

## **Ideological Features Of Vocabulary In News Reports Of Malaysia's Medium Of Instruction Change**

*Saran Kaur Gill*

[saran@ukm.my](mailto:saran@ukm.my)

*School of Language studies and Linguistics  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

*Yuen Chee Keong*

[yuenck@ukm.my](mailto:yuenck@ukm.my)

*School of Language studies and Linguistics  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

*Stef Bolte*

[donbolte@gmail.com](mailto:donbolte@gmail.com)

*School of Language studies and Linguistics  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

*Saravanan Ramiah*

[srn67devil@gmail.com](mailto:srn67devil@gmail.com)

*School of Language studies and Linguistics  
Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

### **Abstract**

News reports are part and parcel of the human communication system; however they cannot be taken at face value, because reporters determine the context of a piece of news by making choices in the subjects, the point of view from which they describe the issue and through the style of their reporting. This allows media to propagate ideology through their texts. As such a comparative analysis of four newspaper articles; from The Star (Malaysia), the International Herald Malaysia (international newspaper with a Malaysian edition), The Jakarta Post (Indonesia), and The Guardian (United Kingdom), reporting on the same story using Fairclough's (1989, 1995) framework of Critical Discourse Analysis to determine the ideological meanings associated to the papers was conducted. The focus of the articles is the July 2009 announcement on the change in medium of instruction from English to Bahasa Malaysia for the teaching of Mathematics and Science in Malaysia. Even though the news agencies have access to the same information and / or facts, the analysed reports are ideologically different and shed a different light on the issue presented. The study reveals the complexity of our human communication system and it becomes visible that newspapers from different socio-cultural and political contexts interpret and report an ideologically contested issue in different ways and in so doing influence their readers' thinking and opinion about the issue.

**Keywords:** critical discourse analysis; educational policy; medium of instruction; ideology; news reports

## **Introduction**

Using Critical Discourse Analysis, (henceforth, CDA) this paper attempts to research ideological themes in news reports on the recent change of educational policy in Malaysia. After an introduction to the issue under investigation and a review of literature, the researchers will analyse expressive and experiential values of salient lexical items in 4 news reports, using Fairclough's approach to CDA. Furthermore, the data will be analysed for the quantification of expressive and experiential values. For CDA, ideology is an essential feature to create or maintain unequal power relations and is often referred to as "the ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds" (Thompson, 1990 cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 10). This paper attempts to enlighten and raise awareness on ideological themes in news reports and the ideological function of media, without being judgemental towards ideological differences or evaluating what is right or wrong.

In 2002, after more than 40 years with Bahasa Malaysia being the medium of instruction for all subjects on national schools in Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the then Prime Minister, announced that from 2003 the teaching of mathematics and science will be conducted in the English language. After six years of active implementation of this policy, the government announced on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 2009<sup>1</sup> that the medium of instruction will be reverted from English to Bahasa Malaysia for mathematics and science in primary and secondary schools, with the exception of Form 6 and matriculation. As announced, after a period that allowed for bilingual use to facilitate the change of MOI, the implementation of the policy started gradually in 2012 and is scheduled to be fully implemented by 2016. The reasons for change in medium of instruction are often explained in terms of an educational agenda, when in reality these decisions are frequently underpinned by strong political and ideological agendas. In this context, it is further explained by Tsui and Tollefson, (2004, p. 2) when they stress that "policy makers put forward an educational agenda that justifies policy decisions regarding the use and / or the prohibition of a particular language or languages. Yet, behind the educational agenda are political, social and economic agendas that serve to protect the interests of particular political and social groups". This language policy change, most possibly an ideological one, is heavily debated in the Malaysian media. Several groups are lobbying for or against the policy change, like for example the Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE) which lobbies for a choice in the medium of instruction. The issue is also reported in the foreign media; however, the different news reports under investigation on this same issue, in their socio-cultural and political context, are significantly different.

## **Media**

McQuail (1983, cited in Boyd-Barrett and Braham, 1987, pp. 80-81) sees media as "an enormously diverse set of messages, images and ideas, most of which do not originate

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.moe.gov.my/?id=169&lang=en>

with the media themselves but come from society and are sent ‘back’ to society”. What we perceive through media is not necessarily the reality, as Williams argues (1986, pp. 7-20, cited in Boyd-Barrett and Braham, 1987, pp. 34-35) “what we actually see is being chosen, by cameramen or directors, of course with the intention that we should see what is most exciting”. Breen (2007, cited in Devereux, 2007) states that conglomerates and corporations control news worldwide, which has resulted in the commodification of news which reflects hegemonic commercial interests. Besides the agenda of the media in which they choose what stories to cover and what not, McCombs (1972, 1997, 1999, cited in Griffin, 2006, pp. 395 - 407) also distinguished framing in the media. Framing, according to Tankard is “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (1991, cited in Griffin, 2006, p. 401). Reporters constantly frame their stories by interpreting the facts of an event or issue and thereby emphasizing or neglecting certain aspects which results in an unequal distribution of attention on elements. Through framing, journalists determine the context by making choices in the subjects, the point of view from which they describe the issue and through the style of their reporting. Besides framing, reports also undergo editorial adjustments and news agencies are in some contexts limited to what and how they can publish reports. As a result, the media are shaping the public opinion through the ‘reality’ that they construct and publish.

Media in Malaysia, according to Pang (2006, p. 72) follows a ‘development journalism’ model (Taylor and Kent, 1999, p. 138) which is “a system where the media openly practise pro-government policy in aid to nation building”. In his study about news management, Pang (2006, pp. 72-3) uses the hierarchy of an influence model conceptualized by Shoemaker and Reese (1996, cited in Pang, 2006, Figure 1.), which comprises 5 layers, and “being at the outermost circle, ideology is argued to have the most pervading influence on content”. Mohd Azizzudin Mohd Sani (2004, p. 341) contends that media freedom in Malaysia “has been controlled by the government and media companies are associated with government leaders for the political survivability of the ruling government party and leaders to hold the power”. Malaysia has “over 30 laws that regulate and control media activities” (Iga, 2008, p. 125) and according to Reporters Without Borders the media in Malaysia are in a ‘difficult situation’. In the Press Freedom Index 2009 (*year of reports’ publication*) the organisation ranked Malaysia 131 out of 175, in 2010 141 out of 178 and the 2011-2012 index placed Malaysia 122 out of 179. van Dijk (1995) points out that “the power of media discourse is not merely defined in terms of the control of mental models and social representations that are its consequences, but also needs to be formulated in terms of its conditions: Who, indeed controls media discourse itself?” (van Dijk, 1995, p. 32) In addition to the framing of media in general, the influence of the rules and laws in Malaysia strengthens the expectation to find different ideological themes in the four news articles.

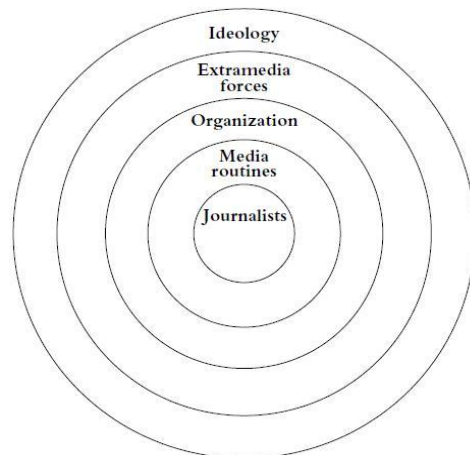


Figure 1: Hierarchy of influence model by Shoemaker and Reese (1996, taken from Pang, 2006, p.73)

### **Statement of Problem**

Newspapers can have access to the same facts and details about an event or issue, but still report in a different way since they interpret the data in their own way. When certain aspects of a story are made more salient in published reports, a one sided perspective might occur amongst the readers. This framing, or representations in discourse, can provide readers with a certain interpretation and/or conclusion over an event that is reported. However, readers are not always aware of the fact that what they read is an interpretation. Furthermore, most readers do not compare different reports in order to come closer to the ‘truth’ to read and understand multiple points of view. In this light, van Dijk (1995) further explicated the issue of different models when he states that “models are mental representations of experiences, they are generally inferred from social perception and interaction, in general, and from discourse about social events, in particular. Such models can only be shared and socialised, if they are fairly generally known, and such knowledge presupposes public discourse, which is, in turn, largely provided by the mass media (and then by everyday conversations which are, in turn, based on such media discourses)” (van Dijk, 1995, p. 34). Therefore, it is interesting to identify and compare ideological themes in different newspaper reports on the change in language policy.

As the implementation started since January 2012, the policy change is still a current issue that is ideologically contested and brings forth much discussion in the domestic and possibly international fronts. There is a significant amount of literature on media in Malaysia, the law, their regulations and their function, however, research on a specific current topic like the change of educational policy in relation to foreign media reports while using CDA is scarce. A comparative analysis of four reports from differing newspapers as such will thus raise awareness on socio-political manipulation in news reports and make transparent ideologies, whether hidden or not. A detailed analysis “provides insight into the models, which indirectly influence the development of new attitudes and ideologies” (van Dijk, 1995, p. 34). The objective of this study is to identify

ISSN: 1675-8021

the ideological themes from the four reports on the announcement of the change in the medium of instruction policy and is guided by the following question:

*How do the newspaper reports convey their ideological themes through the lexical items used, in terms of their expressive and experiential values?*

### **Significance and Limitations of the Study**

There is no complete objectivity in representing the reality, but if we can locate particular representations or strategies employed by media in the context of their countries, we can emerge with two things. First, by reading different reports on the same issue, we can come closer to the interpreted facts that were reported. Secondly, after finding such representations or strategies in the data, we can start to understand the way that media deal with political and ideological issues and thereby comprehend more of society and the way that media functions in socio-political context. By means of CDA analysis, ideological differences can be derived from the reports under investigation. Besides the hidden agenda and/ or bias, analysing foreign versus national media reports is also useful in understanding the opinions of other countries on decisions made, the causal relations they make and the consequences they perceive that those particular decisions bring along. In this light, this project can be beneficial and interesting to all whom are directly affected or merely interested by the new change in policy, whether they are pro or against the implementation, and will contribute with an interesting political and ideological insight to the discussion that is still on-going in the Malaysian media and society. In addition, these findings can raise awareness on the role and function of media in their socio-cultural and political context.

Due to scope of the study and time constraint, the data sources for this research had been limited to four different news reports that cover the one subject previously described. The reports from the Jakarta Post and the Guardian were one of the few articles that covered the issue in foreign countries. Since it is a Malaysian issue which was mostly reported in the Malaysian media, we decided not to do a literature review on British and Indonesian media. Due to the extensive amount of data that can be produced with the CDA framework provided by Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2001), we have also limited the linguistic analysis. Only the expressive value and experiential value of the most salient lexical items in the news reports will be analysed. Fairclough stated that not all concepts are relevant for each project, and in relation to the amount of data and time, selective use of the framework is justified.

### **Methodology**

#### **Data Collection**

From the four newspapers selected, three were the most widely distributed English newspapers in their country and the fourth was an international published newspaper with a Malaysian edition. By comparing a local newspaper, an international newspaper with local ties and two international newspapers with whom Malaysia has a strong cultural or historical background with (U.K. and Indonesia), we attempt to reveal the ideological themes of the newspapers and how they differ from one another. All news reports were  
ISSN: 1675-8021

published between 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2009 and they were the most current reporting on the issue.

The Star is the largest English newspaper in Malaysia, with a daily circulation of between 290,000 to 300,000 copies. It is majority owned by Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), the second largest party in the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) alliance. The International Herald Tribune, on the other hand, is a widely read English international newspaper with local editions. It combines the resources of its own correspondents with those of The New York Times, is printed at 38 sites throughout the world and is sold in more than 160 countries and territories. While, *The Jakarta Post* - Indonesia's largest English written newspaper -, was established in 1983 due to the growing number of foreigners in Indonesia and the need to balance the Western dominated global traffic of news and views, *The Guardian* had over 20 million unique users a month, making it the most popular UK newspaper website.

The four reports that comprise the small corpus for this qualitative study were manually coded in order to identify the expressive and experiential values in the lexical items. The findings were then quantified in order to present an overview of the balance between positive and negative values. Finally, further analysis of the salient lexical items was carried out.

### **Theoretical Framework: Critical Discourse Analysis**

Several prominent CDA scholars like Fairclough (1989, 1995, 2001), van Dijk (1995) and Wodak and Meyer (2001) have established different versions or approaches of CDA that draw on the general assumptions mentioned above. Whereas Reisigl and Wodak (2001) focus is the Discourse- Historical approach on 5 different discursive practices which integrates argumentation theory, van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive approach (focuses more on 14 different linguistic markers, from which he supposes forms of interaction which are in principle susceptible to speaker control, but less consciously controlled or controllable by the speakers (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). In order to find ideological themes in the news reports analysed, we draw on Fairclough (1995), who refers to ideology as "particular ways of representing the world (e.g. particular representations of Arabs, or the economy), particular constructions of social identities (e.g. the construction in particular ways of the scientific experts who feature on radio or television programs), and particular constructions of social relations (e.g. the construction of relations between politicians and public as simulated relations between people in a shared life world)" (1995, p. 12).

CDA is mostly concerned with raising awareness on the way discourse creates or maintains unequal power relations and in particular Fairclough's framework has been used frequently in researching media ( e.g. Teo, 2000; Takagi, 2008; Abduljalil al-Sharabi, Noraini Ibrahim, Nor Fariza Mohd Nor, 2011). Fairclough considers discourse as text, process of production, (interaction) and process of interpretation (context) (Fairclough, 1989, p. 21). The relationship between text and society is studied, as Fairclough mentions, by looking at "social orders and orders of discourse" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24). In Fairclough's version of CDA the dialectical relations between semiosis

(including language) and other elements of social practice are being analysed (Fairclough, 2001, cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001). Semiosis is part of every practice and figures in three ways: semiosis as a part of the social activity within a practice constitutes genres, in representations semiosis constitutes discourses and in performances of particular positions within social practices semiosis constitutes styles (Fairclough, 2001, cited in Wodak & Meyer, 2001).

We selectively follow Fairclough's 5-step procedure (Fairclough, cited 2001 in Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 125). First, we focus on a problem that contains unequal power relations, which is the case with ideological contested issues that are reported in media. We continue to provide a contextual analysis in which the situation is further unveiled as field, mode and tenor. Our linguistic analysis draws on a checklist of questions (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 92-93) and is included as an appendix in this paper. In this part of the analysis, we focus on two different types of values (Fairclough, 1989, p. 93): *experiential value* reveals "the text producer's experience of the natural or social world" and *expressive value* reveals "the producer's evaluation (in the widest sense) of the bit of the reality it relates to". The differences between positive and negative sentences are important to derive the determined ideological significances from the reports. Experiential values exposes contents, knowledge and beliefs and often come as ideologically contested words such as 'socialism', comes in over wording, rewording or the way in which certain words co-occur as well as the main meaning relations synonymy, hyponymy and antonymy (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 94 – 96). Lexical items that Fairclough distinguished as 'right' and 'left' ideological frameworks like subversive and solidarity, will tend to ideologically place a text (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 94-5). This means that words can either have a positive or negative expressive value. Words that contain a positive expressive value are supporting the issue reported and words with a negative expressive value are linked to an opposing point-of-view regarding the reported issue. "When one wishes to represent textually some real or imaginary action, event, state of affairs or relationship, there is often a choice between different grammatical process and participant types, and the selection made can be ideologically significant" (Fairclough 1989, p. 120). Differences between positive and negative values of lexical items in sentences are important to obtain the firm ideological significances in the written reports from the different newspapers.

## **Analysis of the Newspaper Reports**

### **Context of Situation**

*Field.* The four selected news reports are from four distinctive yet widespread English written newspapers on the issue of the 2009 announcement that the medium of instruction for the teaching of Mathematics and Science in Malaysia will be reverted from English to Bahasa Malaysia. The issue is globally discussed, ideologically and politically contested and subject to varying opinions and perspectives. Each of these newspapers has its own view on the issue and reports in a specific way, whether it leans more towards a positive or a negative point of view, to inform or to persuade its readers.

*Tenor.* Two of the newspapers have their roots in South-East Asia, respectively Malaysia and Indonesia, while the other two are western based from the UK and France/ USA, although the latter has a Malaysian edition. All newspapers are of considerable size and aim at a large number of readers, who most probably share the same ideological view as the writers of the articles and/ or newspaper. The ideological differences between the newspapers are visible through the lexical items and grammatical structures as portrayed in these news reports.

*Mode.* The reports are in a logically written form as common for news reports, such as the 5W's rule. News reports are a public discourse act and are bound to be read by a large part of society. The news reports, furthermore, undergo several editorial adjustments before publication, which shows the involvement of not only the writers' point of view and the topics covered regarding the event or issue, but as well the ideological outlook of the news agency or paper. The latter indicates that the newspaper or agency also determines what is suitable to be published in their context, whether by intrinsic motivation, such as the agencies' or reporters' socio-political preferences or by extrinsic motivation, such as rules, laws and other forms of regulation that determines what and how issues can be published. In this light, this comparative analysis attempts to reveal ideological themes in the news reports and how they differ from one another according to their contexts.

### **Linguistic Analysis**

The results in table 1 reveal that the percentage of negative expressive values was higher than the positive values in all the four newspapers. However, the ratio between the number of words and the number of negative expressive words clearly placed the newspaper agencies in an ideological pattern of its own. The Star has the lowest difference (0.88 %) which shows that The Star has taken the most diplomatic approach in their reporting. However, this is not true with the foreign based news agencies in which all three depicted more than 2.50 % differences between the negative and positive expressive values. Most probably it is because they are not bound by the Malaysian laws such as the Official Secrets Act and the Printing Presses and Publications Act. Thus, the reporting is direct and the use of words is not censored. For example, when the report was about the Malaysian government, words such as dearth, stalled, dismay and pathetic were used. The foreign based news agency is frequently critical of what they see as flawed or favourable government policies and action. This is the same with experiential values. The Star registered the same percentage between the negative and positive experiential values (27.3 %). The other three foreign news agencies produced more than 30 % differences. Nevertheless, these numbers do not tell us as much as the actual lexical items, because they are important in their opposing or supporting context of the issue being reported.



Table 1: Table providing overview of expressive and experiential values

News-papers	Expressive Values					Experiential Values				
	Total words	Negative expressive words	%	Positive expressive words	%	Total sentences	Negative experiential sentences	%	Positive experiential sentences	%
The Star (10 <sup>th</sup> July 2009)	793	15	1.89	8	1.01	33	9	27.3	9	27.3
The Guardian (10 <sup>th</sup> July 2009)	867	28	3.23	4	0.46	33	16	48.5	5	15.2
The International Herald Tribune (9 <sup>th</sup> July 2009)	670	30	4.48	8	1.19	28	14	50	5	17.8
The Jakarta Post (8 <sup>th</sup> July 2009)	278	16	5.75	8	2.88	12	7	58.3	2	16.7

### What expressive values do words have?

The Star reported *'Declining scores prompted policy reversal'*. The usage of the words *declining scores* depicts negative expressive values which portray a negative point-of-view from the writer or the news agency towards the reversal of PPSMI, allowing readers to conclude that students are finding it difficult to cope with the understanding of English as the medium of instruction in teaching Mathematics and Science. *"If we continue, we will see double jeopardy and I do not want Malaysians to face problems later"*. The words, *double jeopardy* are negatively connoted, portraying that by continuing the policy, Malaysians would face a lot of problems later. Hence, this substantiates reader's perception that the PPSMI policy should be discontinued.

Meanwhile, The Guardian's report included the following sentence: *"calling the decision a lost opportunity for Malaysia to emulate the economic success of English-speaking Singapore..."*. The words *lost* and *opportunity* carried a negative connotation which could be interpreted as Malaysia will be at loss if the PPSMI policy is discontinued. Readers are brought forth to perceive that the economic progress that Singapore had achieved would be unattainable by Malaysia. Similarly, in *"he had championed of promoting Malay identity and downgrading the country's Anglophone colonials past had been a mistake"*, the words *championed* and *promoting* express positive expressive values but these words are juxtaposition against *downgrading* and *mistake*, which provide a mental assumption to the readers on why the policy should be continued. It also

shows that, The Guardian ideologically opposes the actions taken by the government. Words like *downgrading* and *mistake*, are also laden with negative outlook to suggest that the action taken by the government was not appropriate.

In the case of The International Herald Tribune, it carried this statement “*From 2012, he will be forced to return to using the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, after the government decided to abandon English .....*”. From this sentence, the word *forced* provides a representation of negativity towards the policy change and the negativity is further strengthened with the word *abandon*, providing a stronger argument for doom. Likewise, “*The announcement on Wednesday .... English standards in the former British colony will slide and whether Malaysia’s competitiveness as a destination for multinational companies may suffer*”, conveys how dangerous and detrimental it would be if the policy was to be discontinued. By using the words *slide* and *may suffer* – which provide a negative connotation towards the whole issue and to influence their readers that the discontinuation of PPSMI is a great mistake by the government.

Last but not least, The Jakarta Post reported that “*Malaysia announced Wednesday it will abandon the use of English to teach math and science, bowing to protesters who demanded more use of the national Malay language.*” Negative expressive words such as *abandon* and *bowing* appear to suggest the willingness of the government to just abolish the policy to please some quarters. In this particular sentence, the words *protesters* and *demand* suggest a submissive stand by the government. It seems to convey to the readers that the policy discontinuation was executed to please certain sections of the people and not the entire nation. This idea is further reinforced with another sentence, “*Malay activists began to protest the policy after the government recently said it was reviewing the program’s success.*” The news agency has painted a negative assumption on the reason for the change in the policy.

### **What experiential values do words have?**

In the article from The Star, it is quite apparent that the actions of the government are very direct. It is adamant and has decided to put an end to the PPSMI policy. Hence, many of the sentences are in the negative form whereby the subject (PPSMI) is foregrounded in a light that is negative. The news article is written in a way where the Malaysian government obviously does not want to change their stand, it has been decided – PPSMI will be abolished. “*Data showed that when English was not used to teach the two subjects 30 years ago, there was an increase in the number of graduates and professionals.*” In the above sentence, the teaching of English is brought to forefront to be seen as the main subject. The sentence then continues on to project a negative light on the action that if English was to be continued, the number of graduates and professionals would decline. This sentence when read as a whole tells a story to the readers that the villain here is the English language. The sentence could have been written in such a way that the English language is difficult to grasp in the rural areas and because of that the number of graduates and professionals are on the decline. However, that is not the case. There might be other reasons for the decline but we were made to perceive that English was the reason for the decline.

The following sentence, “*Muhyiddin had on Wednesday announced that the subjects would be taught in Bahasa Malaysia or in the mother tongue in vernacular schools from 2012, while English would be given prominence by beefing up the teaching of the language*”, significantly underlines the ruling government’s desire to stop completely the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English. Yet again, a negative light was shone on the act of using English as a medium to teach those two subjects. A positive note here is the use of the phrase *would be given prominence*. How this is going to be implemented is not mentioned. Another ambiguous phrase is *mother tongue*, other than Bahasa Malaysia, are there going to be other medium of instructions to teach Mathematics and Science? In conclusion, it can be seen from this article in The Star that the article veers towards opposing PPSMI. Furthermore, there are many reasons given to stop PPSMI from continuing again and again throughout the article. As the readership of this agency is majority Malaysian audience and some foreigners, it is probable that this news agency is trying to procure a pro-government stand.

In The International Herald Tribune’s report, there are several sentences which are written in a negative light. However, from analyses, the negativity in the sentences does not seem to be as harsh as the ones written in The Star. For instance: “*The announcement on Wednesday, which came after months of lobbying by the Malay nationalists, has raised concerns about whether English standards in the former British colony will slide and whether Malaysia’s competitiveness as a destination for multinational companies may suffer*”. Looking at the sentence above, it is evident that the main subject brought forth is the concerns whether Malaysia could cope internationally by abolishing PPSMI. The phrase ‘Malay nationalists’ reflects the independent aspect of the news agency which does not adhere to the Malaysian Press format. The news agency is also bold in pointing out that the government actually gave in to the Malay nationalists by jeopardizing the education policy. In other words, the ideological stance for The International Herald Tribune newspaper veers towards a pro-PPSMI policy and tries to look at the issue in a negative light as it attempts to convince its readers that Malaysia is making a wrong decision by abolishing PPSMI.

Comparatively, the sentences written in the report published in The Guardian are very much negative in nature. The noticeable difference between the news writing of The Star and The Guardian is that the latter actually highlights the aggressive demonstration and staunch nationalists’ demands to abolish PPSMI. It showcases the dilemmas amongst Malaysians and the spectre of violence as reveal in these sentences; “*but in more recent years, few have been able to ignore an emerging skills gap between urban and rural schools as education authorities outside the major cities failed to find enough staff able to teach in English. Meanwhile, government opponents have fanned nationalist fears by claiming that Malay culture was being undermined by PPSMI*”. Highlighting the emerging gap between the rural and the urban students, the scenario portrays a sympathetic feeling towards the Malaysian children. The Guardian also goes on to write how PPSMI is going to undermine the Malay culture as seen in the following sentence; “*In March police in Kuala Lumpur used teargas to disperse up to 5,000 ethnic Malays who took to the streets to voice their opposition to the police*”. This particular paragraph, however, shows how much violence and force was used to pressure the government in accepting to abolish PPSMI. In this sense, the *5,000 ethnic Malays* is written in a

negative light, creating doubts in the minds of its readers as the PPSMI policy has compromised the Malay culture. From the analysis, it is apparent that The Guardian has veered its ideological stance towards the people's plight through elements of violence in their news report. It also portrays PPSMI as a problem and a dilemma in the education policy, which has been used as a political tool by certain groups to gain popularity.

Meanwhile, The Jakarta Post report upholds the Malay language by blaming PPSMI for the decline in Bahasa Malaysia. *"The news comes after months of high-profile demonstration by politicians and linguists, especially from the ethnic Malay majority, who say a six-year-old policy of using English undermines their struggle to modernize their mother tongue"*. From the paragraph above, PPSMI is to be blamed for the decline of the Malay language. The struggle by the Malay politicians and linguists has been long and hard and that the Malay students suffered the most because they are not proficient in English. The ideological nature of The Jakarta Post is to uphold the Malay language and marginalize PPSMI as it is a detriment to the development of the national language.

## Conclusion

In conclusion we have identified lexical items through which the newspapers reflect their ideological views. Even though we have done a selective analysis, it is apparent that the newspapers are expressing differing ideologies and therewith display the complexity of language and our human communication system. The Star and the Jakarta Post, albeit in different ways, are opposing to PPSMI while the other two newspapers are in favour of PPSMI. Through the ideological themes that are apparent in the reports, the newspapers are influential in the way people think about the issue. The Star is most ideological for its selective use of information in the reports, but through the lexical items used, they maintain a non-provoking stance in opposing PPSMI which is in line with the expected pro-government reporting, which was pointed out by Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani (2004), Pang (2006) and Iga (2008) as the news agency is owned by MCA, a major political party of the National Front government. The Jakarta Post, however, is another newspaper that portrays their ideological stance through their lexical items used and provided its readers with a strong causal relation for the change in policy, which maybe is a highly discussed issue in Indonesia as well. Both The Guardian and the International Herald Tribune provided different sides of the issue, but did report with a bias that is pro-PPSMI, most probably because they both originate from English speaking countries. The media reports analysed clearly show that the reports are based in the interpretation of the facts of the issue and that they are subject to framing. In this way, the media are constructing a certain reality and thereby contributing to a one-sided point of view for their readers.

It has not been our intention to judge ideological differences, but instead to identify differences in order to understand how the media shape public opinion by providing a reality, not *the* reality. For future research van Dijk's structures of news (1988) model can be used to investigate the extent to which opposing voices of this policy, such as the Parent Action Group for Education were covered in this discourse. In line with other media studies and theories, this project revealed that newspapers from different socio-cultural and political contexts interpret and report an ideologically contested issue, such

ISSN: 1675-8021

as the change in PPSMI policy, in different and complex ways and in so doing influence their readers' thinking and opinion about the issue.

## References

- Abduljalil al-Sharabi, Noraini Ibrahim, Nor Fariza Mohd Nor. (2011). Representation of Nojoud's 'Early' Marriage: A CDA of Online English Language Yemeni Newspapers. *GEMA Online™ Journal of Language Studies*, 11(1), 97-123.
- Boyd-Barrett, O. & Braham, P. (1987). *Media, knowledge and power*. Routledge: London, England.
- Devereux, E. (2007). *Media Studies: Key issues and debates*. Sage Publications: London, England.
- Griffin, E. (2006). *A first look at Communication theory*. (International Edition). McGraw Hill Education (Asia): New York, USA.
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and Power*. Second edition (2001). Pearson Education Limited: Essex, England.
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media Discourse*. Hodder Arnold Publications, Hodder Education Group: London, England.
- Iga, T. (2008). The role of media and media freedom in democratizing countries: A comparative study of Indonesian and Malaysian media. Paper presented at *Conference on Confluences and Challenges in building the Asian community in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century*. API publications. [www.api-fellowships.org/body/international\\_ws.../year8.pdf](http://www.api-fellowships.org/body/international_ws.../year8.pdf)
- Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani. (2004). Media freedom in Malaysia. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 35 (3), 341-367.
- Pang, A. (2006). Managing news in a managed Media: Mediating the message in Malaysiakini.com. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 17 (7), 71-95.
- Reisigl, M. & Wodak, R. (2001). *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of racism and anti-semitism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Reporters Without Borders. Press Freedom Index 2009. (Online) Retrieved from [http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id\\_rubrique=1001](http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=1001)
- Reporters Without Borders. Press Freedom Index (2009). Press Freedom Index 2010. (Online) Retrieved from <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2010,1034.html>

- Reporters Without Borders. Press Freedom Index 2011-2012. (Online) Retrieved from <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2011-2012,1043.html>
- Takagi, S. (2008). *Political and criminal discourses in Japanese and American newspaper articles: A study of representations in the news media based on critical discourse analysis*. Revised version of paper presented at the Jaces (Japanese Association for Current English Studies) summer seminar held on August 2, 2008. [www.lc.osakafu-u.ac.jp/Lng\\_Clt/.../09\\_takagi.pdf](http://www.lc.osakafu-u.ac.jp/Lng_Clt/.../09_takagi.pdf)
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (1999). Challenging assumptions of international public relations: When government is the most important public. *Public Relations Review*, 25(2), 131-144.
- Teo, P. (2000). Racism in the news: A critical discourse analysis of news reporting in two Australian Newspapers. *Discourse and Society*, 11(1), 7-49.
- The Guardian UK. (2009). Malaysia drops English language teaching. (Online) Retrieved 10 July 2009, from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/jul/10/malaysia-tefl?INTCMP=SRCH>
- The International Herald Malaysia. (2009). In Malaysia, English Ban Raises Fears for Future. (Online) Retrieved 9 July 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/10/world/asia/10iht-malay.html?ref=malaysia&pagewanted=print>
- The Jakarta Post. (2009). Malaysia Drops English Used To Teach Math, Science. (Online) Retrieved 8 July 2009, from <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/07/08/malaysia-drops-english-used-teach-math-science.html>
- The Star Online. (2009). PPSMI: 'Declining Scores Prompted Policy Reversal' (Update). (Online) Retrieved 10 July 2009, from <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/7/10/nation/20090710165700&ec=nation>
- Tsui, A.B.M. & Tollefson, J.W. (2004). *Medium of instruction policy: Which agenda? Whose Agenda?* Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers: Mahwah, NJ, USA.
- van Dijk, T.A. (1988). *News Analysis. Case Studies of International and National News in the Press*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- van Dijk, T.A. (1995) The mass media today: Discourses of domination or diversity? *Javnost/The Public (Ljubljana)*, 2(2), 27-45.
- Wodak, R. & Meyer, M. (2001). *Methods of Critical discourse Analysis*. Sage Publications: London, England.

## APPENDIX A - Questions For Linguistic Analysis

### A. Vocabulary

1. What *experiential* values do words have?

What classification schemes are drawn upon?

Are there words which are ideologically contested?

Is there *rewording* or *overwording*?

What ideologically significant meaning relations are there between words?

2. What *relational* values do words have?

Are there euphemistic expressions?

Are there markedly formal or informal words?

3. What *expressive* values do words have?

4. What metaphors are used?

### B. Grammar

5. What *experiential* values do grammatical features have?

What types of process and participants predominate?

Is agency unclear?

Are processes what they seem?

Are normalizations used?

Are sentences active or passive?

Are sentences positive or negative?

6. What *relational* values do grammatical features have?

What modes are used?

Are there important features of relational modality?

Are the pronouns *we* and *you* used and if so, how?

7. What *expressive* values do grammatical features have?

Are there important features of expressive modality?

8. How are (simple) sentences linked together?

What logical connectors are used?

Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or/ subordination?

What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

### C. Textual Structures

9. What interactional conventions are used?

Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

10. What larger scale structures does the text have?

## **APPENDIX B - News Article The Star**

Published: Friday July 10, 2009 MYT 4:55:00 PM  
Updated: Friday July 10, 2009 MYT 5:10:08 PM

### **PPSMI: 'Declining scores prompted policy reversal' (Update)**

**KAMPAR:** The command of Malaysian students in Science and Mathematics subjects has been on a steady decline forcing the Government to revert the teaching of the subjects to Bahasa Malaysia and other vernacular languages.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the Trends Report showed Malaysian students' position in Mathematics dropped to 20 from 10 while Science went down from the 20th place to 21.

"Data showed that when English was not used to teach the two subjects 30 years ago, there was an increase in the number of graduates and professionals."

"And when it was changed in 2003, our students could not cope with the change in language," he said Friday.

Speaking to reporters after opening the Fifth Malaysia Festival of the Mind at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) here, Muhyiddin, who is also the Education Minister, said the ministry's records also showed a decline in the students' ability in learning the subjects.

"If we continue, we will see double jeopardy and I do not want Malaysians to face problems later," he added.

Muhyiddin had on Wednesday announced that the subjects would be taught in Bahasa Malaysia or in the mother tongue in vernacular schools from 2012, while English would be given prominence by beefing up the teaching of the language.

Asked whether the Government planned to enlist political parties to help explain the rationale, given that some people were unhappy with the decision, Muhyiddin said:

"We will keep on explaining (but) as the Prime Minister had said, we will not be able to please everybody."

He added the reversal could only be carried out in 2012 because the government had to explain its decision.

"If we do it tomorrow, those who are not aware of it may get a shock," he said.

He reiterated that the decision made by the Government had taken into account many things and it was not done in haste.

"It is not selective of one or two schools. We are talking about more than 10,000 schools nationwide," he said.

Meanwhile, a blog poll by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad showed that the majority of the 26,000 respondents opposed the policy reversal of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English.

Dr Mahathir said he included the poll in his blog, chedet.com to gauge people particularly parents actual opinions on the policy reversal.

"Out of the 26,000 respondents we received, 80% disagree to the teaching of Science and Mathematics either in the national language, Chinese or Tamil languages.

"Certainly, after getting the poll results, if my opinion cannot be forwarded to the Government in other ways, I will post my opinion. If there are those in the Government who read my blog," he told reporters after attending closed-door talk on the position of



the institutional monarchy and the Malays in the Federal Constitution from the 1 Malaysia perspective at Putra World Trade Centre here Friday.

Asked whether the Government was making a wrong step by making the policy reversal, he said:

”Yes, yes. I’ve said this many times before because this policy was implemented during the last year of me being the Prime Minister.

“I had definite reasons supported by the Umno supreme council as to why we should teach Science and Maths in English.

“It is not about trying to learn English. It is not about trying to learn Malay. It is simply an acknowledgement of the fact that today’s knowledge comes to us in the English language.

He said that in the past, when Arabs became Muslims, they studied Greek in order to acquire the knowledge of the Greeks.

Subsequently, he said the Europeans, in the dark ages studied Arabic in order to acquire the knowledge of the Arabs.

“Today, the knowledge is with the people who write in English. And for that reason we want to learn English to acquire knowledge, not to learn English, but Science has got a special English language for itself. It is important that we use English to study the Science and Maths.

“I speak what I think. I’m not criticising just anything. I’m criticising something that will affect the future of our children,” he said adding that he was briefed by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also Education Minister and his officials a day before the announcement of the policy reversal.

“I don’t expect anything but it was nice of him to come and see me and brief me with his officers. I did give my opinion but it was not reflected in the announcement that was made. It was just a briefing session a day before they officially adopted it.

“It’s quite obvious that they are not going to change their minds even if they talk to me,” he added.

**APPENDIX C - News Article The International Herald Tribune Malaysia**  
**In Malaysia, English Ban Raises Fears for Future**



Bazuki Muhammad/Reuters

Students attended a morning session at a school in Putrajaya, Malaysia on Thursday.

By LIZ GOOCH

Published: July 9, 2009

KUALA LUMPUR — P.S. Han, a teacher in Kuala Lumpur, has been using English to teach math and physics to 17-year-olds for the past six years.

From 2012, he will be forced to return to using the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, after the government decided to abandon English for the two subjects in a decision some consider to be motivated by politics rather than education.

“English has been used as the language of science for 300 years,” said Mr. Han, a teacher at St. John’s Institution. “You cannot really convey the scientific concepts to the students in Bahasa Malaysia at a very high level.”

“We have to face the fact that science knowledge is in English.”

The announcement on Wednesday, which came after months of lobbying by Malay nationalists, has raised concerns about whether English standards in the former British colony will slide and whether Malaysia’s competitiveness as a destination for multinational companies may suffer.

English has been the language of instruction for math and science in Malaysia since 2003, when former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad introduced the policy amid concerns that poor English skills were hindering students’ job opportunities.

Mr. Mahathir expressed sadness over the decision to revert to Bahasa Malaysia, saying that the decision would adversely affect children and make it difficult for them to keep abreast of scientific developments, the national news agency Bernama quoted him as saying.

The government cited a decline in students’ math and science grades, particularly in rural areas, as one of the reasons behind the switch.

However, Khoo Kay Kim, emeritus professor of Malaysian history at the University of Malaysia, said that teachers had not been adequately trained before the policy was introduced.

He described Malaysia's English standards as "pathetic. "Fewer and fewer of our professors can now write in English," he said. "We used to lead Asia in terms of English, and now we have allowed ourselves to slip below other Asian countries."

Mr. Khoo said it was a "national shame" that the country's oldest university, the University of Malaysia, had fallen behind other Asian universities in international rankings, a trend he attributed to declining English standards.

He also raised concerns that poor English standards may affect Malaysia's international competitiveness, saying that multinational companies may struggle to find graduates with good English.

"If less and less Malaysians know English, how are multinational companies going to come into this country?" he said. "If we don't have the workforce who can fit into multinational companies, how are they going to come here?"

Malaysia's business community has long been concerned about the reported decline in English standards in schools. "The business community feels that English is imperative for Malaysia's international competitiveness," said Michael Yeoh, chief executive the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute, an independent research organization.

Mr. Yeoh said that more needed to be done to improve English standards, but questions remained over whether teaching science and math in English was the best method.

"We don't really know exactly how this could impede on the study of English," he said.

The Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry welcomed the government's decision to increase the number of English teachers and teaching hours.

Its executive director, Stewart Forbes, said that the need to emphasize English must continue to be part of the government's policy.

"Private sector companies in Malaysia continue to complain about graduates' communication skills in general, and English skills in particular, and the government's efforts to raise the level of English expertise are very worthwhile," he said.

Some educators from Malaysia's two largest minority groups, the Chinese and Indian communities, welcomed the decision to revert to using Chinese and Tamil for science and math in vernacular schools, local media reported.

However, many parents and the National Union of the Teaching Profession have expressed concern over the decision to scrap English.

Shazlin Aidani, a mother of three, said she wanted her children to learn math and science in English. "When they graduate and go to work everything will be in English, not Bahasa," she said.

## **APPENDIX D - News Article The Jakarta Post**

### **Malaysia drops English used to teach math, science.**

The Jakarta Post | Sean Yoong, The Associated Press, Kuala Lumpur | Wed, 07/08/2009 10:59 PM.

Malaysia announced Wednesday it will abandon the use of English to teach math and science, bowing to protesters who demanded more use of the national Malay language. Malay will be reinstated in state-funded schools starting in 2012 because teaching in English caused academic results in those subjects to slip, Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said.

The news comes after months of high-profile demonstrations by politicians and linguists, especially from the ethnic Malay majority, who say a six-year-old policy of using English undermines their struggle to modernize their mother tongue.

English was once the medium of instruction in most schools in Malaysia, a former British colony. Nationalist leaders switched to Malay less than two decades after independence in 1957.

In 2003, realizing that poor English skills hurt graduates competing for work against people from other countries, especially neighbouring Singapore, ex-Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad launched a program to resume teaching math and science in English. Most other subjects are taught in Malay.

Malay activists began to protest the policy after the government recently said it was reviewing the program's success.

Students in rural districts, who are mainly Malay, suffered the most because their English proficiency was low, Muhyiddin said. He said authorities would try to improve students' English-language skills by recruiting more teachers and offering more language classes.

Some in the large ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities also oppose the use of English, insisting that math and science should be taught in their mother tongues, Mandarin and Tamil.

Muhyiddin said schools for ethnic minorities that teach most subjects in those two languages will also scrap the use of English for math and science starting in 2012.

## **APPENDIX E - News Article The Guardian Malaysia drops English language teaching.**

Government says education policy failing to create global speakers.

**Max de Lotbinière** | guardian.co.uk, Friday 10 July 2009 16.44 BST



Ethnic Malays take opposition to English on to Kuala Lumpur streets in March.  
Photograph: AFP/Getty

Malaysia has decided to abandon a six-year experiment in using English in state schools to teach maths and science. The plan was intended to produce a new generation of global communicators, but government officials say it has stalled attainment and exposed a dearth of teachers able to deliver classes in English.

Education minister Muhyiddin Yassin announced last Wednesday that the English-medium education policy introduced across the country in 2003, known as PPSMI, would be phased out from 2012. He said that evidence gathered during a year-long assessment and public consultation had convinced the government that PPSMI wasn't working, and that the dominance of English in the curriculum risked undermining students' grasp of their first language.

"I wouldn't say it's a complete failure but it has not achieved the desired objectives that it was supposed to achieve," Muhyiddin told a press conference.

"The government is convinced that science and maths need to be taught in a language that will be easily understood by students, which is Bahasa Malay in national schools, Mandarin in Chinese schools and Tamil in Tamil schools."

But supporters of the policy expressed dismay, calling the decision a lost opportunity for Malaysia to emulate the economic success of English-speaking Singapore, held up as an example of how language skills can be a key to a connecting local workers and industries to the global economy.

The Parents Action Group for Education (Page), which had campaigned to maintain PPSMI, said the change would be unfair on many parents.

"There might be some schools which would want to continue teaching in English," Page chairman Azimah Abdul Rahim told the New Straits Times newspaper. "I think there should be a choice. There are many Malaysians whose first language is English."

The use of English for teaching in class has been a politically charged issue since it was decreed by Malaysia's autocratic prime minister, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, months before he stood down from office in 2003.

Since he was a staunch nationalist during his 22 years in power, Mahatir's move was a surprise acknowledgement that the post-independence policy he had championed of promoting Malay identity and downgrading the country's anglophone colonial past had been a mistake.

English-medium teaching was phased out of most schools by the 1970s. As a result the economy stagnated and Malaysia needed to develop a workforce skilled in the language of commerce and technology if it was to catch up with its south-east Asian competitors, he argued. Many schools struggled from the start to deliver maths and science lessons in English, but the promise of future economic gains, and enthusiasm among parents, particularly in urban areas, for their children to acquire better English helped to maintain government commitment to the policy.

But in more recent years few have been able to ignore an emerging skills gap between urban and rural schools as education authorities outside the major cities failed to find enough staff able to teach in English. Meanwhile, government opponents have fanned nationalist fears by claiming that Malay culture was being undermined by PPSMI.

In 2008 the government responded to growing pressure by setting up a review of PPSMI, and an expert panel delivered its report to ministers in January, but a decision was stalled until after parliamentary elections in April.

In March police in Kuala Lumpur used teargas to disperse up to 5,000 ethnic Malays who took to the streets to voice their opposition to the policy.

In his statement, Muhyiddin denied that the government had bowed to political pressure, stressing instead that the decision had been taken on the basis of educational results alone. He claimed these showed that the students who had been taught maths and science in English since they started primary school were now performing less well in those subjects in national exams than previous cohorts.

He said the percentage of students who achieved grade A to C for science had dropped by 2.5% in urban schools and 3% in rural schools. For maths, the results had fallen by around 4% in both urban and rural schools.

He added that only 8% of teachers were using English exclusively in classes while the use of Bahasa Malay was still common, particularly in rural areas, with on average just over half of PPSMI teaching time being delivered in English. English-medium instruction will be phased out from schools from 2012 and the focus shifted to teaching English in separate language classes alongside improved Bahasa Malay teaching, Muhyiddin said. He said that up to 14,000 English language teachers would be recruited by 2012, as well as specialist teaching assistants. English language teaching time will be increased by up to 30% a week, Muhyiddin added.

However, some critics were sceptical that qualified teaching staff can be found. "What has not occurred to the authorities is that the education system requires very competent teachers," Khoo Kay Kim, emeritus professor at the University of Malaya's history department, told the Reuters news agency.

Meanwhile, the still influential architect of PPSMI was quick to rally support for his policy. The octogenarian Dr Mahathir is using his popular blog to canvass opinion. "I am not surprised over the disappointment and even anger towards the government's decision ... Seems to me like the government is not listening to the voice of the people," he wrote.

Within hours of putting up his online poll, 40,000 people had responded with a resounding 84% opposed to the changes.

### **About the authors**

Saran Kaur Gill is Professor of Sociolinguistics in Multi-Ethnic Nations and is Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Industry and Community Partnerships) at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She obtained her doctorate from the University of London on an Association of Commonwealth Universities Academic Scholarship. She has published in international journals which include *World Englishes*, *Language Policy*, *Asian Englishes* and *Current Issues in Language Planning*.

Yuen Chee Keong is a lecturer at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. He has jointly written a series of English textbooks for secondary students as well as a module on English for Business for undergraduates of distance learning. His main research interests are written Discourse Analysis, Varieties of English and Gender Studies.

Stef Bolte is an international Master student at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University Kebangsaan Malaysia. He obtained a Dutch Bachelor degree in Social and Cultural Education and is particularly interested in Intercultural Communication, Media Studies and (Critical) Discourse Analysis.

Saravanan Ramiah is a Master student at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, University Kebangsaan Malaysia. He obtained a Bachelor degree in English language studies, with a minor in Literature and has teaching experience for over twenty years. His particular interests are in the fields of Language Acquisition, TEFL and Discourse Analysis.