happy in their cubicles. Fundamental research is important but you can work with others to translate it into applied research. Some people just aim at becoming professors by a certain age. Our research should involve industrial players” ~ Interviewee 5*

*“I feel they are mostly looking for products. Otherwise your research might be considered a waste of time” ~ Interviewee 6*

*“There is one department set up to take care of entrepreneurial, innovative and creative research and one may start with fundamental research but at the workshops, they will gear you towards entrepreneurial research” ~ Interviewee 7*

Once again the researchers from the professional school (medical and accounting) are already into the game of patenting – but face obstacles like “too much bureaucracy” (Interviewee 3) and “a lack of grants for specific kinds of research to inform standards” (Interviewee 2). They are moving towards entrepreneurial research although the attempts are few and far between – there are a very low number of patents and commercialisation of research and development products. Other interviewees seem aware of the importance of industrial linkages and entrepreneurial research although more as an aspiration or an idea towards which they may strive. MOHE in the Agenda for Innovative Malaysian (AIM) blueprint 2009 has discussed some relevant concerns. The ones pertinent to this study are the insufficient number of postgraduates (25% in 2009), weak strategies to retain talent – ‘Brain drain, limited entrepreneurial skills (of researchers), limited communication between academia and industry and a weak ecosystem for innovation which would require the government, education, industry and ventures to work in tandem to create an innovative Malaysia.

Research universities in the United States have expanded the “knowledge-creation industry because they were accompanied by powerful think-tanks, like the Rand Corporation and Corporate labs” (Baxter and McMillan, 2010: 8). Singapore, South Korea and Israel have created research clusters which have given them steadily growing economies and stopped brain drain to retain their talent and even the Apex University in Malaysia is moving towards a pre-cluster stage.

Commercialisation of research has received criticism from some quarters which argue that the public service mission for universities is in reality submission to the power of the business sector or that the universities are fashioning themselves after bureaucratic organisations. These criticisms notwithstanding, the onslaught of commercialisation of research is quite relentless and determined to sweep the developing countries.

There is simultaneity of both convergence and divergence with regard to the commercialisation of research in Malaysia. The Tenth Malaysia Plan reflects the global trends of research in institutions of higher learning to be entrepreneurial and collaborative while the neo-institutionalists would view the transformative education policies as stimulated by external forces leading to the current developments. Equally significant is the local reality of the Malaysian mindset in its non-acceptance of Malaysian inventions and products,

which is proving to be stubborn and resistant to change (MOHE, 2010). According to Luhmann's theory of self-referential systems – systems keep reproducing themselves by using built-in internal references that support current mindsets. Hence, the resistance to change (Steiner-Khamsi and Quist, 2000). At this point, it becomes necessary to make 'externalised' (Schriewer, 2003) references to justify and push reforms.

#### **4.5 The Bind of Bias in Publication**

Scholarly publication has become increasingly difficult everywhere and more so for scholars who do not belong to the core countries, barring them from participating in global academic communities. There could be cultural, linguistic, stylistic, political and economic factors operating to exclude them from the publication world as suggested by a host of studies (Braine 2005); Canagarajah, 1996; Flowerdew, 2008; Salager and Meyer, 2008).

##### *4.5.1 The Many Faces of Exclusion*

Interviewees have experienced rejections and exclusions and perceive it as bias in the publication industry:

*“...they notice that if you are not a native speaker, they tend to have some prejudice against the paper” ~ Interviewee 2*

*“The language may also be a stumbling block. In the medical faculty, maybe not too much of an issue but even here some personnel find it challenging to write a journal paper” ~ Interviewee 3*

*“However well we write, it is not the same as a native speaker. Singapore has done well because they bring in foreign professors who groom the local ones, if you have such strategies it is fine. You cannot expect a local who has studied in Sekolah Kebangsaan to write that way even if he went to the United Kingdom to get his PhD” ~ Interviewee 5*

Flowerdew (1999) points to the technical problems such as less facility of expression in English, meagre vocabulary, inappropriate use of idiomatic expressions and convoluted syntax as the main obstacles. Li and Flowerdew (2007) found that even many revisions do not render the writings native-like – as expressed in

*“all of us do send papers to various journals, but as rejections come in – you redraft and rewrite and redo and finally it gets dropped” ~ Interviewee 2*

*“Sometimes it is language, other times papers get rejected because they do not have international appeal” ~ Interviewee 8*

The problem of parochialism has also been discussed by journal editors participating in Flowerdew's (2001) study. They remarked that when the scholars fail to go beyond local contexts, they are not seen as relevant to the core communities (Uzuner, 2008) which is unfortunate as the periphery perspectives may provide unique insights (Canagarajah, 1996).

Belcher (2007) found that maintaining a network of connections with the core disciplinary communities is a powerful tool and the interviewees realise it as expressed in the following quotes:

*“Also when we have visiting professors, through informal conversations we realize that he or she is able to get papers into top journals within three weeks because he/she met the editor at a conference and they had tea...”* ~ Interviewee 2

Or

*“...if your co-author is someone well known”* ~ Interviewee 2

There are other biases which restrict scholars from joining the publishing club. It could be national origin, institutional affiliation or even race (Aydinli and Mathews, 2000):

*“The university you come from may have a bearing on acceptance of your paper”*  
~ Interviewee 1

Most challenges mentioned in publishing literature have been experienced and mentioned by the interviewees although there seems to be a lack of awareness about (i) how their writing may be diverging from accepted norms of research reporting, (ii) how that may be related to their specific disciplines, and (iii) how this is leading to their invisibility.

Malaysian researchers participate in the normative ‘publish or perish’ maxim along with the worldwide research community but their academic contexts, background, opportunities to socialise with research and publishing mechanisms, their interpretation and adaptation mechanisms are unique. These get translated into quite a remarkably different research culture.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Public universities in Malaysia especially the research universities have quite successfully reorganised their priorities to promote scholarly vigour among the faculty. The reach of scholarship is growing at the individual faculty level as well – even making inroads into the academic psyche. Yet in spite of its unremitting efforts in the pursuit of research scholarship, Malaysia is trailing behind in the international ranking of its universities. Despite handsome incentives and very stringent KPIs of publishing in ISI journals, the academics have not met the publication expectations for some of the reasons discussed above. There is increasing awareness to produce a useful knowledge corpus to stimulate commercially oriented research and to form research clusters with industry. A taskforce for this has been set up for MOHE – IP to develop innovative collaborative and entrepreneurial human capital. It would be encouraging for researchers to know that economists in the United States have rated university research as the best investment taxpayers can ever make. The local researchers can aspire to take entrepreneurial research to that level. As an emerging mission of universities, internationalisation is the new watch word, constituting a flow of new information, faculty members, curricular content and students. In Malaysian universities, internationalisation is still largely represented by an international body of students only.

The authors suggest that great scholarship and research thrive under a combination of factors: (1) Government and corporate funding needs to be increased as Malaysia only spends 0.6% of its GNP on research funding. (2) The KPIs need to correspond to the unique opportunities and constraints of the various disciplines. (3) Research needs to be imbued by interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies, and socialisation into the core requirements of publishing. (4) Research mentors should be made available.

The race for proliferation of research output must not be allowed to undermine its quality. It would be also important to maintain an optimum balance between teaching and research. Universities may become multiversities by balancing the various complex roles expected of them today and establishing their relevance to society.

By favouring a holistic analysis of the research mission suggested to integrate the endogenous and exogenous forces and to transcend the dualism of macro and micro levels, we can draw on the insights of the neo-institutionalist theory as well as the self-referencing theory and the externalisation thesis to explain the convergence and instances of missed universalism (Schriewer, 2003).

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## **‘Dog Whistle Journalism’ of Racialising Myanmar Refugees**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The journalistic practice of representing refugees is commonly performed by erecting symbolic boundaries that depict their differences from the dominant group. The castigation of such symbolic marking enables how new racism is understood, formed, and naturalised. This expansive contemporary notion of racism locates minority groups as socially constructed categories and a racist discourse is one imbricated with social practices of language, culture, and traditions. Using a discourse analytical approach, this study will demystify the insidious form of racism found in three news reports in *The Star*, the most-read English daily in Malaysia, that framed the Myanmarese refugees within a negative exclusionary angle. Specifically, at the micro level, a discursive analysis of the properties of news discourse of racism is undertaken. At the macro level, the constitutive association between the discursive and social practice is shown. Through banal journalism, the study reveals how the politics of representing the Myanmar community here problematises the securitisation and the criminalisation of this group of people. Cumulatively, through systematic deconstruction of news discourse from these two levels, this paper displays how racism is intricately embedded and enmeshed in the socio-economic and socio-political structures that are pivotal in establishing certain power structures and group relations within a society. The analysis also reports on discursive means through the use of binary oppositions with the strategic manoeuvring of others brings about a tensile balance of power between the subordinated Myanmarese and the wider national society at large. The paper concludes that such dog-whistle journalism defies the basic tenet of the culture of globalisation i.e. the politics of recognition, where it fails to engage in creating awareness of the plurality of cultures and identities of the Myanmar minority.

**Keywords:** Racism, media discourse, securitisation, Myanmar refugees

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.1. Symbolic Racism***

The journalistic practice of representing refugees is commonly performed by erecting symbolic boundaries that depict their differences from the majority. The castigation of such symbolic marking enables how new racism is formed and understood. Today, racist discourse is no longer confined to the conventional biological reality such as colour or ethnic background. The contemporary notion of racism is expansive and places importance on minority groups as socially constructed categories. On such premises, a discourse qualifies to be racist when it is imbricated with social practices of language, culture and traditions.

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When ascribing these cultural differences, this hegemonic practice has come to assume terms such as ‘new racism’ (May, 2001), ‘everyday racism’ (Essed, 1991) ‘elite racism’ and ‘neo-racism’ (Wodak and Reisigl, 2003). In this reformulation of racism, Reisigl and Wodak (2000) look at how the cultural construction of groups is hierarchised based on their descent and ascribed invariable biological traits. The traits are “primarily related to biological features, appearance, cultural practices, customs, traditions, language or socially stigmatised ancestors. They are - explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly - evaluated negatively, and this judgement is more or less in accord with hegemonic views.” To van Dijk (1993), the central element in racism is group dominance as seen with self-interested groups dominating ‘socially valued resources’ which results in social inequality. While the West is established in their studies into media discourse on racism (van Dijk, 1984; Hartmann and Husband, 1974; Brookes, 1995; Jager and Link, 1993), research from the East, in particular from South East Asia, is still emerging (Teo, 2000; Kim, 2012).

News discourse, being ‘socially valued resources’ becomes a site of ideological struggle which hegemonises the dominant systems, values, and beliefs. The various genres emanating from the main domain of news discourse constitute the operational conduit to naturalise the politics of legitimacy.

### ***1.2. Banal Journalism and the Politics of Representation***

Media is a potent vehicle to define social relations and contexts through meanings constituted from media representation. Representations made in respect of racist discourse are crucial in that they are capable of directing racist views within a social context, thereby legitimising racist practices. Race can be represented in various ways but when a group is positioned in a manner that its existence is consistently associated with social ills, crime, and disorder, this symbolic representation becomes a particular cultural practice that typically characterises that group to be the source of these problems. For instance, the print media has been found to be highly influential in constructing moral panics yet research findings show how these did not reflect any form of actual panic behaviour or attitudes.

In shaping certain experience, journalists are said to be “among the pre-eminent storytellers of modern society” (Allan, 2004:77) where they attempt to render their reporting as faithful accounts of reality. Yet, Fiske’s clarion call for the need to demarcate events in the world from media events, especially when news stories report on ‘race’ matters, needs to be heeded. He cautions the following (Fiske, 1994:2):

“The term media event is an indication that in a postmodern world we can no longer rely on a stable relationship or clear distinction between a ‘real’ event and its mediated representation. Consequently, we can no longer work with the idea that the ‘real’ is more important, significant, or even ‘true’ than the representation. A media event, then, is not a mere representation of what happened, but it has its own reality, which gathers up into itself the reality of the event that may or may not have preceded it.”

The process of representation of racism can be further problematised when news reports function to negotiate reality through naturalising events. Naturalisation yields the

concomitant effect of common sense when “a hierarchical series of normative rules by which social life is to be understood” is set out (Allan, 2004). This politics of common sense rendered in news discourse will see the boundaries of societal consensus set and the moral order “being affirmed, recreated and contested in ideological terms” (Allan, 2004: 78). As part of this negotiation in the naturalisation process, the social life of the minority will be aligned to the parameters of the common sense of the dominant society compromised by dominant values and norms.

Since construction of meaning is central to the role of journalism, news that feature minorities is often marked with binary oppositions that act to racialise the ‘other’. Sonwalker (2005:268) remarks on the prevalence of discursive nature of this opposition in most societies and hence “journalists, breathing the same socio-cultural air, can scarcely remain untouched by the prevailing sense of we-ness and they-ness.”

The journalistic style of weaving special ‘stories’ into its news report genre provides another means to reproduce racism. Given the analysis of stories, these news narratives are highly organised to structure certain kinds of representations. The use of narrative in news discourse functions as an ideological tool since they, being stories in themselves, are relayed in reference to other stories. Conboy (2007:141) explicates it by “narrative is political in the way that it maps onto pre-existing explanations of how the world operates or deliberately sets out to contest those versions.” On this, narrative in news discourse that work on a 3-stage trajectory – setting, event, and outcome and usually the absence of a final resolution (Richardson, 2007: 71) – will align this framework to the political consensus of the nation. The ideological role is further accomplished with narratives attempting to “establish closure around the expectations of the targeted audience” (Conboy, 2007: 141). Thus narratives in news discourse act as a cohesive device to solidify institutional values of the nation with the audience. In short, the power of this genre – narratives in news discourse – rests with its symbolic representation that frames the ideology, values, and systems of the nation.

## 2.METHODOLOGY

This study uses the critical discourse analysis paradigm to unearth the ideological structures embedded in the news discourse. A qualitative study via a critical discourse analytic approach provides a better means to account for the role media plays in representing minorities (van Dijk, 2008). Earlier studies on racist discourse that took a quantitative approach, that is, content-analytical study (Hartmann and Husband, 1974; and Deepe Keever *et al.*, 1977 as cited in van Dijk, 2000) could only afford quantifiable features to be represented from the corpus studied but crucially lacked the accounting for the association between the various aspects of social practice.

As news discourse is a social practice, the dialectics of the media mediating between various social agents such as the larger political institutions and the public at large need to be addressed. Furthermore, the dialectical relationship needs to extend to the orders of discourse established in these institutions that include various networks of social practices operating in the language domain (Fairclough, 2003). Thus, Fairclough’s (2001) three-dimensional procedure which consists of description, interpretation, and explanation is

used. The descriptive stage analyses the formal texture features found in the legal prose where textual properties draw upon various aspects of semantics and syntax. The interpretation stage examines the interactive link between text and the social structure. The explanation stage provides the justification for the discursive processes and the social processes.

This study aims to show how journalistic practice racialises the Myanmar community through framing a systematic ideology of dominance. More specifically, this form of dominance over this community is legitimised and naturalised through two mode of analysis. First, at the micro level, the discursive reproduction of racism is realised through the structures and strategies of news reports. On this footing, critical linguistics provides a useful paradigm to reveal the covert hegemonic practice of news reports. Simultaneously, through the analysis of properties in the narrative structure (a core portion of the present corpus), the genre of narrative in news discourse under the practice of investigative journalism is depicted as strategic in positioning the Myanmar within a negative exclusionary angle. One strategy of legitimisation is the use of semantic polarisation that van Dijk (2008:187) states to be “global semantic strategies of positive self-presentation of Us and negative other-presentation of Them.” Second, at the macro level, because language is a socially conditioned process and thus constitutive of a dialectical relationship (Fairclough, 2001), the analysis contextualises the news article. For this purpose, the issues on securitisation and criminalisation of the Myanmar community in the Malaysian context are scrutinised, in particular, how their identity is negotiated and understood.

This two-pronged approach provides a robust means of investigating how the structures and strategies of news discourse are integrated into the properties of the social context where the news is produced. Cumulatively, this method of research will systemically describe the modus within which the news discourse acts in the (re)production of racism of the Myanmar community.

The corpus of this paper is drawn from three news articles published on 6 April 2010 in the Malaysian daily, *The Star*. The first article (referred to as A1) appears on the front page with the headline “Gen 3 beggars” and with the caption “Myanmar refugees forced to make a living by seeking alms”. The second article “Begging runs in the family” (referred to as A2) and the third “Using children to do it” (referred to as A3) are published on page 4. The coverage of these articles is derived from investigative journalism that *The Star* has implemented where specific topics are given extended coverage and scoop. News reports featured from such form of journalism are specifically categorised in *The Star* as “Starprobe: Your right to know”. The three articles provide exclusive coverage of the Myanmar refugees living in the district Klang as reported by Elan Perumal.

### **3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **3.1 *Narratives in News Discourse***

In this section, the genre of narrative in news discourse (Article 3) will be subject to analysis. The basic form will first be analysed, that is, the micro level that investigates the properties of narrative structures. This will be made meaningful when it is deliberated in relation to the structural “orders of discourse” and “high level of socially shared social

cognitions” (van Dijk, 1993:122) which include discussions of social and cultural systems of the text and the social formations of values and norms.

The lead in Article 3 provides most of the main elements in the news story as seen in Table 1 with the exception of Why (Why did the Myanmar refugees resort to begging?), which will be explicated in Section 5.

The setting is gradually introduced in the first three paragraphs which are couched in ambiguity. Citing the place as ‘their territory’ instantaneously raises doubt on the favourability of the location since it is marked by the pronoun ‘their’ and accentuated by ‘territory’. The lexis ‘territory’ denotes spatial division and the journalist’s insertion of quotation marks on this word compounds the effect that this space of his investigation is one not openly accessed by the public and it is shrouded by some form of risk, threat, or danger. This mysterious setting is augmented in paragraph 2 with “They were in the thick of action” but the form of activities undertaken is not delineated with any explicit antecedent description. Adding to the intensity by calling it ‘thick’ provides double suspense. This style of noticeable absence of concrete description is again deployed in the subsequent paragraph “Things were so intense...” Though paragraphs 1-3 intend for the introduction of setting, the stylistic choice of the journalist with “they were” (twice cited in paragraph 2) and “things were” (paragraph 3) displays gross irresponsible journalism treading on categorical assertions with no justification through descriptive information. Given that the schema of narratives demands an ordering of meaning, it appears that the ostentatious ambiguity in paragraphs 1-3, as set out in Table 2, is intentional to manipulate the readers’ construction of meaning.

Among the various stages of the narrative schema, the evaluation stage “contains the most explicit political information” (Labov, 1972 as cited in Riggins, 1997: 15). This stage renders the temporal cessation of all actions and events in the story. This leads the narrator

**Table 1.** The lead: 4 Ws

Elan Perumal	Who
provides a first-hand account	What
of his close encounters with vagabonds	Where
over a two-month observation period	When

**Table 2.** Paragraphs 1-3

Paragraph 1	I was surprised to find beggars and their children all over the place when I first entered their “territory”.
Paragraph 2	They were in the thick of action and I realised that they were well known among the petty traders and shopkeepers in the area.
Paragraph 3	Things were so intense that I was almost immediately approached by the young beggars.

**Table 3.** Paragraphs 6-7

Paragraph 6	From my observations, I learnt that the beggars operated under various <i>modus operandi</i> , depending on the age of their children.
Paragraph 7	The ones with babies would normally use a more ‘direct approach’ by moving around in crowded areas to attract sympathy.

to take the role of an arbiter who pronounces the worthiness of the value of the story. In paragraph 6, the journalist-narrator’s foray into this evaluative stage is noticeable. Preceding paragraph 6, that is, from paragraphs 1-5, the journalist’s accounts are mainly to set the background to the story. However, this move from the setting takes a drastic shift to one where he primarily appraises the form of begging in this locality. The negativity associated with ‘*modus operandi*’ has a high likelihood of producing a range of adverse denotations from covertness, stealth, slyness, deceit, and craftiness. The lexical choice of ‘direct approach’ (paragraph 7) is intentionally selected to juxtapose with ‘*modus operandi*’ (paragraph 6) and this comparison confirms and accentuates the negative denotation of ‘*modus operandi*’.

Under normal situations, one can be justified in evaluating a particular phenomenon when facts have first been sufficiently presented. At this juncture, as illustrated in paragraphs 6 and 7 in Table 3, using the phrase “from my observations” makes the entire appraisal of the journalist questionable. Firstly, he has thus only presented the setting with the mere preceding 5 paragraphs. Considering this entire news story is made up of 20 paragraphs but judgment enters at this early stage which is one-third of the news story, the authenticity of his appraisal is doubtful. Suffice to say that this premature judgment, premised on insufficient and ill-formed observations, raises the provocative question, “Could we ever narrativise without moralizing?” (White 1984 as cited in Conboy, 2007: 144). One possible explanation implies that this process of selectivity, preferencing, and relativising is an attempt to fit into the moral norms of the society consuming the news story. Conboy (2007:144) observes that if at all, there is the element of intrinsic value in news stories themselves and he concedes that this value is contingent on the “moral expectations of contemporary society”. Thus, the journalist’s break from the traditional narrative pattern and substituting it with a premature evaluation is in line with the way this section of news is consumed. As this piece of news narrative together with the other two articles are specially categorised under Starprobe, which features investigative journalism pieces, the readers will not be content with the mere presentation of facts and want more. Since there is a need to whet the readers’ appetites, the lack of sufficient facts to ground the journalist’s evaluation in paragraphs 6-7 may well be overlooked. Conversely, such omission is easily pardoned by the readers since the cultural patterns of narrative news consumption entail suspense, thrill, and sensation, which is now clearly offered by the journalist’s appraisal here.

### 3.2 Modality

The act of moralising continues with the use of modality. Modality provides the apparatus to capture the extent of the journalist’s commitment and confidence towards the claims he

sets out. As “modality refers broadly to a speaker’s attitude towards, or opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence” (Simpson, 1993: 47), the hybridity of this news genre necessitates a study of modality. With such genre, the risk lies with attributing the locus of voice as a representation of the account of the journalist-writer or of the journalist-narrator. The case of obscuring the two without a clear demarcation is not too difficult an occurrence for the voice of the latter can risk shading off into the former resulting in objectivising the speaking subject.

One clear use of modality in this article is the word ‘would’ which appears 10 times and the propositions with ‘would’ are set out in Table 4. The modal auxiliary ‘would’ is analysed using Simpson’s modal systems of English (Simpson, 1993: 47). To eliminate the possibility of presumptuous interpretation into the journalist’s choice of ‘would’, it seems that the usage - as may be argued by some - cannot simply be one to lend spontaneity to the actions and events narrated, as often is the style preferred for narratives. Had the journalist intended to merely extemporise his account, his consistent use of the past tense in the article is counter-productive. Thus, on this basis, the inclusion of the modalised ‘would’ perform distinct functions.

The journalist’s choice of the modalised ‘would’ being a deontic modality signifies the extent of his attitude about the extent of obligation in the performance of the actions relating to begging. The range of commitment is exhibited in the propositions in paragraphs 14 and 15. ‘Would wait’ (paragraph 14a) and ‘would make’ (paragraph 14b) both encode the journalist’s commitment to the actions of ‘waiting’ and ‘making’ through the continuum of obligation and requirement. ‘Would make’ indexes the obligatory performance by the beggars towards their children elsewhere ‘would wait’ operates as a requirement for begging to come to fruition.

**Table 4.** Modal auxiliary ‘would’

Paragraph 5a b	They were worried that the beggars’ “livelihood” <u>would</u> be affected and that enforcement action <u>would</u> follow.
Paragraph 7	The ones with babies <u>would</u> normally use a more “direct approach” by moving around in crowded areas to attract sympathy.
Paragraph 13	After several hours, Salim <u>would</u> go and enjoy <i>teh tarik</i> at a nearby restaurant while his wife continued to beg.
Paragraph 14a b	Other beggars with very small children <u>would</u> wait at strategic spots such as the back lane near Plaza MPK. They <u>would</u> make their children sit in front of them, holding a bowl.
Paragraph 15a b	On weekends and public holidays when human traffic was heavy, the mothers <u>would</u> leave their children at a strategic point before moving to another location to beg. But they <u>would</u> often return to watch over the young ones.
Paragraph 19a b	I witnessed how the children <u>would</u> run to their mothers with their collection. The mothers <u>would</u> quickly insert the coins into a pouch which they kept in a sling bag.

The epistemic function of ‘would’ is used in paragraphs 15a and b. The epistemic modality in this paragraph indicates the extent of the journalist’s confidence of the likelihood of the events he witnessed. In paragraph 15a, the truth modality operationalised by “would” strengthens the stake that the event (“leaving their children at a strategic point”) did take place. The conjunction ‘but’ in paragraph 15b functions to qualify the apparent wanton neglect of the mothers, an interpretation possibly reached upon processing paragraph 15a. Together with ‘would often’ they double up to reinforce the journalist’s belief in the mothers’ act of returning to watch their children. Attaching the modalised adverb ‘often’ to ‘would’ lends a greater confidence about the act claimed to be witnessed by him.

Another form of modality, which Fowler (1991: 87) terms ‘desirability’, pertains to the degree of (dis)approval of the state of affairs expressed by the statement. The reading of the two sentences in paragraph 19 yields the inference of the journalist’s disdain over the day’s collection of alms. While paragraph 19a is neutral on its own, it is the choice of the modalised adverb ‘would quickly’ (paragraph 19b) that expresses this negatively and reduces the act of the collection to one tainted with impropriety. Thus, ‘would quickly’ then becomes a logical linguistic choice as a move to cover up. Besides, the epistemic modality through the modal lexical verb ‘I witnessed’ in paragraph 19a affords firm confidence to validate this account of events.

Another instance of inference of the journalist’s approval is found in paragraph 13. Had the independent clause “Salim would go and enjoy *teh tarik* at a nearby restaurant” ceased here, the idea can be dismissed as a mere form of reportage. Nevertheless, the immediate juxtaposition derived from the subsequent clause “while his wife continued to beg” renders an added dimension to the interpretive process. Perceptibly, albeit subtlety, the effect of this is the contemptible derision ascribed to the asymmetrical division of tasks in spousal roles.

The analysis of modality above raises several pertinent issues with ideological effects being at its very core. Firstly, the deployment of modality is a strategic tool to manoeuvre the timeline of events. On this point, it begs the reason for the avoidance of using the simple past tense for those propositions in Table 4 since the journalist has consistently presented his narrative in the latter. The opening sentence after the lead firmly displays this conspicuously with “I was surprised to find beggars....when I first entered...” It can be convincingly argued that an action framed in the simple past tense presents a straightforward account of a past action with it being a complete fulfilled act. Conversely, with the modal auxiliary form of ‘would’ + verb, different effects emerge. To illustrate this, consider the effects from the modifications set out in Table 5 (in bold) made to some of the paragraphs from Table 4.

**Table 5.** Past tense verbs

Paragraph 13	After several hours, Salim <b>WENT</b> and <b>ENJOYED</b> <i>teh tarik</i> at a nearby restaurant while his wife continued to beg.
Paragraph 14a	Other beggars with very small children <b>WAITED</b> at strategic spots such as the back lane near Plaza MPK.
b.	They <b>MADE</b> their children sit in front of them, holding a bowl.

As opposed to the simple past tense, the construction of 'would' + verb cannot come near to suggest a completed act. The danger from such a construction is its manoeuvring ability of time; instead of a closure, such construction suggests an extension or recurrence of the act from time past into future, to the extent of equating it to be a habitualised mode of conduct.

Secondly, the delayed use of modality mitigates journalistic responsibility. Conboy (2007:64) observes that this delay produces a significant effect on the news. More importantly, he adds this is one strategy where "preferred opinion can be subtly woven within the columns of hard news." In this article, two-thirds of the modality underscored above begins to appear only after 65% of the story is presented. Alongside the much criticised preferment of opinion, as discussed in this section, this use of delayed modality creates a distance between the journalist and the events narrated resulting in the obscure experiencer-theme dichotomy. Simple past tense creates categorical assertion in respect to the state of actions, sometimes to the extent of invoking perlocutionary force in the speech act whereas modalisation results in epistemically weaker construction. The lack of illocutionary force from the latter diminishes the immediacy of the story that otherwise could have emanated directly from the journalist. In this case of detachment, such tenuous link therefore absolves him from journalistic culpability especially a breach of ethical standards, where racist assumptions underlie the coverage in question.

**3.3 Lexicalisation**

The choice of lexis selected by the journalist plays a significant role in reporting the latter's experience and observations of the Myanmarese's acts of begging to the news readers. This ideational function within the framework of Halliday's linguistics framework functions as a map (Fowler, 1991: 82) to both the news structure and the larger ideological work. In this section the analysis from semantics, in particular over-lexicalisation, denotations, and connotations, provides the lens to appreciate the manner in which the Myanmar refugees are marginalised.

As set out in Table 6, the lexical cohesion achieved through the repetitive use of 'trade' and the collocated verb 'plying' alleviates the act of begging to the level of trade. Conventional understanding of the begging denotes the presence of poverty or destitution. It presupposes the person to have exhausted all means of provision and begging is done in a dire situation, very often, the last resort. A decomposition of this lexis usually includes a moral dent to one's pride as the need to stoop so low as to beg because of economical or moral inability.

**Table 6.** The lexis 'trade'

Article 1	...they are on the very same streets themselves <u>plying</u> the <u>trade</u> . ...the <u>trade</u> will continue...
Article 2	...successive generations have taken over the 'trade'; ...are now <u>plying</u> the streets ...who had inherited the ' <u>trade</u> ' from her mother.

The referential strategy employed by the journalist is to name the main social actors in this news. The explicit label selected is ‘beggar(s)’ with its corresponding verb forms ‘beg’ and ‘begging’. The form beggars attributed to this group of refugees is not inappropriate since their actions highly correspond to the semantic field of begging where this group is seen appearing in the public area of the district of Klang and appealing for monetary charity. Nevertheless, the profusion of this label appearing so repetitiously in the two articles (A1 and A2) may render the form of over lexicalisation to create a sense of ‘over-completeness’ (van Dijk, 1991) for the social actor. This has the effect of preempting the need to probe into the legitimacy of the scope of their begging, dismissing the significant enquiry – Why are they begging? The over-lexicalisation becomes a useful tool to gloss over reasons and issues that would otherwise expose unfair political reality in respect to this group. This is further explored in the next section.

A word count was performed for the two articles, A1 and A2; these two were chosen for this lexical examination since A2 is a continuation from A1 which was featured prominently on the front page. In total, the nouns ‘beggar’ and ‘beggars’ appear 11 times and the verbs ‘beg’ and ‘begging’ ten times. Given the overt duplication of the term so coherently found in the two articles, such referential strategy is indeed what Fowler *et al.* (1979) call “a pragmatic strategy of encoding ideology in news discourse”. The ideational metafunction is seen served discursively here because such over lexicalised terms can trigger the readers’ social cognition in that it invokes the mental models that readers have stored in their memory systems. The proliferation of this term can be argued to create the stigma associated with begging especially the local cultural experience in this nation slants towards scorn and to some level of skepticism of the sincerity of begging. This is especially reinforced since the exclusive coverage by *Starprobe* on tactics used by bogus beggars just four months before (December 2009) could still be fresh in the mental models of readers.

Begging is now perceived to be a dodgy commercial venture to the extent the unscrupulous, who capitalise on the benevolence of the public, are in states not so dire and can access alternative means of subsistence. Thus lexicalisation in this form of repetition will readily transpose a cultural stigma to the Myanmar refugees creating unjustifiable ramifications by according them undignified identity. This further castigates them into a lower status as they are already so with a chastised unrecognised refugee status.

The appellation for the current group of Myanmar beggars also needs to be analysed semantically. The referent ‘generation’ with its concurring collocation appears in Table 7.

Inherent in the concept of generation is the continuity of two entities and indexes a relationship of a predecessor and successor. Marking the current refugees as ‘successive’

**Table 7.** The lexis of ‘generation’

Article 1	<u>Gen 3</u> beggars ( <i>headlines</i> ) ... <u>three generations</u> are now living here ...
Article 2	New <u>generation</u> takes over in Klang ( <i>lead</i> ) ... successive <u>generations</u> have taken over the trade. ... subsequent <u>generations</u> were taking over from their parents...

and 'subsequent' generations gives rise to the implicit quality that some planned training is part of the implementation and that it incorporates skill building in this 'begging' scheme. This is achieved by the direct mimicry of the 'trade' as reported that "she used to beg with her mother as a young girl. Now her children are following in her footsteps." Alternatively, the younger generation may well have been trained vicariously when they were playing in the vicinity where their mothers were begging ("While the children move freely around these areas, their mothers often place themselves on the pavement...").

The prepositional phrases from 'take over', 'taken over', and 'taking over' presuppose the cessation of the predecessor's involvement with begging and marks the new chapter for dominion and control now vested in the hands of the younger family members. Combining this with the description 'new generation takes over' (lead) and 'Gen 3 beggars' (headlines) a different mode of operation is invoked. Ordinarily the usage of the collocation 'new generation' exudes some quality of novelty that signifies marked forms of departure from the predecessor. The clipped form of 'generation' to 'Gen 3' is interesting. Since it is featured in the headlines, this diminutive can be validly inserted for want of space. Yet one cannot disregard its concomitant potential to double up to augment the novelty. The compound noun phrase from 'gen' with a numeral is also a common trade designation that tags new product arrival marking modernity, sophistication, and innovation as compared to its predecessor(s). The reading of 'Gen 3' then renders that this current group of successors, imbued with their sophistication and innovation, shall prompt responses to the question "How are they different from their parents?"

The answer to this question necessitates the juxtaposition of the old and new generation. The first seven paragraphs provide a snapshot of the exodus of these thousands of Myanmar refugees and two brief accounts (paragraphs 4-5 of Article 2) of begging. The latter was only followed by salient accompanying descriptions: the beggars were females, they had babies in their arms, older children begged by roaming. Conversely, this new generation creates a different image with due attention leverage on their babies. The babies, who were featured with the old generation, were not perceived to be of an issue unlike in the present generation. From Article 2, the report that pertains to the role of babies is set out in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Role of babies

Paragraph 19	<i>Starprobe</i> discovered that some of the women deliberately got pregnant so that they could have babies to cuddle in their arms, an effective strategy to get the public to donate.
Paragraph 20	"I'm sure you will feel pity for the baby and offer me some cash. Otherwise, you may chase me away," said one of them when casually asked why many of these beggars had babies.
Paragraph 21	She added that they were the real mothers and the babies were not hired as some people suspected.
Paragraph 22	What is not established is who the fathers of the children are. It is learnt that most of the mothers were without husbands.

Paragraph 19 raises and addresses the motivation behind the babies' existence and seemingly formulates the summary for the information presented from paragraphs 20-22. A careful reading of the relative clause in paragraph 19 with the use of the determiner 'an' is mainly to display the causal relationship between the strategy and intentional pregnancy. Nevertheless this conclusion seems to be made from the apparent premises set out in paragraphs 21-22. These two paragraphs deal with the availability of identities of the babies' mothers and fathers. Citing the mothers without husbands in paragraph 22 is a very strong charge casting aspersions on the moral behaviour of the mothers. The inclusion of verbatim reportage on the use of babies in paragraph 20 answers only in part on the use of babies yet such honest confession is judiciously exploited by the journalist for corroborating his assumption of intentional pregnancy. From paragraphs 19-21, this analysis exposes the various predication strategies used. Predication according to Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 54) results in "persons [etc...] [being] specified and characterised with respect to quality, quantity, space, time and so on...". Thus, the mothers, being the main social actor, have been accorded descriptors that work to solidify the quality of their character. "Deliberately got pregnant" is a blatant explicit denotation of the attribute of these mothers as schemers.

Therefore the discussion on the lexis 'new generation' is a conscious journalistic choice that seeks to underscore its unique *modus operandi* for the 'trade' working at two levels: from conception to actual operation.

### ***3.5 Criminalisation and Securitisation***

This section moves beyond the micro level of discursive analysis into the macro dimension i.e. the social practice that contextualises the former. In particular, the issue on the criminalisation and securitisation of the Myanmar refugees will be looked into.

When considering the criminalisation of this group of refugees, it is pertinent to examine the various strategies used to affect what van Dijk (2008:103) calls the ideological square found in the dichotomy of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation. The Us-Them gulf created is integral in the process of 'othering' the refugees through representing them in a marked manner (Sonwalker, 2005). On the three texts used for this study, the racist ideology is produced through the parallel reading of the extracts Table 9.

By allowing the refugees to enter the country, the point is being made that this entry was due to the hospitality and receptiveness of Malaysia as a kind host. The extent of this generosity is further augmented with the inclusion of 'thousands' to achieve the effect of equating them as an influx yet at the same time statistical data is a helpful tool to objectify the phenomenon. Historical knowledge of this volatile era in South East Asia informs how the Myanmar civilians were subject to many forms of adversity in their country including

**Table 9.** The process of 'othering'

Article 1	The beggars are from a community of Myanmar refugees who first came here in the 1970s.
Article 2	Their grandparents were among thousands who entered the country as refugees from Myanmar in the 1970s.

the potential loss of one's life. In such a destitute state, they had resorted to escaping the ruthless military junta into the neighbouring countries of South East Asia with Malaysia being one. Against this historical backdrop, Malaysia's openness in accommodating these refugees positively presents itself as being humanitarian with its related admirable benevolent traits of empathy, sympathy, and compassion.

Another positive self-presentation is derived from the Klang Consumer Association. The journalist's inclusion of the account from Devadass, the president of this association, is representative of the association's attitude in respect to these refugees. Devadass, who says, "... I used to talk to her those days" reveals social affability towards this group of people. The journalist continues by providing a descriptive trait by calling Devadass one who helps the refugees. This continues to show that a local agent such as this association moves beyond the local concerns of the district into charitable aid extended to this group of people.

The ideological role in these two instances of positive self-presentation is pivotal in setting the psychological ground for the process of 'othering' the refugees through the strategy of negative other presentation. This negative other presentation is principally derived from the representative power that emerges from the social construction of this group of refugees. From the news article, they are presented as conspirators or schemers (deliberately got pregnant...an effective strategy to get the public to donate'). By actively engaging their children to beg in certain locations independently of their parents, ("they would leave their children at a strategic point") another category constructed against them is their apparent wanton disregard for their children's safety. Furthermore, these children are of school-going age and these parents are seen denying them the basic right to an education. The male refugees are not spared: they are negatively cast as lazy ("Salim...enjoy *teh tarik*...while his wife continued to beg"); exploitative ("They felt they did not need to do the hard and dirty work of begging"); irresponsible ("Men supposedly leave their "wives"); and morally decadent ("and get engaged with new partners frequently").

Thus, this Us-Them dichotomy performs the crucial representation work by creating the marked difference of the 'other'. This racist discourse through the genre of news report produces a form of symbolic marking of 'their differences'. The direct impact of this effectively criminalises this group of refugees, albeit not in the strict sense of imputing legal punity. This attribution of 'illegality' marks the first step of securitisation. Securitisation of this Myanmar group presents them as a threat to issues pertaining to welfare, security, and identity.

One stark instance of this securitisation is the citing of chronological time line and generational continuity as in: 'Forty years have passed and Starprobe has discovered that successive generations have taken over the 'trade' and "three generations are now living here, all of whom have had to resort to begging to make a living.'" The combined effect of these foregrounds how the refugees abuse the system of asylum. From the initial entry point till today (40 years), their occupational-survival means have not ceased nor reduced, in fact have boomed as discussed through various discursive analyses above. This produces the concomitant repercussion implicating them as conniving manipulators who possess the skill to work around the system ("deliberately got pregnant...effective strategy to get

the public to donate”). These 40 years of unceasing charity of the locals has the effect of victimising the latter through the agency of these refugees as “they can take home a substantial amount during the weekends and public holidays”.

This securitisation that is economically embedded is also loaded with a social dimension. The ubiquitous presence of the refugees in this vicinity cannot be denied - “have become part and parcel of the hustle and bustle of life in this part of the town”. The account of their meandering children is also visible - “the children move freely around these areas” and “their older children would be roaming around”. Such accounts represent a socially shared mental model of the close nexus between foreigners (with the exception of skilled expatriates) and social ills, especially crime. Capitalising on this psychology of prejudice by this cognitive representation, the journalist is producing a racist discourse that stigmatises the refugees. Such representation of social menace very often leads to social tensions where the chastisement of the out-group is intensified as the in-group feels the former perforating their dominant social world.

The two securitisation issues, very much tied to economic and social factors, are argued in this practice of ‘dog whistle journalism’. Ward (2002:28) defines this brand of journalism as the “discussion of policy issues in an outwardly reasonable language, but one using words and phrases that are calculated to carry a different message to the target audience”. How the journalistic discourse is exploited to construct a hyperbolic representation of the Myanmar refugees through the generalised act of begging raises a policy issue – one that is sociological in nature and pertains to the ramifications of this ‘social menace’ that is, what actions can be taken to eradicate this ‘social menace’. The cumulative effect of the three articles does not end there; readers are attitudinally provoked. Sentiments of disgust toward this ‘social menace’ may well be formed and further reinforce the urgency of the policy issue above.

The journalistic representation of the Myanmar refugees by ‘dog whistling’ them to be the racialised ‘other’ - the them (immoral, manipulators, threat to social stability) - dismisses crucial issues that should have been raised in the articles. Rather than provoking with the reports, the causality should have been adequately addressed and it would have supplied a more balanced view of the reality of Myanmar beggars. This stark neglect is the media’s failure and perhaps a cowardly inability to address the shameful political reality of Malaysia’s willful refusal to accord recognition to refugees. Even though Malaysia endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948, it never was a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor the 1967 Protocol. Not ratifying the UNHCR and the Protocol dispenses Malaysia of the need to grant the refugees, official refugees status. This has had the effect of criminalising the unrecognised refugees since the Immigration Act 1959/63 terms them as ‘illegal migrants’ and thus are susceptible to arrest, punishment, and deportation. The suffering of these unrecognised refugees continues as they labour for pittance with employees exploiting their illegal status. Other forms of suffering include the risk of being trafficked and sold into various forms of slavery.

With this political and social landscape in mind, how accurate and true then is the media’s account of the Myanmar beggars who have come to be victimised through a highly racialised discourse?

#### 4. CONCLUSION

A predominant feature in new racism is its categorical denial of racist practice. The present study attempts to reveal that racism is surreptitiously performed under the guise of 'tame' investigative journalism which when subject to scrutiny exposes the media's social practice of simultaneous exclusion and oppression of minorities. The discursive practice from the micro analysis clearly shows how the choice of morpho-syntax and lexis can be instrumental in the production of racism. When this is conflated with the macro analysis, the study underscores how global discourse meanings and topics are tacit forms of discriminatory practices which are skewed to the underlying prejudices in the ideological square. The mere selection of certain frames to represent the Myanmar refugees contradicts the media's position to "transcend the rhetoric of nationalism" (Bailey and Harindranath, 2005:284). Only and if patterns of representation include frames of reference from spheres of reality – political, legal, social - this form of journalism is at best doing lip-service to national interest at the expense of criminalising the other.

It is hoped that this research will heighten social cognition of the discriminatory practices of contemporary journalism. In this manner, critical discourse analysis into racist media becomes socially pertinent in deconstructing ethnic prejudices and ideologies. Contributing to the cognitive interface, this study is socially relevant in providing a discursive structure to mitigate or resist the formation of unfair social representations in one's mental model.

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## **Media Coverage: The Bukit Antarabangsa Landslide**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In the intersection between communication and crisis, the mass media play a significant role in influencing not only public definition and interpretation of the situation but also evaluation of responses from relevant agencies, decision makers and those affected. The media is not dominated by one actor but represented by multiple actors and discourses, each negotiating to ensure that their views predominate and are able to influence people's interpretation and understanding. This paper, based on critical discourse analysis, will examine a Malaysian newspaper's coverage of a landslide in an upper middle class housing area in Kuala Lumpur. The 'Bukit Antarabangsa tragedy' which occurred on 6 December 2008 killed 5 persons and led to the evacuation of thousands of families. The paper will investigate how discourse representation was carried out, examining which voices were privileged or systematically excluded and how voices were recontextualised and how they were framed in relation to each other and in relation to the writer's voice. The analysis highlights the structures of reporting of the various dominant actors, namely, the ruling central government, the opposition state government, the previous state government aligned to the ruling dominant party, victims of previous landslide, current landslide victims and landslide experts, to legitimise or challenge specific responses, actions and decisions.

**Keywords: Media, communication, crisis, critical discourse analysis, recontextualised**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

A devastating landslide occurred in Bukit Antarabangsa, an upper middle class neighbourhood in Hulu Klang, Selangor at 3.30 am on Saturday, 6 December 2008. Five people perished in the landslide and more than one thousand residents were told to evacuate as their homes were declared unsafe for occupation. In addition, the landslide cut off access by the main road to the residential areas at Bukit Antarabangsa, trapping hundreds of residents.

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Within the same vicinity, another hillside tragedy, the collapse of the Highland Towers, had occurred on 11 December 1993 claiming forty-eight lives. Subsequently nine other landslide-related incidents occurred in the Hulu Klang area (Bernama, 2008). As such, the local residents have been fighting for years for more comprehensive regulations against indiscriminate hill slope development.

Given this history, the Bukit Antarabangsa tragedy drew a great deal of attention from the general public. In times of crisis like this, the mass media plays an important role in influencing not only public definition and interpretation of the situation but also in evaluating the responses from relevant agencies, decision makers and the affected victims. Consequently, the media is not dominated by one actor but represented by multiple actors and discourses, each negotiating to ensure that their views predominate and influence significant groups' interpretation, understanding and actions.

This paper will therefore examine the discourse representation of the tragedy by examining which voices were privileged or systemically excluded and how voices were recontextualised (i.e. as direct quotes, indirect discourse) and how they were framed in relation to each other and in relation to the writer's voice. The investigation was undertaken using the analytic paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) employed by Fairclough (1992; 1995a; 1995b; 2003). The corpus consists of 116 articles published from 7 December to 20 December 2008, in the local English daily, *The Star*.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 *Mass Media Coverage on Disaster***

The media's important role in disseminating information in times of disaster cannot be denied. Media discourse sheds light on the risks and hardship faced by the victims and exposes the weaknesses associated with government policies which contribute to the disaster. Sood *et al.* (1987) reinforces that the media plays a vital role in influencing public opinion about the criticalness of a disaster. In addition, Gaddy and Tanjong (1986) and Garner (1996), highlight that the media is instrumental in perception creation and evaluation particularly towards state response and disaster preparedness. Kodrich and Laituri (2005) also stress that the role of media in disaster communication is vital as there is an increased demand for information concerning its severity, public safety and relief operations, and governmental responses.

### **2.2 *Discourse Frames***

Discourse on media coverage of disasters mirrors a meaningful picture. The recontextualisation of voices and how they are framed will reflect the changes in relationship between stakeholders and how the emotive coverage of the disaster engages the audience. According to Lupton "...media texts produce and reproduce meaning in the choice of topics covered and the way those issues are represented through relative positioning, choice, and use of language - reproducing dominant ideologies or discourses" (cited in Kodrich and Laituri, 2005:470). In a disaster situation like the Bukit Antarabangsa tragedy, the media is reliant on local and state government for information and as Kodrich and Laituri (2005: 470) rightly point out the information "...can be biased due to differing political

agendas”. As such, they add that the analysis of discursive contexts and constructions and the subject positions “... may contribute to the individualising of social problems and the marginalisation of individuals who are vulnerable to emotional, psychological, and social distress ...”. Additionally, Sorenson (1991) emphasises that media news discourse is not ideologically neutral as mass media news reporting constitutes a specific type of discourse with its code and conventions.

### ***2.3 Landslides in Malaysia***

Malaysia has seen rapid growth in the last decade and is poised to attain a fully developed country status by the year 2020. This economic quest contributes to “over-zealous rapid development without stringent environmental protection measures” (Chan, 1998:14). This rush to attain developed status is made at the expense of environmental principles. Rules and laws pertaining to development are sometimes compromised to accommodate greed and wealth. Politicians and policymakers contribute to this environmental degradation. Slack enforcement by the relevant authorities pertaining development results in tragic consequences like the Highland Towers tragedy in 1993 which caused the death of forty-nine people. Shaluf and Ahmadun (2006) highlight that to date, Malaysia has experienced nineteen natural disasters, out of which 30% were due to landslides which caused 1,038 fatalities. It has been ascertained that most of these landslides occur on cut slopes, embankments alongside roads and highways in mountainous areas, near high-rise apartments and residential areas (Lee and Pradhan, 2006: 661). Lee and Pradhan (2006: 661) further highlight that “In Malaysia, little attention has been paid to the people who live within landslide-prone areas”. This lack of preparation to manage the forces of nature has been more often than not attributed to ‘acts of God’. However, Chan (1998:15) reveals that the frequent occurrences of landslides “coupled with increasing awareness and improved education amongst the public have made such claims less and less tenable”. The media too has played a crucial role in highlighting these occurrences as ‘acts of humans’ rather than ‘acts of God.’

## **3.METHODOLOGY**

### ***3.1 Theoretical Framework***

The investigation of the present study is undertaken using the analytic paradigm of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) employed by Fairclough (2003)

According to Fairclough (1992) texts (including media texts) are essentially intertextual whereby they are composed by elements of other texts. Intertextuality denotes “the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth” (Fairclough, 1995a:84).

Discourse representation is a “form of intertextuality in which parts of other texts are incorporated into a text, and usually explicitly marked as such, with devices such as quotation marks and reporting clauses” (Fairclough, 1995a:107). It is a major part of the news: representations of what newsworthy people have said (Fairclough, 1995b). He states that

the mass media's power to present a certain event or group of people is evident in the selection of texts/voices.

This article investigates how discourse representation (i.e. which and how other voices are included or significantly excluded, how the the voices are attributed, and how other voices are textured in relation to the authorial voice and in relation to each other) may be varied or manipulated in the construction of reality to evoke certain feelings and images within the audience.

Accounts usually draw a basic distinction between 'direct' and 'indirect' discourse representation. In the case of direct discourse (DD), the words represented are in quotation marks, and there is an explicit boundary between the 'voice' of the person being reported and the 'voice' of the reporter. As for 'indirect' discourse (ID), the quotation marks disappear and the represented discourse takes the form of a clause grammatically subordinated to the reporting clause. In this case, the voices of the reporter and the reported are less clearly demarcated, and the words used to represent the latter's discourse may be paraphrased by the reporter (Fairclough, 1995b).

### **3.2 Data**

The sample data is derived from one of Malaysia's local daily: *The Star*. The chosen articles were published between 7 December 2008 and 20 December 2008 and the total number of issues containing articles on the Bukit Antarabangsa disaster was 116. The newspaper articles covered various aspects of the disaster, ranging from the number of casualties to personal accounts of the victims. The discourse was examined for variation and cohesiveness and similarities and differences.

## **4. Analysis**

### **4.1 A Case of Negligence**

One of the representations of the landslide is that of negligence. The news report presents the claims made by several sources on how the landslide could have been averted if action had been taken earlier. This is evident in the data analysed in Extract 1.

#### **Extract 1**

##### **RESIDENTS PLAN TO SUE**

Residents affected by the landslide at Bukit Antarabangsa plan to sue the relevant government authorities for compensation.

A task force set up to represent the residents feel it has enough grounds to sue as the authorities had failed to act in time to avert the tragedy that claimed four lives. Task force chairman Datuk M. Muniandy said that the committee had engaged lawyers to prepare the lawsuit and to identify the defendants.

"We have strong evidence to back the suit. The residents had been reporting about the slope instability for about two years."

"Because of the hilly terrain, the residents were always alert and cautious and had reported landslides, even sinkholes with the third one going about 6m deep," he

told reporters after a meeting with Selangor police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Khalid Abu Bakar here yesterday.

Task force secretary Raymond Jegathesan claimed that when residents complained that trees started to fall, the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ) attributed it to strong winds and continuous rain.

Over 20 years ago, a block of houses under construction collapsed near the current landslide area but no action was taken to strengthen the slope.

“Now lives have been lost and people have lost their life savings.”

The meeting between Khalid and the residents’ representative was surprisingly not a fiery affair as anticipated.

Both parties discussed looting, entry of outsiders into the affected hillside.

Residents also claimed that seven to eight reports had been lodged on looting and there was also photographic evidence of people in uniform misbehaving.

Nevertheless, Khalid urged residents to lodge reports over their complaints.

(*The Star*, 10 December 2008, p.N6)

*Extract 1* indicates that such a disaster was imminent in this area as there were warning signals. The relevant authorities were alerted of the soil instability as the area had experienced numerous landslides in the past. The warning signals reported by the residents were not taken seriously by the authorities and it was not thoroughly investigated implying negligence. The disaster was attributed to the complacency of the relevant authorities. It was felt that such a disaster could have been averted if the authorities had been more vigilant and if they had in place more stringent policies on hillside development. The relevant authorities’ lack of action and lax policies is implied as a contributing factor to the disaster.

The news report shows a high level of dialogicality with many of the statements being attributed to specific agents both animate (i.e. Datuk M. Muniandy – Task force chairman, Deputy Commissioner Datuk Khalid Abu Bakar, - Selangor police chief, and Raymond Jegathesan – Task force secretary, the residents) and inanimate (i.e. Ampang Jaya Municipal Council). The boundaries between the representing discourse and the represented discourse can be considered high as there are many instances of direct discourse (DD) (i.e. *the daily quoted Datuk M. Muniandy as saying “We have strong evidence to back the suit. The residents had been reporting about the slope instability for about two years.” “Because of the hilly terrain, the residents were always alert and cautious and had reported landslides, even sinkholes with the third one going about 6m deep”. The daily also quoted Raymond Jegathesan as saying “Now lives have been lost and people have lost their life savings.”*) as compared to indirect discourse (ID) (i.e. *Task force secretary Raymond Jegathesan claimed that when residents complained that trees started to fall, the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ) attributed it to strong winds and continuous rain, Residents also claimed that seven to eight reports had been lodged on looting and there was also photographic evidence of people in uniform misbehaving, Khalid urged residents to lodge reports over their complaints*). The journalist maintains a high-boundary strategy to distance himself from the statements made by the Task force chairman and secretary

respectively. This is to highlight that the claims of negligence made by the residents are not supported by the newspaper. By this, it avoids implicating the daily in any way with these claims. A high boundary strategy may have been applied to maintain neutrality in reporting.

The accessed 'voices' consist of the Task force committee (i.e. the chairman, Datuk M. Muniandy and secretary, Raymond Jegathesan), and the government authorities (the Selangor police chief Datuk Khalid Abu Bakar and Ampang Jaya Municipal Council). It should be noted that the claims are by the task force which is made up of residents of Bukit Antarabangsa. There is no mention of geological experts to back up the residents' claims. This questions the authenticity of the task force's claims. In a way, this weakens the credibility of the residents' claims. This is reflected clearly when the journalist states "*Over 20 years ago, a block of houses under construction collapsed near the current landslide area but no action was taken to strengthen the slope.*" This information is written without any attribution so there is ambiguity as it is unclear where the 'fact' was obtained from, i.e. the residents, experts or others. The inclusion of the government authorities, i.e. the Selangor chief police officer is to stress that the police were there to maintain security and to protect the residents from further loss due to looting. Ampang Jaya Municipal Council is included to draw attention to the lack of empathy of the council towards the residents numerous complaints. It also highlights the lackadaisical attitude of the council towards complaints that were life threatening. It also implies that the disaster could have been avoided if the council had taken immediate actions.

The statements made by the accessed voices of the chairman and secretary are categorical assertions, where they are to be taken as facts. However, these assertions are not backed by expert opinion which makes their claims insubstantial. The assertions are merely implying that the landslide could have been averted if the relevant government authorities were more vigilant. The voices of the representatives of the task force did not use any modals to create ambiguity in their assertions, making their assertions as statements of facts without any room for argument.

Extracts 2 and 3 call for hillside development rules and procedures to be set and followed. The first extract "*Time to end slip-ups*" begins with a statement of fact (*It has been raining*) followed by ID quote of an expert that "*we cannot blame the rain all the time*", emphasising the tone of the article that landslide is a man-made phenomena. The opening statements are meaningful in the context of previous landslides as a former Minister of Works attributes the cause of landslide to the forces of nature. The consensus of the experts is that hill slope development can be safely carried out if proper measures are taken by the relevant authorities.

### **Extract 2**

#### **TIME TO END SLIP-UPS**

It has been raining for many days. This was one of the common comments heard after the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide which claimed four lives last Sunday, with one still missing. But we cannot blame the rain all the time, says geotechnical engineer Dr. Gue See Saw.

“We have to accept that we have a high rainfall in Malaysia, so we have to design and build structures that can withstand it,” says Dr. Gue, who is also a Fellow of the Academy of Science Malaysia.

He adds that hillside projects can be carried out safely if proper investigation is conducted on the slope before it is developed.

“We need to ensure that the slope is stabilised before carrying out developments in the area. The construction of the building should be done under strict supervision and developers should ensure the safety and sustainability of the buildings,” he says.

### **Strengthen political will**

Dr. Gue is one of many who joined the public outcry against the lack of responsibility on the part of developers and the authorities involved in hillslope developments. Since the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide tragedy, residents have been up in arms against possible recurrences of a similar tragedy if nothing is done to halt further development.

But as the Highland Towers tragedy is painfully reminding us, Malaysians have short memories.

Whenever a tragedy occurs, we clamour and howl for blood but once the dust settles, we erase it from our conscience. Resolved action rarely follows the heated words. Life goes on. Hillslope development continues to thrive, until another tragedy occurs.

The fatal landslide in Bukit Antarabangsa occurred less than a week short of the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Highland Towers tragedy which killed 48 and rendered thousands homeless. It was the third landslide in the week, occurring just days after a landslide in Ulu Yam killed two sisters in their sleep.

In the last 15 years, there were 13 major landslides in the Hulu Klang area, of which five were in the Bukit Antarabangsa area.

Strong political will is crucial for change, says local government expert and lawyer Derek Fernandez. “Areas of high risk are known, development on hill slopes exceeding 25% is not allowed according to guidelines issued by the department of Town and Country Planning Malaysia, but this was rarely followed by the state governments”.

He cites the project by Selangor Dredging Bhd (SDB) Properties in Medan Damansara that comprises 21 bungalows costing between RM10 mil and RM15 mil each as an example.

### **Competent experts**

Shaik Abdul Wahid, director of an engineering consultant company, feels that professionalism is wanting across the board in the development projects nationwide.

“It is sad that even with the excellent level of engineering we have, the basics have not been covered. All one has to do is to take a drive and look around. One will

hardly fail to notice open areas subjected to rapid erosion, slopes consisting of all forms of rubbish from construction material to even soil. Our construction methods, even for the lowest basics such as drains, have deteriorated to a level that is hard to describe,” he notes.

He claims that the method usually used for testing soil does not normally provide reliable samples while most slope-related designs tend to confine attention mainly to within boundaries of the project area without considering the surrounding areas.

Abdul Wahid is critical of the dumping method, where developers cut out the soil and dump it down the slope. “Where a slope is constructed by simply dumping soil without compaction, soil inside the slope is loose. Regardless of vegetation cover and drainage provided, water will still get into the slope, loosening soils, washing away fine particles in the soils and causing piping and rapid erosion, and in time, slips,” he says.

### **Improve working system**

All agree that a more harmonised framework and system is needed to facilitate safe development projects, specifically hillside developments. Currently, any application submitted by the developer goes through 11 departments, not including Ikram and the Public Works Department.

“In theory, the local authorities are supposed to investigate on site but you find that they have no resources to do it or it is not done with seriousness. Many local authorities don’t have consultant engineers nor is supervision undertaken for each stage of development. Consequently, in practice, the documents were given in a manner that would render them as nonsense because the people receiving the reports have no expertise to evaluate them,” he (Fernandez) says.

(*Sunday Star*, 14 December 2008)

**Extract 2** explains how landslide can be prevented in a built environment. There is a high degree of dialogicality as most of the statements are attributed to experts in the area of building and development, namely, a geotechnical engineer, a lawyer cum local government expert and an engineering consultant. As experts they have privilege access and as such there is frequent usage of direct attribution from them, particularly in the direct speech. Examples of DD are “*We have to accept that we have a high rainfall in Malaysia, so we have to design and build structures that can withstand it*”, says Dr. Gue; “*Areas of high risk are known, development on hill slopes exceeding 25<sup>a</sup>% is not allowed according to guidelines issued by the department of Town and Country Planning Malaysia, but this was rarely followed by the state governments*”, says Derek Fernandez; “*It is sad that even with the excellent level of engineering we have, the basics have not been covered.*”, he (Shaik Abdul Wahid) notes. Quoting the experts in direct speech lends credence to technical discussion of the text as well as shows that the writer has done research with credible sources before writing the report.

There is high usage of categorical assertions by experts on the procedures to be followed to ensure safe hill slope development, such as soil stabilisation, proper earthworks and drainage, regular supervision and maintenance of the whole area. The use of modals 'are supposed to' and "need to" emphasises that certain procedures were not followed, such as, "In theory, the local authorities **are supposed to** investigate on site but you find that they have no resources to do it or it is not done with seriousness" (Fernandez) and "**We need to ensure that the slope is stabilised before carrying out developments in the area**" (Gue). In the latter statement, Gue uses the inclusive pronoun 'we' to refer to all parties concerned with hill slope construction, particularly, the local authorities and developers. Similarly, another construction expert, Shaik Abdul Wahid, blames the local authorities and developers for low standard of construction, "**Our construction methods, even for the lowest basics such as drains, have deteriorated to a level that is hard to describe**".

The experts direct the landslide problem to specific agents for non-adherence of slope safety procedure. By so doing, the experts provide clarity and emphasis on the parties accountable for the problem, in this case, the local authorities and developers. For example, Shaik Abdul Wahid blames developers for improper earthworks which lead to loosening of slope soil, "**developers cut out the soil and dump it down the slope**". Fernandez cites the problems of the lack of political will and professionalism among the local authorities, "*development on hill slopes exceeding 25<sup>o</sup> is not allowed according to guidelines issued by the department of Town and Country Planning Malaysia, but this was rarely followed by the **state governments***". Pertaining to the lack of supervision, "*the **local authorities** are supposed to investigate on site but you find that **they** have no resources to do it or it is not done with seriousness. Many **local authorities** don't have consultant engineers nor is supervision undertaken for each stage of development*".

In addition, the writer of extract 3 makes some assertions as statements of fact to show the seriousness of the problem (i.e. *It was the third landslide in the week, occurring just days after a landslide in Ulu Yam killed two sisters in their sleep. In the last 15 years, there were 13 major landslides in the Hulu Klang area, of which five were in the Bukit Antarabangsa area*). This is followed by other statements which as a result of past experience, are made as statements of fact, "*Whenever a tragedy occurs, **we** clamour and howl for blood but once the dust settles, **we** erase it from our conscience. Resolved action rarely follows the heated words*". However, the use of inclusive pronoun 'we' in this case which refers to Malaysians in general, shows that the writer is not optimistic that all the hue and cry will be followed by concrete action.

### Extract 3

#### THE ROOTS OF TRAGEDY

You don't ban cars because of accidents. You make sure that people drive carefully, roads are built better, cars are safer and in good condition, people use safety belts and only qualified people drive, to mention just a few measures to reduce road deaths.

Short-circuiting any of these, or compromising on these standards, results in higher accident rates and a greater number of deaths and injuries when accidents happen. Like all public concerns, road safety has to be managed.

The recent hill slope tragedy at Bukit Antarabangsa just outside Kuala Lumpur is yet another example of management of the process of property project assessment and development going awry.

The problem in this case is not hillside development but the wrong kind of hillside development. The solution is not banning hillside development but ensuring that hillside development takes place under carefully controlled and supervised conditions to reduce the danger of landslips.

What are the prerequisites for that? First and foremost we need honest and competent local councils and authorities. Honesty is all important, because if the integrity of councilors and council heads can be compromised, the decision-making is going to be bad and in favour of the developer, no matter what.

Next is competence. That's necessary at least at two levels. First, you need it to be able to establish what are the standards for hill slope development. Next, you need that to be able to monitor and establish for certain that developers adhere to the standards agreed upon.

The questions to ask are these: Are our local authorities honest enough to turn down inducements that developers may offer and stick to professionalism and integrity? Are they competent enough to ensure that proper safety standards are set and adhered to?

If the answers are "no" to both those questions, then we should go about taking measure such that the answers are affirmative soonest. Honesty and integrity come first.

(*The Star*, 12 December 2008)

*Extract 3* is written by a regular columnist of *The Star*, and as such the statements are in the authorial account. There are no statements attributed to other persons.

The article begins with statements of fact: "**You don't ban cars because of accidents. You make sure people drive carefully. Like all public concerns, road safety has to be managed**". There are no modalities in these statements showing the writer's high level of commitment, that this is how the matter should be handled. In terms of speech usage, the author through the possessive pronoun 'you', emphasises that the matter involves everyone and addresses the readers directly.

Pertaining to the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide, the author makes a moral assertion, "*The problem in this case is not hillside development but the wrong kind of hillside development*". Again there is an absence of modalities ('not banning hillside development but ensuring that hillside development takes place under carefully controlled and supervised conditions') denoting the writer prefers to say it as a factual assertion that, hillside development can occur if precautions are taken.

On the measures needed to be taken, the writer uses the question form to dialogue with the readers. "*What are the prerequisites for that (prevent landslide)?*" The question is

rhetorical as the writer goes on to provide the answer as well. The writer makes a categorical statement (“*Honesty is all important, because if the integrity of councilors and council heads **can** be compromised, the decision-making is going to be bad*”), with the use of modality ‘*can*’ denoting a median level of commitment. The writer further defines the second prerequisite needed to prevent landslide, namely, competence of the local authorities (“*you need it to be able to establish what are the standards*”, “*you need that to be able to monitor*”). The use of personal pronoun ‘*you*’ directly addresses and places responsibility on the local authorities.

In the final paragraph, the writer continues to use the question form to engage the readers. (“*Are **our** local authorities honest enough..? Are they competent enough...?*”) To these questions, the writer implies that the answer is “no”. If that is the case, the writer continues with the suggestion that, “***we should** go about taking measures.*” The use of the possessive pronoun ‘*our*’ denotes that the local authorities work for the public and are accountable to the public. On the other hand, the use of personal pronoun ‘*we*’, denote that the author speaks on behalf of the public. The use of the modality ‘*should*’ indicates a high level of commitment expected from all parties concerned, that the local authorities should be accountable to the public and the public should be responsible to ensure that the local authorities do what they are supposed to do.

#### **4.2 Political Blame**

The March 2008 election in Malaysia changed the political landscape in the country. Selangor, the richest state fell to a opposition party, the Pakatan Rakyat. As a result, frequent political attacks are made by both Pakatan Rakyat and Barisan Nasional, the former state government, against each other over corrupt practices and other wrong doings. The Pakatan Rakyat wants to prove that it is a better, caring and a corrupt-free government who has the interest of the people at heart. The Bukit Antarabangsa tragedy took place in an upper middle class area in Selangor which had a history of landslides. Selangor has always been a Barisan Nasional stronghold and this disaster gave Pakatan Rakyat an opportunity to point out the inefficiency and corrupt policies of the previous government, reinforcing that the people made the right choice in voting them into office. This unfortunate tragedy gave Pakatan Rakyat an opportunity to disclose the proactive actions taken by them in ensuring safety of hillside developments. *Extract 4* draws attention to the political scenario in the state.

#### **Extract 4**

##### **99 HILLSIDE PROJECTS APPROVED SINCE 2000**

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim (PKR-Bandar Tun Razak) has declassified state information to reveal that a total of 99 development projects on hills were approved by local councils in Selangor since 2000.

He said that 33 of them were approved between 2000 and January 2005 while 63 were approved between February 2005 and February this year.

Three others have been abandoned.

Speaking to reporters at the Parliament lobby, he said 64 projects were ongoing, 21 had yet to start while the status of 11 projects could not be determined as yet. Currently, 27 projects came under the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council, said Khalid, adding that of these, 10 of them were located in Bukit Antarabangsa and 11 in Melawati.

On June 27 last year, Khalid said a committee meeting under the state government had rejected the application by Superview Sdn Bhd to revive an abandoned project at Jalan Wangsa 9, Taman Wangsa Ukay.

Since April, Khalid said the state government had been monitoring hillside developments and ordered those which did not comply with regulations to stop work.

“We have ordered some projects to stop work in Subang and Kajang areas,” said Khalid.

He said that inspections would continue as part of the government’s monitoring process.

He added that between 1993 and 2008 there had been 18 major landslides in Selangor – in Ampang Jaya (nine), Subang (three), Selayang (two), Kajang (three) and one in Hulu Selangor.

(*The Star*, 11 December 2008, p. N28)

*Extract 4* shows a high level of dialogicality where many of the statements made are attributed to a specific agent: Selangor Menteri Besar, Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim. The direct attribution to this ‘voice’ serves to highlight the difference between the voice of the reported and the voice of those reported. Fairclough (1995b: 81) mentions that an important variable in the representation of discourse is the degree to which boundaries are maintained between the representing discourse and the represented discourse – between the voice of the reporter and the person reported. The represented discourse is incorporated into the representing discourse, summarised rather than quoted, using indirect discourse (ID) in many cases. For example, “*He said that 33 of them were approved between 2000 and January 2005 while 63 were approved between February 2005 and February this year*”. The Selangor Menteri Besar, Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim’s voice is represented mainly in ID and once in DD (e.g. “*We have ordered some projects to stop work in the Subang and Kajang areas,*” said Khalid). This is significant as the journalist is attempting to distance himself from the Menteri Besar’s claim, as the journalist does not want to be linked in any way if the claims are not true.

The accessed ‘voice’ is that of Selangor Menteri Besar, Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim as being the current chief minister of the state he is accountable for government agencies like Ampang Jaya Municipal Council as Bukit Antarabangsa comes under the jurisdiction of this council. Therefore the voice of Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim increases the credibility of the reporting. However, the voice of the previous government and Superview Sdn Bhd is excluded and therefore they are not given a chance to explain their side of the story.

The statements made by Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim are categorical assertions, where they can be taken as facts as he is the chief minister and privy to confidential information. He therefore may have made the assertions to distance himself from the decisions made by the

previous government as the development was a contributing factor to the tragedy. There is only one instance of modal used by Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim (i.e. *He said that inspections would continue as part of the government's monitoring process*). This shows a high degree of commitment by the current state government to ensure that such tragedies do not happen in the future.

The site visits and probe on the cause of landslide ensued after the initial shock of the landslide and the subsequent action of evacuating the affected parties. Many people were interested in knowing the outcome of the investigation; the findings hold many answers to the equally many questions swirling around the heads of various parties: developers, municipal councilors, victims, and the public in general. The findings will determine whose house is unsafe for occupancy, who needs to evacuate, who can go home, and most importantly, who is at fault.

### **Extract 5**

#### **SOME HOMES DECLARED UNSAFE**

Most residents affected by the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide tragedy are expected to be allowed to return to their homes.

However, some would have to abandon their homes as they have been declared unsafe.

A three-page report of the tragedy containing these recommendations was handed to Selangor Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim at about 12.45pm yesterday.

Khalid said that he had not had the time to read the report in full and could not make further statements on its contents.

He said he had directed Gombak District officer Huzaini Samsi and Ampang Jaya Municipal Council president Abdul Hamid Hussain to study the report and visit the areas where houses were to be abandoned.

“The state government will then discuss the report from the council chief and district officer to see what help we can offer to the residents who will move back and also those who will have to shift out.

“There are also a few areas listed in the report where we will need to conduct some work to ensure future safety,” he said yesterday.

Khalid said he would visit the site on Sunday to announce the houses that need to be vacated and the help that the state government would offer.

Some 3,000 Bukit Antarabangsa residents who had to evacuate their homes after the landslide have been waiting anxiously for the report.

The affected residents are from Impian Selatan Condominium, Taman Bukit Jaya, Taman Bukit Mewah and Taman Wangsa Ukay.

It is learnt that police at Bukit Antarabangsa handed the summary of the report to Huzaini as he was the state government representative on site.

He then took the report to the state secretariat building and handed it to Khalid. It is also learnt that the report by the Public Works Department, Malaysian Public Works Institute and Geological Department did not contain full details of findings

such as the cause of the landslide, the soil composition, data of rainfall in the area on the day of the tragedy and the current status of the surrounding slopes.

It did, however, list the affected homes in several categories like stable, low risk, high risk and unsafe for occupation.

State tourism, consumer affairs and environment chairman, Elizabeth Wong, said the report only listed houses that had to be abandoned while for those that could be occupied, it only stated when the residents could move in.

The dates for residents to move in are important as some of the areas require work to stabilise surrounding land or slopes before the homes can be occupied, she said.

(*The Star*, 20 December 2008, p.N32)

*Extract 5* shows a high level of dialogicality with many of the statements being attributed to specific agents both animate (i.e. Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim – Selangor Menteri Besar, police at Bukit Antarabangsa, and Elizabeth Wong – state tourism, consumer affairs and environment chairman) and inanimate (i.e. report by the Public Works Department, Malaysian Public Works Institute and Geological Department). The direct attribution to these ‘voices’ serves to highlight the difference between the ‘voice’ of the reported from the reporter. The degree to which the boundaries are maintained between the reporting discourse and the reported discourse – between the ‘voice’ of the reporter and the person reported - is considered an important variable (Fairclough, 1995b). However, in the above excerpt, the boundary between the representing discourse and the represented discourse can be considered low as there are only two instances of DD (i.e. “*The state government will then discuss the report from the council chief and district officer to see what help we can offer to the residents who will move back and also those who will have to shift out.*” “*There are also a few areas listed in the report where we will need to conduct some work to ensure future safety*”) as compared to ID (i.e. *Khalid said that he had not had the time to read the report in full and could not make further statements on its contents, He said he had directed Gombak District officer Huzaini Samsi and Ampang Jaya Municipal Council president Abdul Hamid Hussain to study the report and visit the areas where houses were to be abandoned, Khalid said he would visit the site on Sunday to announce the houses that need to be vacated and the help that the state government would offer, It did, however, list the affected homes in several categories like stable, low risk, high risk and unsafe for occupation, State tourism, consumer affairs and environment chairman Elizabeth Wong said the report only listed houses that had to be abandoned while for those that could be occupied it only stated when the residents could move in, The dates for residents to move in are important as some of the areas require work to stabilise surrounding land or slopes before the homes can be occupied, she said*). The represented discourse is incorporated into the representing discourse; condensed rather than cited. Thus, the high usage of ID here shows that paraphrasing has occurred and this suggests that some of the words reported in the excerpt may not be the actual words used.

It is interesting to observe that there are two statements which are not attributed to any source (i.e. *It is learnt that police at Bukit Antarabangsa handed the summary of the*

report to Huzaini as he was the state government representative on site, It is also learnt that the report by the Public Works Department, Malaysian Public Works Institute and Geological Department did not contain full details of findings such as the cause of the landslide, the soil composition, data of rainfall in the area on the day of the tragedy and the current status of the surrounding slopes). However, these two statements are linked to a similar source that is undisclosed. The reporter also chooses to use the second person pronoun in the statements, rather than using the first person pronoun to show that it is he who found out the information from the undisclosed source. Perhaps the reporter has been asked not to reveal the source's identity if information is given to him. This implies that the mysterious source could be an insider whose job might be at stake if his identity is revealed in the press.

The accessed 'voices' consist of the attributed voices listed above: both animate and inanimate. Fairclough (1995b) notes that a very high proportion of media output in news consists of the speech of mainly prominent people in the various domains of public life, such as politicians, police, lawyers, many categories of experts and so forth. Hence, it is hardly surprising that the accessed voices in excerpt 5 are from the pool of people listed by Fairclough: politicians, police, experts' report. It is worthy to note then that the 'voices' of the affected parties such as the victims, are not heard at all. Instead, they are only mentioned collectively in the excerpt as part of the story. It is ironic that their voices are not heard given that they are the victims of the landslide who are undergoing a lot of hardship. Perhaps the opinion of the affected parties is not important in this juncture as their thoughts may not attribute anything substantial about the landslide other than to air their grouses of the hardship that they are currently facing.

There is a high degree of commitment to act by the main 'voice', Khalid. His statements are filled with the modal 'will' (i.e. *The state government will then discuss the report from the council chief and district officer to see what help we can offer to the residents who will move back and also those who will have to shift out, There are also a few area listed in the report where we will need to conduct some work to ensure future safety, Khalid said he would visit the site on Sunday to announce the houses that need to be vacated and the help that the state government would offer*). The use of 'deontic' modality shows the high level of commitment by Khalid to act on his statements. It is also noteworthy that in his statements, he interchanges the use of personal pronouns, 'he' and 'we', and the proper noun, 'the state government'. This interexchange of pronouns serve to highlight the fact that he and the state government are one entity and that they are both working together as a unit to get the work done for the victims and how to best help them.

Apart from the use of modals, there are also instances of categorical assertions (or statements of fact). They are found in the reporter's statements as well as the accessed voices' statements. By using categorical assertions, there is no room for any kind of doubt in the mind of the reader. For example, the statement *some would have to abandon their homes as they have been declared unsafe* informs the reader that the affected houses are indisputably not safe for occupancy. In another categorical statement by Khalid, *he had directed Gombak District officer Huzaini Samsi and Ampang Jaya Municipal Council president Abdul Hamid Hussain to study the report and visit the areas where houses were*

*to be abandoned*, makes it very clear what Khalid has done: given directives to two officers to analyse the report and subsequently, make a site visit to the proposed abandoned houses.

One of the recommendations to prevent future landslides is to adopt the Hong Kong's land code. The recommendation came from the government's Public Works Department and the Public Accounts Committee. *Extract 6* is a news report of the Deputy Prime Minister's interview with journalists.

### **Extract 6**

#### **MALAYSIA MAY ADOPT HK'S HILLSIDE DEVELOPMENT RULES**

**Kuala Lumpur:** The Government may introduce planning legislation similar to Hong Kong's guidelines of hillside development to prevent more landslides in future.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Government was willing to consider any suggestion when he was asked to comment on the statement by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that it would look into introducing a new hillside law based on Hong Kong's Buildings Ordinance.

Najib said many tragedies could be avoided if the authorities approve development orders based on objective technical evaluation of the environmental impact assessment. "We should not focus on profit and put aside the people's safety and environmental concerns," he said.

"We do not want landslide tragedies to happen again because there is a lot of public anger"

"There is much cynicism as well that statements may not be heeded by the relevant authorities, he said when asked to comment if the Government would hold local councils responsible for approving any high-risk development project.

In 2006, the Federal Court ruled that the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council was not liable for the pre- and post-collapse events at Highland Towers, which killed 48 people and left thousands homeless. "We have to discuss whether we can put in place mechanisms to prevent high-risk development projects," he told newsmen after launching the book *Taib Andak – In a Class of His Own* at Menara Maybank yesterday.

(*The Star*, 12 December 2008)

*Extract 6* shows a moderate level of dialogicality, with statements from the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Federal Court. However, only the Deputy Prime Minister's statements are in direct discourse. There are two process types that can be observed in the extract. The first is the verbal process involving the Deputy Prime Minister that the government is willing to consider any suggestions. The latter expresses his view but does not take any action. Action is seen in the second process type, that is, material process, where it is reported that the Federal Court 'ruled' that the Municipal Council is not liable for the collapse of Highland Towers.

The government's low level of commitment to adopt Hong Kong's hillside development rules is indicated by the choice of the modalities 'may' ("The Government **may** introduce planning legislation"), as well as 'could' ("tragedies **could** be avoided if the authorities approve development based on objective technical evaluation"), which indicate the speaker's uncertainty on whether the tragedies can be avoided.

On the other hand, when making a general moral statement, the author, as expected of a politician, speaks with high level of commitment, such as "We **should** not focus on profit and put aside the people's safety and environmental concerns," and "We **do not** want landslide tragedies to happen again because there is a lot of public anger."

### **4.3 Personal Trauma**

One of the popular methods of including the 'voice' of the non-prominent people in public life would be through narratives. This is when the media publishes reports of individuals or groups related to the issue/incident. *Extract 7* is an example of a narrative of a victim from the landslide.

#### **Extract 7**

#### **VET WITH A HEART OF GOLD**

KUALALUMPUR: Veterinarian Dr. Yogeswari who died in the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide tragedy on Saturday had a heart of gold.

As her funeral was being held yesterday, friends related how they had lost a good person.

She died trying to save her children.

The 40-year-old had used her body to shield Avinesh Raj, 11, and Priyanka, three, but a beam fell on her back, fracturing her ribs and causing massive internal bleeding. Independent animal rescuer and founding director of animal sanctuary Furry Friends Farm Sabrina Yeap said she had lost a good friend and supporter.

"Dr Yoges helped me a lot by charging only a nominal fee to vaccinate, neuter and treat rescued cats and dogs.

"She also did not take any money when boarding rescued dogs and cats at the clinic," said Yeap tearfully.

According to Yeap, Dr Yogeswari was such a likeable person that it was very easy to warm up to her.

She said this was evident when workers from a coffee shop where the veterinarian had her meals rushed to her home when the landslide occurred.

"They told me that they helped extricate her from the rubble.

"The restaurant supervisor said they tried everything possible to resuscitate her," said Yeap of the veterinarian attached to the Anicare Veterinary Clinic in Wangsa Maju.

Dr Yogeswari was cremated at the Cheras Crematorium at 3pm yesterday.

She was born a Chinese and was adopted by an Indian family at a young age.

She traced her biological family through an advertisement in the newspapers not long ago and had kept in touch with them.

Her adoptive parents died some time back.

Relative Ravindran Poobalan said the family organised a gathering with Dr Yogeswari (and she) was a very friendly person by nature.

“She was always greeting people with a smile or a pat on their back. Her children were the world to her,” said Ravindran.

Caroline Joseph Raj, 41, said that she got to know Dr Yogeswari seven years ago as their children were friends.

“We all will miss her.”

(*The Star*, 8 December 2008, p. N10)

*Extract 7* again displays a high level of dialogicality where many of the statements made are attributed to a specific agent: friends, Sabrina Yeap - Independent animal rescuer and founding director of animal sanctuary Furry Friends Farm, workers from a coffee shop, restaurant supervisor, Ravindran Poobalan - relative, Caroline Joseph Raj- friend. Boundaries between reported and reporting discourse can be considered rather high as many of these agents' statements are in DD (i.e. “*Dr Yoges helped me a lot by charging only a nominal fee to vaccinate, neuter and treat rescued cats and dogs*”, “*She also did not take any money when boarding rescued dogs and cats at the clinic*”, “*They told me that they helped extricate her from the rubble*”, “*The restaurant supervisor said they tried everything possible to resuscitate her*”, “*She was always greeting people with a smile or a pat on their back. Her children were the world to her*”, “*We all will miss her*”). From the cases of DD in the excerpt, it is clear that most of the statements are describing the victim, Dr Yogeswari. The remaining two statements are about how they tried to rescue her. It is significant that these statements are in DD for several reasons: (1) the reporter is distancing himself from the statements made by the agents as he does not know the victim prior to this incident and it is hard to gauge the accuracy of the agents' claims; (2) this also lends credibility to the narrative that the reporter is not making up this story but has done some investigation on the victim by interviewing those who knew her; (3) by using specific agents and attributing their claims in DD, the reader will empathise more and feel as if he also knows something about the victim. Thus, the use of DD in a narrative and attributing these statements to specific agents are salient in capturing the heart of the readers.

There are also instances of ID in the above excerpt: *friends related how they had lost a good person, she had lost a good friend and supporter, According to Yeap, Dr Yogeswari was such a likeable person that it was very easy to warm up to her, She said this was evident when workers from a coffee shop where the veterinarian had her meals rushed to her home when the landslide occurred, Relative Ravindran Poobalan said the family organised a gathering with Dr Yogeswari (and she) was a very friendly person by nature, Caroline Joseph Raj, 41, said that she got to know Dr Yogeswari seven years ago as their children were friends.* Once again, the use of ID implies that the reporter has paraphrased the statements of the reported. However, the agents of the statements are made very clear to illustrate who said what. It is also interesting to note that the reporting verb used very

frequently in the ID is the neutral verb, 'said'. This does not reveal much of the feelings or thoughts of the reported, except for what is being said in the statements. Stronger reporting verbs such as 'emphasised', 'agreed', 'explained', 'agreed', 'acknowledged', 'asserted', 'commented', 'described', 'asserted', would describe what someone has said more accurately. Perhaps this was the intention of the reporter: to remain neutral in his reporting so as to make his report more objective.

The accessed 'voices' in the above excerpt are from various circles: social (*friends, Caroline Joseph Raj, workers from a coffee shop, restaurant supervisor*), professional (*Sabrina Yeap*), and family (*Ravindran Poobalan*). The reporter covers various circles to infuse a more holistic representation of Dr. Yogeswari. Some of these accessed 'voices' are not named, probably for a couple of reasons. One, there are too many of them (friends, workers from a coffee shop), and they are not deemed important enough to be mentioned (workers from a coffee shop, restaurant supervisor). This is even more apparent when the latter two accessed 'voices' are heard via another accessed 'voice', Sabrina Yeap. Their statements are framed within Sabrina Yeap's statements. However, the workers from a coffee shop and the restaurant supervisor play a significant role as accessed 'voices' because they are the ones who lend a sense of social aspect to the victim. This also shows that Dr. Yogeswari was such a *friendly* and *warm* person to everyone, regardless of their background, and that they had gone to great lengths to rescue her.

On the other hand, it is noteworthy that the victim's immediate family members are not given space at all. Could this be because the family members refused to talk to the press? Or were they too distraught to give a statement? Or the reporter wishes to respect the privacy of the deceased's family? The latter would definitely make the reporter more humane in the eyes of the reader.

This excerpt is rather distinctive as it contains only one modal. Furthermore, the modal used is 'will', which shows a high degree of commitment by the user. The user actually comprises many people, although it is not specifically mentioned who they are. It can be presumed that in the statement, *We all will miss her*, the inclusive pronoun would include the victim's family members, relatives, friends and from professional to social associates.

The other statements made are all categorical statements. Most of these statements are essentially about Dr. Yogeswari: personality, work ethics, background. These statements of fact help to give the reader an idea of the kind of person the victim was according to those who knew her personally. She is described as *a good person, a good friend and supporter, likeable person, a very friendly person by nature*. Furthermore, Dr. Yogeswari is also said to be a person who *had a heart of gold* and *it was very easy to warm up to her*. Thus, by using categorical assertions to describe Dr. Yogeswari, the reporter achieves two aims: (1) the victim is a nice person according to those interviewed, and not according to the reporter who does not know her; (2) there is no doubt as to what is said about the victim.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis highlights how the coverage was framed to draw attention to negligence. The reporting focuses on the impact of the disaster on residents who are worried of their safety and furious at the lack of intervention by the relevant authorities in preventing such a

disaster. This is in light of the fact that the area experienced numerous landslides in the past. The voices of the reported through the reporter and the prominent and non-prominent people highlight the anguish of the residents in wake of the loss of lives and property. The media also highlights that careful planning with proper environmental measures should be put in place and enforced to avert such tragedies in the future. Additionally, Malaysia should attain fully developed country status in the year 2020 by not compromising on environmental principles. The media therefore plays a powerful role in exposing and educating the common man on environmental degradation brought about by rushed development and relaxed policies.

The political blame game is highlighted with high dialogicality where many statements are attributed to specific agents such as politicians, the police and experts. This distances the reporter from what was reported and draws attention to the way politicians and people in power play to the gallery to gain political mileage in times of tragedy. In short, the greed for wealth and power should not be entertained and the 'acts of humans' should be minimised, if not eradicated to prevent such disasters in the future. Malaysia should instead emulate the best practices on hillside development which has been successfully adopted by other countries. This will enable the Malaysian government to conserve the natural environment and minimise tragedies.

The discourse representation also brings out the voices of the victims of the landslide who suffered personal trauma through the loss of loved ones. The analysis looks at the how the media covered the loss of lives accurately and sensitively. Baring witness to a sudden death always brings out an outpouring of grief by those who knew the victim directly or indirectly and the media reporting is able to introduce these voices in an emotive way. The analysis also highlights that no comments were sought from immediate family members of the victim by the press. This move by the journalist is construed as positive as the press is portrayed as being understanding.

In conclusion, the textual analysis draws attention to the 'voices' of various stakeholders and how the 'voices' were framed to emphasise negligence, political maneuvering and grief associated with disasters of such magnitude. The media plays a crucial role in gathering and providing information about these disasters to the general public, government officials, relief organisations and environmental groups. The media thus facilitates discussion about the causes of such disasters, and the preparedness and response of the authorities in the wake of such occurrences. The media plays the role of a commentator, interpreter and gatekeeper. It cannot be denied that public opinions are formed by the media as information is packaged and framed to shape the way in which the public receives, digests and reacts to the news.

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## **Identity Construction and Code Switching in English Newspaper Advertisements**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined identity construction through the use of code switching in English language newspaper advertisements in Malaysia. Specifically, this study investigated how code switching is used to construct identity and determine the types of identities constructed. One hundred and twenty one (121) food, finance, motoring, energy and telecommunications English advertisements with Malay, Tamil and Chinese code switching occurrences were selected from the three local English newspapers with the highest circulation over a period of six months from 1 August, 2011 to 31 January, 2012. The data was analysed using Bhatia's (1992) four structural components of advertisements, Piller's (2001) identity theory of similarity and difference and Woodward's (1997) theory of difference and representation. The findings reveal that during festivals, advertisers construct identity through code switching in the headline and body copy components of their advertisements. The types of identities constructed include Islamic identity, ethnic identities and national (Malaysian) identity. The findings are consistent with previous studies on language choice and advertising.

**Keywords: Advertising, code switching, identity construction, language choice**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The growing phenomenon of code switching occurrences in advertisements has led to a rise in the study of identity construction through code switching advertisements (Piller, 2001). The current study follows in this vein by focusing on the construction of identity through the use of code switching in print advertisements in the Malaysian context, an area that has not been fully explored thus far.

There have been many differing views on identity and how it is constructed through language. Labelle (2011:174) stated that identity is "one's conception of self in the world". This is representative of the essentialist view, which holds that identity is relatively fixed and stable. Romaine (2010:1), on the other hand, explained that identity concerns how people relate to their surroundings as well as their own place in it. This is representative of

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the non-essentialist view which holds that identity is fluid, and changes with time, context and relationships (Woodward, 1997:11).

Identity can be marked through similarity, difference and representation (Piller, 2001; Woodward, 1997). In other words, our concept of who we are can be derived through our similarities with others, our differences from others and through symbols that are representative of who we think we are. Language use is one way of marking those similarities, differences and representation. Thomas and Wareing (2000:136) observed that “one of the most fundamental ways of establishing our identity is through our use of language”. Therefore, language choice and code switching are seen as expressions of identity (Hajar Abdul Rahim 2006; Myers-Scotton 2006:9) and advertising is one field where identity construction through the use of code switching has been examined.

Piller (2001) examined how advertisers construct identities through the use of English in German advertisements. She argued that “contemporary social identities are hybrid and complex, and the media plays a crucial role in their construction” (Piller, 2001:153). She found that English is used in advertisements to construct global, successful and economic-oriented identities (Piller, 2001:167). Similar findings were revealed in other studies which investigated the use of English in non-English advertisements. Those findings argued that English is used because it is linked with success, modernity, global economy and progress (Gao, 2005; Chen, 2006; Ruellot, 2011). However, studies relating to code switching and identity in the Malaysian context are slightly different.

One such study was by Hajar Abdul Rahim (2006) who explained that the use of local lexis in Malaysian English is seen as important linguistic, cultural as well as identity indicators of the users which are not used to merely fill in the lexical gaps to account for local culture but rather for connotative reasons (Hajar Abdul Rahim, 2006: 7). She argued that the “choice of using a particular lexical form over another goes beyond linguistic needs” to an expression of political, cultural and religious identities (Hajar Abdul Rahim, 2006: 15).

Code switching has also been observed in local English newspaper advertisements (Azirah Hashim, 2010; Dumanig and David, 2011). Studies which examined code switching in newspaper advertisements in Malaysia were conducted by Dumanig and David (2011), Shanmuganathan and Ramasamy (2009) and Azirah Hashim (2010) but they did not put much emphasis on identity construction. However, we observed that identity construction could be evident in the choice of language in advertising which can offer valuable insights into the cultural, ethnic and religious pluralism of Malaysia.

This study examined the use of local or native code switches in English advertisements and described the identities constructed in such context. More specifically, this study aimed to explore identity construction through the use of code switching in English newspaper advertisements in Malaysia. Code switching in this study was defined as “the alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent” (Poplack, 1980: 583).

The findings of this study may be used to provide new insights on identity construction in the Malaysian context and in the domain of newspaper advertisements by advancing the knowledge on how code switching is used to construct identity in newspaper advertisements. The perspective adopted in this study also contributes to theories on code switching in

newspaper advertisements. Since most studies on code switching in advertisements have been in the context of English codes switched into local languages, this study can be beneficial to sociolinguists. Furthermore, the study can be useful to those who are studying the impact of local languages on the English language as the study focused on code switching from the local languages into the English language in print advertisements.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework for this study was derived from Bhatia (1992), Piller (2001), and Woodward (1997). Bhatia (1992:196) describes print advertisement as a “single discourse unit” with four structural components, namely, the Headlines, the Body Copy, the Signature Line, and The Slogan. This framework was adopted as it treats the whole advertisement as a single discourse, which allows the overall intent and purpose to be discerned and it provides a systematic approach to analysing advertisements through the analysis of the four components.

Secondly, this study also drew on Piller’s (2001) identity theories of similarity and difference in examining the use of English in German advertisements. The theory posits that group as well as individual identity can be marked by similarities as well as differences. These identity theories of similarity and difference have been extensively used by other studies in categorising various identity constructs in advertisements through the use of code switching (Gao, 2005).

Thirdly, the current study was also anchored from Woodward’s (1997) theory of identity and representation which posits that identity is constructed through symbolic systems which carry meaning such as certain words and language systems that carry particular meaning for an individual or group and so, express identity. Thus, code switching can be used to construct identities through representation as well as differences (Blomquist, 2009:12). This notion is of relevance to the current study as it delved into various identities in a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual context.

Using this derived framework, the headlines, body text, signature line and slogan of advertisements collected were analysed to determine where the code switches occurred. Then identity theories of similarity, difference and representation were used to determine the identities constructed in the advertisements.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

The data for this study comprised of a corpus of 121 advertisements published in three local English newspapers namely, *The Star*, *The Sun*, and *The New Straits Times*. These were chosen as they have the highest readership and circulation for English newspapers in the country (Nielsen Media Research, 2010). The newspapers were scanned daily for a period of six months from 1 August, 2011 to 31 January, 2012. Advertisements that were selected were extracted from the newspapers and categorised as food, finance, motoring, telecommunications and energy advertisements. In each category, advertisements were indexed and checked. Duplications and repetitions of advertisements were discarded. The advertisements were also listed, coded, labeled and filed according to category, so that they

could be retrieved as needed. A master list of all the advertisements according to their categories was drawn up to keep track of the advertisements.

The data was limited to food, financial, motoring and energy and telecommunications advertisements in the local English dailies. Advertisements in other forms of print media such as magazines were not taken into account as the focus of the research was on advertisements in newspapers. Only advertisements with code switching occurrences in the local languages were chosen. Although advertising relies on both linguistic and non-linguistic (graphic) elements to get the message across, this study focused on code switching, a purely linguistic element. As such, the study adopted a textual approach to the analysis and did not analyse the visuals in the advertisements. Due to the limited scope of this study, the findings may not be generalised across other print advertisements, categories, domains and time frames.

**4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**4.1 Code Switching in Temporal and Spatial Contexts**

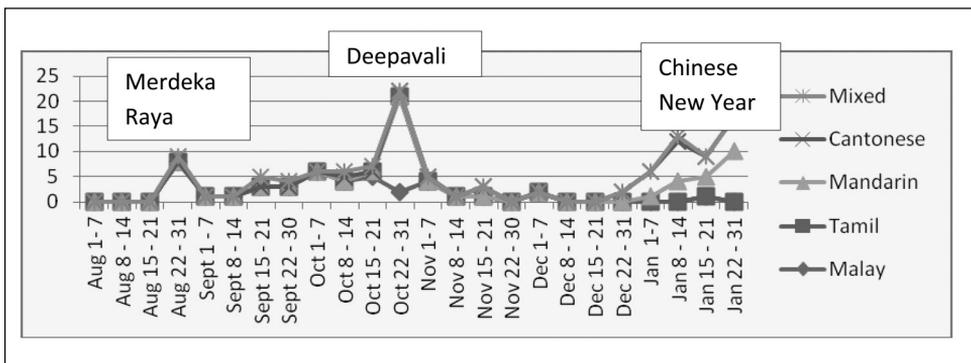
In order to answer the first research question, the data was first analysed to note *when* they occurred (temporal context) in relation to major festivals and celebrations. Then, using Bhatia’s (1992) four structural component framework, the data was analysed to note *where* in the advertisements, these code switches occurred (spatial context).

**4.1.1 Proximity to Celebrations and Festivals**

In terms of temporal context, the data revealed that most code switching occurred during festivals and special occasions as shown in Figure 1.

The findings revealed that code switching occurrences were higher during the period of August 22 – 31, 2011 (*Hari Raya & Merdeka*), October 15 – 31, 2011 (*Deepavali*), and from January 8 – 31, 2012 (Chinese New Year). However, there were almost no code switching occurrences from December 22 – 31, 2011 (Christmas).

It is also evident from Figure 1 that code switching into a particular language was higher nearer to the festival related to a particular ethnic group. For example, Malay code



**Figure 1.** Temporal context of code switching occurrences

switches were more prevalent during *Hari Raya* from August 22 - 31, Tamil code switches were so on Deepavali day (October 25) while code switching into Cantonese and Mandarin were most often found during the Chinese New Year period (January 8 – 31, 2012). The findings are consistent with earlier studies (Dumanig and David, 2011). The lack of code switching occurrences during Christmas could be explained by the festival itself being most closely identified with English.

Extract 1 illustrates how the choice of language was influenced by the proximity of various festivals in Malaysia.

### Extract 1

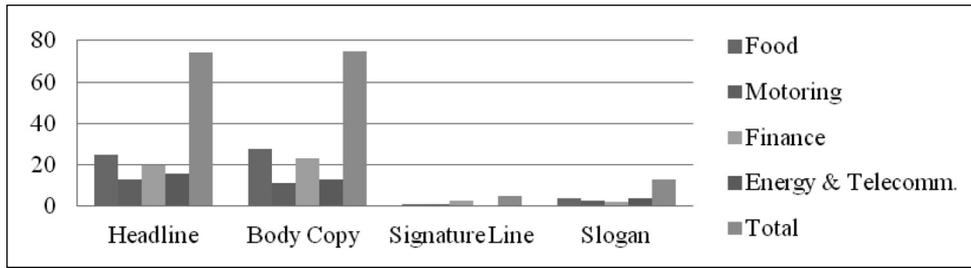
- a. *Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri & Happy Merdeka Day to all Malaysians.* (Honda, *The Star*, 29 August 2011).
- b. Warm wishes from the hearts of all 42,000 Maybankers, here and abroad. *Deepavali Vazhthukal* (Maybank, *New Straits Times*, 25 October 2011).
- c. Usher in a prosperous year by tossing *Yee Sang* with family, friends and business associates! It may be the Chinese year of the dragon, but our Thai style plum sauce exudes a truly Au-thai-tic flavor. *Gong Xi Fa Cai!* (Sri Ayuthaya, *New Straits Times*, 21 January 2012).

Extract 1a uses the Malay greeting *Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri*. *Selamat Hari Raya* literally means “Happy Celebration Day”, and is used by the Malays to refer to two major Muslim festivals in the country, *Hari Raya Haji* and *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*. *Aidilfitri* is borrowed from Arabic, *‘Īdu l-Fimr*, often abbreviated to *Eid*, marking the end of the fasting month. Azirah Hashim (2010) reports that the Malays are most closely linked with Islam. Hence, the celebration of *Hari Raya* is most closely identified with Malay culture and language.

Similarly, Extract 1b has code switches from English to Tamil. The Tamil greeting *Deepavali Vazhtukal* (Deepavali Greetings) is in the Romanised form. This style of code switching would appeal to many urban and younger generation Tamils who may not be able to read the Tamil script. The greeting is one that is commonly used during *Deepavali* among Tamil speakers rather than the English equivalent, “Happy *Deepavali*.” Since the Tamils are the majority Indian ethnic group in Malaysia, the main language linked with the celebration of *Deepavali* is Tamil.

Extract 1c shows the use of the Cantonese word *Yee Sang*, and also the addition of the Mandarin Chinese New Year greeting, *Gong Xi Fa Cai*, which loosely translates as “Congratulations and be prosperous”. The tossing of *Yee Sang* is closely identified with the Chinese New Year celebrations, and has special meaning for the Chinese community. The switching of these phrases, *Yee Sang* and *Gong Xi Fa Cai*, would therefore appeal to the Chinese community, especially during the Chinese New Year period.

It can be clearly seen from the examples how the context, in terms of *when* the code switching occurs, plays a role in determining the choice of language of the advertisers. It is



**Figure 2.** Spatial context of code switching occurrences

evident that the advertisers code switch into a particular language to construct differing identities in order to establish rapport with the target group, for example, using Malay for the Malays during *Hari Raya* to make them “feel they are the target audience so they feel a sense of ownership” by conveying the message that “they are the right group of people” for whom the advertisement was intended (Dumanig and David, 2011: 221).

#### 4.1.2 Code Switching and Structural Components of Advertisements

In order to construct a comprehensive context of the code switching occurrences, the data was also analysed against the four structural components of print advertisements (Bhatia, 1992) as detailed above. The results of the analysis are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that code switches occur in the headline (44.3%) and body copy (44.9%) of the advertisements. This is similar with Bhatia’s findings (1992: 204) who, in his study of the use of English in Hindi, Chinese, Japanese, French, Italian and Spanish advertisements, found that most of the code switches (90%) occurred in the headlines as an attention-grabbing method. Moreover, in certain ‘open’ languages like Hindi, code switches also occur in the body text. Some examples are presented in Extract 2.

#### Extract 2

- a. (Headline): *Jom generasiku!* (Body Copy): A chance to win these prizes when you save with SSP. (BSN, *New Sunday Times*, 16 Oct. 2011).
- b. (Headline): *Loh Sang* & celebrate the dragon year at the Oriental group of restaurants. (Oriental, *The Star*, 17 January 2012).
- c. (Headline): (Chinese Characters) *Wishing good health and may everything go well with you this New Year.* (Body Copy): Refreshing and delicious, made with real fruit juice. Feel the fruity goodness from F& N Fruit Tree. (Fruit Tree, *The Star*, 21 January, 2012).

Extract 2a is an example of code switching used in the headline as an attention grabber. The Malay sentence, *Jom generasiku!* (Come, my generation!) is more than an invitation, it is a stirring call to action. The colloquial Malay expression *Jom* could be translated as

'Come!' or 'Let's Go!' The use of this informal term reduces the gap with the consumers and grabs their attention, persuading them to go on reading the rest of the advertisement. Myers-Scotton (2006), in her Markedness model, speaks of how the use of code switching can be considered 'marked' and thereby alerts the conversation partner that something different is to follow. Similarly, the use of code switching in the headline alerts the reader that something different is happening and so attracts the attention of the reader (Ruellot, 2011).

In Extract 2b, the code switched term *Loh Sang* is used to attract the attention of the Chinese community who celebrate Chinese New Year. *Loh Sang* is a term that refers very specifically to the act of tossing *Yee Sang* in the Chinese New Year period. Thus, the use of *Loh Sang* specifically acts as an attention grabber. Once the reader's attention is caught, then the rest of the details are explained in the body text.

In Extract 2c, the whole headline is code switched into Cantonese. This means that the advertisement is meant for a specific audience, those who can read Chinese. The headline is used to grab attention, while the body copy is in English, explaining and describing the product.

Unlike the findings of Piller (2001), this study found that code switching occurrences are mostly in the body copy, with very few in the signature line and slogan component. This implies that, firstly, the identity of the reader in this study is that of a competent bilingual who reads and understands information in code switched words and phrases in the body copy. This indicates that readers in the Malaysian context are competent, familiar and also comfortable with Malay, English and their own ethnic dialects and languages (Tan, 2009). Unlike the German reader, Malaysians have shown themselves to be very comfortable in switching back and forth between different languages for reasons other than proficiency or lexical gap (Dumanig and David, 2011). Thus the advertisers were able to code switch in the headline and body copy and be certain that the Malaysian readers would not only understand, but identify with the words and phrases used.

Secondly, since the readers of English newspapers could be assumed to be reasonably competent in the English language, there was no real need to translate either slogan or signature lines into another language. The preference of the advertisers was to render their business names and labels in English for an English-speaking readership. This is evident as the number of advertisements with code switching occurrences in the signature line is only five, whereas the number of advertisements with code switching occurrences in the headline and body copy is 74 and 75 respectively.

It can be seen that code switches, both in terms of proximity to festivals and celebrations, as well as placement in the advertisement, is with respect to choice of language to affect the meaning carried in the copy. It is also evident that the use of code switches is purposeful with the intent of creating specific identities that build solidarity with the consumers and enable them to have affective feelings toward the product or brand. Hajar Abdul Rahim (2006: 12) stated that "The choice to use a particular form, motivated by the semantic, and more importantly ideological effects of the use, undeniably impacts upon the message that the use intends to convey." In other words, the use of code switching impacts the message of the advertisement and consequently, leaves an impression on the reader. This finding is consistent with previous studies of Dumanig and David (2011) and Gao (2005).

## 4.2 Identities Constructed through Code Switching

The findings show that multiple identities are constructed by the advertisers in their advertisements. The identities constructed include the Islamic identity, other ethnic identities and Malaysian identity.

### 4.2.1 Code Switching and Islamic Identity

One of the most prevalent identities constructed in the advertisements is the Islamic identity, which is constructed through the use of Malay religious terms. This finding is supported by Azirah Hashim (2010) who observes that one of the most obvious examples of code switching in print advertisements in Malaysia is the use of religious terms, particularly the use of Islamic terms. She explains, “in a country where the Malays make up the biggest ethnic group and Islam the dominant religion, issues of *halal* food (food that can be eaten) and *haram* food (food that is prohibited) are of crucial importance” (Azirah Hashim, 2010 : 382). As such, certain terms such as *halal* and *haram* are used to establish credentials and assure Muslims that certain foods are acceptable to them.

The current study does not find any such food-related religious terms. However, religious terms are evident in Islamic banking and financial-related advertisements which convey specific ideological meanings which are related to Islam. This can be seen in finance-related advertisements as exemplified in Extract 3.

### Extract 3

- a. *Amanah Hartanah Bumiputra* (AHB) is an initiative to encourage *bumiputra* participation in property investment that is *Syariah*-compliant. (Maybank AHB, *The Star*, 15 Oct. 2011).
- b. Grow your investments with *Shariah*-compliant Stocks and *Sukuk*. (Public Mutual, *New Straits Times*, 12 Oct. 2011).
- c. You can now pay your *zakat*, utility bills and many more payments. (Agro Bank, 26 Sept. 2011).

Extract 3a uses an Islamic term, *syariah* (Islamic Law), to establish credentials and gain the attention of a particular religious group: the Muslims. The term *syariah* is used to indicate compliance with Islamic law, and in this context, Islamic banking principles. This is a religious term which only Muslims would readily identify with. Although other religious groups might know of it, they are not the target of this advertisement. The use of the Malay word *bumiputra* (*lit.* sons of the soil), precludes all other races from the information in this advertisement, as it refers particularly to the Malays and the indigenous groups in Malaysia.

Woodward (1997) explained that identity is often constructed by marking difference, that is, by showing or recognising how one’s identity is different from others. In this advertisement, the use of certain technical religious terms precludes others from being the

intended target of the advertisement. The identity that is constructed here is Muslim *bumiputra* as set over and against other religious and ethnic identities.

Extracts 3b and 3c are two examples which illustrate the religious identity construction through the use of technical Islamic terms in banking advertisements. The words, *syariah*, *sukuk*, *zakat*, refer to Islamic terms which have a special connotation for Muslims. All these words are borrowed from Arabic. The term *syariah* refers to Islamic law. *Sukuk* literally means certificates, but in the financial sector, refers to Islamic bonds. While ‘bonds’ is a common English term in banking and financial circles, the use of the word *sukuk* specifically indicates Islamic bonds. Similarly, the word *zakat* (literally alms) carries a connotation that Muslims could easily identify with. Woodward (1997) studied the construction of identity through representation. Language, and in particular, certain words and phrases, can be seen as symbols which carry a lot of ideological meanings and so may be used to construct identity. The words mentioned in this example, that is, *sukuk*, *syariah*, and *zakat*, are symbolic values in Islam. They are loaded with religious meanings which represent an Islamic identity. By using these words, the advertisers, through both differentiation and representation, constructed a religious identity that would have reached a very specific group of people – the Muslims.

#### 4.2.2 Code Switching and Ethnic Identity

In Malaysia, culture is closely connected with ethnic identity as each ethnic group has its own “set of values, beliefs and practices” (Azirah Hashim, 2010: 381). Thus, language choice can be seen as an expression of one’s culture as well as one’s ethnicity. This can be clearly seen in the construction of Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic identities in the data, as exemplified in Extract 4.

#### Extract 4

- a. **Headline:** (In Tamil script) *Inba Deepavali Vazhthukkal*. Happy Deepavali.  
**Body Copy:** May the divine light of Diwali spread into your life peace, prosperity, happiness, and good health. Happy Diwali (Repeated In Tamil script):  
*Makizhzhyaana Deepavali naalil theyvika oliparagraphvatum vallamum, makizhchiyum, noyatravaazhvum perukatam.* (Sports Toto, *The Sun*, 25 October, 2011).
- b. (In Chinese characters) *Once Carlsberg is open, there is an endless flow of prosperity.* (In English) Welcome the New Year with the vigour of the Dragon for an endless flow of prosperity. *Gong Xi FaCai.* (Carlsberg, *The Star*, 17 January 2012).
- c. *Maaf.* This blessed *Aidilfitri*, take some time to remember the moments when you may have hurt a loved one, offended a friend, or misjudged a stranger... DIGI wishes you a *Selamat Hari Raya. Maaf Zahir dan Batin.* (DIGI, *The Star*, 29 August 2011).

In Extract 4a, the phrase used in the headline, *Inba Deepavali Vazhthukkal* (lit. Joyous Deepavali Greetings) is followed by the English equivalent, Happy *Deepavali*. While 'Happy *Deepavali*' is used by all Malaysians to greet their Indian friends, *Inba Deepavali Vazhthukkal* (*Joyous Deepavali Greetings*) is used only by Tamils in wishing each other. The use of the Tamil script in the headline grabs the attention of those who know Tamil, at the same time, excludes those who do not, thus constructing an identity that is marked against those who are not able to read and understand Tamil. Unlike other Deepavali advertisements which tend to use the occasion as an opportunity to include all Malaysians in the greeting, this advertisement does not.

In Extract 4b, Cantonese is used to describe and connect the product (Carlsberg) to prosperity. The code switching here is used to appeal to the consumer's language (Cantonese), ideology (prosperity) and custom (the consumption of beer during such festivals). The choice of Cantonese can be explained by the fact that the Klang Valley edition of *The Star* focuses on a region where the dominant Chinese dialect is Cantonese. Thus, other dialects (other than Mandarin and Cantonese) are not used much in the advertisements. The use of the Mandarin greeting (*Gong Xi Fa Cai*) can be explained by the fact that Mandarin is the medium of instruction in Chinese schools. Thus, those who have studied in Chinese schools are fluent in Mandarin. This is also evident as greetings from other dialects during Chinese New Year (*Kung Si Fa Chai; Kong Hee Fatt Choy*) have fallen into disuse particularly in English newspaper advertisements. The use of code switching in these advertisements construct the identity of a Chinese-English bilingual who is familiar and somewhat proficient in Cantonese and Mandarin, at least enough to read Chinese characters and understand basic words and phrases related to the festival. The fact that Cantonese and Mandarin terms are mostly used in the domain of culture, particularly food and celebrations, is supported by the findings of Tan (2009) who also found that lexical borrowings from Chinese to English were highest in the domain of culture, food and festivals.

The Malay identity is also marked similarly through the use of certain Malay words and phrases, particularly during the *Hari Raya* festive period, as in the case of Extract 4c which focuses on the word *Maaf* (forgive) which is linked to the celebration of *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*, when the Malays customarily go around to their elders and ask for their forgiveness uttering the phrase *Maaf Zahir dan Batin*, which can be translated as "Forgive my physical and emotional wrongdoings." This extensive switch not only foregrounds the celebration, but also creates a rapport with and within the Muslim/Malay consumers by appealing to a specific Malay ethnic identity.

Each example shows how identity is constructed principally through differentiation, marking each ethnic identity over and against other ethnic groups. The advertisements in this instance intentionally constructed different ethnic identities in order to tap into the meanings, norms, beliefs and practices of each individual community, and in so doing, to express solidarity with that particular group over and against the others. There are times, however, when the advertisers favoured highlighting the commonalities, rather than the differences, between the cultures.

#### 4.2.3 Code switching and National (Malaysian) Identity

The findings also reveal that a Malaysian identity is constructed through the marking of similarities among the different ethnic groups in the country. This is done through marking commonalities among Malaysians such as food, childhood games, use of familiar phrases, festive clothing, as well as through government policies.

As noted earlier, food can be the “bearer of symbolic meanings and can act as a signifier” of identity (Woodward, 1997: 31). One of the main markers of the Malaysian identity is the love for food, whichever culture it may be from. Advertisers have taken this very Malaysian aspect and applied it to the concept of unity.

#### Extract 5

- a. (Headline)** A salute to every Malaysian. **(Body Copy)** For the ones who mix their coffee with tea, who look for *nasi lemak* when they’re overseas; And the ones who finish their meals with an *ABC*... and the ones who can’t wake up without a ‘super *kau’kopi-O* first... For the ones who call everyone ‘bro’, who *lat-tali-lat* to decide who gets to go... (Perodua, *The Star*, 18 September 2011).
- b. (Headline)** Weaving harmony through *Baju Raya*. (There is an image of four *baju raya*, and under each there is a caption as follows: ‘Modern *Kurung* a la *Punjabi*’, ‘*Baba Nyonya* inspired *Kebaya*’, ‘Buttons and fabric from *Cheongsam*’, and ‘*Sari* cloth from *Indian* fashion house.’ **(Body Copy)**: As we prepare for a blessed *Syawal*, let us remind ourselves. Although from different backgrounds, we’re really all cut from the same cloth. *Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri* and *Selamat Hari Merdeka*. (TNB, *The Star*, 29 August 2011).

In Extract 5a, although Perodua is a car manufacturer, the advertisement uses food-related words to promote the idea of a Malaysian identity. *Nasi Lemak* (rice cooked in coconut cream) is a type of rice dish that is of Malay origin but is popular among all the races. Most Malaysians have *Nasi Lemak*, on a regular basis, particularly for breakfast. Thus, the use of *Nasi Lemak* immediately strikes a chord in every Malaysian, regardless of race. On the other hand, *ABC*, an acronym for *Ais Batu Campur* is a dessert of shaved ice, nuts and other little bits which again connect with all the races. Even the coffee is spelled “*kopi*”, which is in Malay, and refers to the Malaysian version of coffee – dark, and roasted with margarine and sugar. The word *kau* (Hokkien for ‘thick’) refers to thick coffee, not just strong coffee. ‘Super *kau*’ would refer to extra thick coffee associated with breakfast at the old Chinese coffee shops or *Kopi Tiam*. Taken together, *kopi* super ‘*kau*’, is a mix of three languages, that is, Malay, English and Hokkien. Such a phrase carries the connotation of the Malaysian variety of coffee.

The advertiser also evokes the shared memory of childhood games through the use of the phrase *lat-tali-lat*, which refers to a game that almost all Malaysians would have played

in their childhood, and becomes another common experience for Malaysians. Perodua uses these markers of the Malaysian identity – things that the general public link to what being Malaysian is all about – to bring good feelings of nostalgia and warmth to the reader.

Similarly, Extract 5b builds the idea of a Malaysian identity through the use of lexical items referring to clothing in the local languages. One of the main characteristics of any celebration in Malaysia is that families would go out to buy new clothes to wear for the celebration. These are *Baju Raya* (festive clothes) which are usually worn on the first day of the festival. This happens across ethnic lines, as each community shares this common practice. Tenaga Nasional, in this advertisement, takes the idea of *Baju Raya* and shows how, in this case, the clothes for the Muslim (mainly Malay) celebration of *Hari Raya* has elements from the other races and their cultures woven in. The code switched words in Extract 5b are ‘*kurung*’ and ‘*kebaya*’ (Malay), while ‘*Punjabi*’ and ‘*sari*’ (Indian). ‘*Cheongsam*’ is Chinese and the ‘*Baba Nyonya*’ refers to yet another ethnic Chinese group. Although the celebration is basically a Malay celebration, the advertisement appeals to the larger Malaysian identity by weaving together elements from every culture. The last line of the advertisement asserts in English, ‘Although from different backgrounds, we’re really all cut from the same cloth.’ In this advertisement, it can be seen how code switching to the different main language groups in Malaysia (Malay, Chinese and Indian languages) is used to construct a Malaysian identity, especially by appealing to a shared cultural norm – that of *baju raya*.

The Malaysian identity cuts across ethnic barriers by appealing to common or shared experiences, norms or practices, such as food, childhood games, and new clothes for festivals. This concurs with what Woodward (1997) observes about advertising and how it uses images and representation that is very much in the public consciousness. It is this very Malaysian identity which is already present in the public consciousness that is constructed by the advertisers in order to appeal to the consumers.

### Extract 6

- |   |
|---|
| <p>a. <i>Lagi power, lagi best.</i> (Perodua, <i>The Star</i>, 28 September 2011).</p> <p>b. Through diversity we embrace the values of respect, mutual understanding and tolerance. Together, we will progress as One nation, <i>1 Malaysia. Selamat Hari Malaysia.</i> (RHB, <i>News Straits Times</i>, 16 September 2011).</p> |
|---|

Another shared cultural norm is the use of familiar phrases as seen in Extract 6a which shows a unique combination of Malay and English words which, when taken together, represent Perodua’s marketing thrust. The company has registered this phrase as a trademark and uses it as a slogan. While the code switched word is actually the Malay intensifier *lagi* in both instances, it is used differently each time. In ‘*lagi power*’ the word *lagi* is used to denote ‘more’, to render it ‘more power’. In the second instance, however, it is used with the

English superlative, 'best' to create a familiar Malay phrase. The word 'best' has been borrowed into colloquial Malay and is used by people from various ethnicities as part of informal talk. The phrase is a familiar one to them. The phrase '*lagi best*' can be rendered as 'is even better', implying that the vehicle being advertised was the best before, but is even better now that it has more power. The familiarity of the phrase constructs a Malaysian identity and enables the consumer to identify with the brand and have a positive attitude towards it. As Woodward (1997: 15) noted, "advertisements can only 'work' in selling us things if they appeal to consumers and provide images with which they can identify". It has been observed before that Malay is the choice for inter-ethnic communication (Rajadurai, 2007). Thus, it becomes the choice of advertisers in constructing a Malaysian identity that cuts across ethnic lines.

The study also found that the construction of the Malaysian identity as a planned, intentional ideology of the Government. This is exemplified by Extract 6b above which reflects the influence of Government ideology in reflecting a united, Malaysian identity in advertisements. This is no accident, as the Malaysian Advertising Code specifically calls for advertisers to incorporate elements that reflect unity (*The Malaysian Code of Advertising Practice*, 2008). In addition, it is the Government's policy to promote Malay as the language to unite the various ethnic groups. In addition, the advertiser makes no mention of their label, company, product or service. The advertisement serves as reminder of the values of the nation, specifically unity in diversity. The values of respect, mutual understanding and tolerance are highlighted. In addition, the advertiser links progress to being 'together'. Only by being together, or being united, will the country progress. This progress will be as One nation, 1 Malaysia. The use of the English One indicates that 'One nation' is meant to be in English. Contradicting this is the use of the numerical '1' in 1 Malaysia. Since 1 Malaysia is the Malaysian government policy for unity and progress, when RHB uses '1 Malaysia' it should properly be read as '*Satu Malaysia*', rather than 'One Malaysia'. In doing this, the advertiser highlights the 1 Malaysia concept of the Government. In addition, RHB ends the advertisement with the greeting *Selamat Hari Malaysia*; whereas 'Happy Malaysia Day' would have done just as well. The implication is that the code switched greetings are purposeful and intentional. The use of Malay in these greetings indicates that not only is unity being promoted, but that the vehicle of unity is the Malay language itself. Thus, Malay is not only used to convey the message of unity, it is used to forge unity as well. This finding is evidenced by Malay as the preferred choice of language in advertisements carrying messages of unity within the *Merdeka Day* and *Malaysia Day* periods.

The revelation of the Malaysian identity is consistent with Kow (2008), who notes that Malaysians tend to embrace and use all the languages in the country, as well as the culture and ethnic practices that are behind them, even though Malay is the official language and English is a strong second language. This is especially seen in the practice of Malaysians who have embraced each other's food and cultural festivals through the concept of open house, as well as the many holidays for the major festivals of each ethnic group. It is these shared experiences and cultural elements that the advertisers exploit in order to construct the Malaysian identity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In relation to *when* code switching is used to construct identity in English newspaper advertisements, it was found that code switching is used most near and during major festivals and celebrations. The choice of language for the code switches is influenced by the festival or celebration nearest in time. In relation to where these code switches occur, the study reveals that they are most prevalent in the headline and the body copy components of the advertisements.

The study revealed that there are three major types of identities constructed in the data, namely, Islamic identity, ethnic identities and a national (Malaysian) identity. The data shows that Islamic identity is marked by both representation and differentiation through the use of religious terms which only Muslims will recognise and give credence to as they read the advertisement.

The analysis also showed that various types of ethnic identities are built through the code switching occurrences in these advertisements. The construction of these ethnic identities has been primarily through the marking of differences from other communities. This was done by using words and phrases which have special meaning to the community celebrating at that time, such as *Hari Raya* for the Malays, *Deepavalli* for the Indian Hindus and *Gong Xi FaCai* for the Chinese. In this way, only the targeted community responds to the advertisement.

The third type of identity constructed is the Malaysian identity. It was found that advertisers used common traits and shared experiences such as food items, childhood games, familiar phrases, as well as government policies to construct a united Malaysian identity that focuses more on what is similar rather than what is different.

This study has a number of limitations in terms of domain, data selection as well as scope as detailed above. Future studies that are more comprehensive are recommended in order to fill in some of the grounds that this study did not cover.

Some recommendations for future studies include: (1) Examining other categories of advertisements where code switching occurs, as this study limits itself to food, finance, motoring and energy and telecommunications-related advertisements. Future studies such as these may be important in verifying the findings of the current study within a wider context; (2) Extending the scope of the study to other forms of print advertisements such as in magazines and other forms of advertisements such as television and radio advertisements; (3) Extending the scope of the study to identity construction through loan words found in advertisements, or even articles found in newspapers and magazines; (4) Examining the use of stereotypes in constructing identity in newspaper advertisements.

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### **Referee Acknowledgement**

SEARCH: The Journal of the South East Asia Research centre for Communication and Humanities gratefully acknowledges the following individuals for reviewing the papers submitted for publication consideration in Vol. 5 No. 1, 2013:

Dr. Atilio V. Alicia  
Dr. Carolyn D. Castro  
Dr. Ivie C. Esteban  
Ms. Rosaline Fernandez,  
Dr. Rodney C. Jubilado  
Dr. Kais Amir Kadhim  
Ms. Siti Marina Kamil  
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rochelle Lucas  
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### *Method of Payment*

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Volume 5, No. 1, March 2013

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