WAR HEROES, TERRORISTS, FREEDOM FIGHTERS AND FRAGILE ECONOMY: FROM METAPHORS TO 'WMDs'

Faridah Ibrahim & Emma Mirza Wati Mohamad
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi
fbi@ukm.my & mirza@ukm.my

Abstract

Metaphor has long been treated with both reverence and suspicion. To the empiricist metaphor is at best an ornament of speech, that improves the sound and appearance of language but does not add to its comprehensibility. In contrast, there is a conception of metaphor as a fountain of meaning and truth that adds colour and force to human beings' expressions of evaluations of certain phenomenon and occurrences. Metaphor is perhaps a very useful language tool that adapts well in our changing needs. Sometimes, however, metaphors get overworked or overused to the extent that they become dead metaphors. Such is the case in journalism where metaphors are used as shortcuts to explanations. In the global context, news content via media language and metaphors are transmitted by the mass media and international news agencies within seconds to the mass audience. In the haste of facing news deadlines and new occurrences, journalists, both local and international, tend to use metaphors to add colour, meanings as well as to make their task easier in the process of explaining news stories to the public. However, the question that arise is to what extent metaphors used for instance 'Terrorists', 'Muslim Fundamentalist', 'Freedom Fighters', 'Fragile Economy' and the like depict the reality? Hence, it is the central aim of this article to analyse to what extent are metaphors used in journalism and to what extent are they allowed. Based on a qualitative content analysis of several Malaysian mainstream newspapers, this article tries to evaluate the use and misuse of metaphors in several news categories.

Abstrak

Metafora telah lama dianggap baik dan juga tidak baik. Bagi para pengkaji, metafora menjadi penghias ucapan yang memperbaiki bunyi dan penampilan bahasa tetapi tidak menambah dari segi pemahamannya. Sebaliknya, ada juga beranggapan bahawa metafora adalah pemberi makna dan kebenaran dan menambahkan daya tarikan kepada penglahiran dan penilaian idea. Sesungguhnya metafora adalah alat bahasa yang mudah disesuaikan dengan keperluan manusia. Walau bagaimanapun, kadangkala metafora terlalu kerap digunakan sehingga menjadikannya kurang efektif dan digelar metafora mati. Keadaan ini dapat dikesan dalam dunia kewartawanan di mana metafora digunakan

sebagai jalan singkat untuk menjelaskan sesuatu. Dalam konteks global, kandungan media melalui bahasa dan metafora disebarkan oleh media massa dan agensi berita antarabangsa dalam sedetik saat kepada khalayak massa. Dalam kesegeraan tarikh luput berita, para wartawan di peringkat tempatan dan antarabangsa, berpotensi menggunakan metafora untuk meningkatkan daya tarikan, makna dan juga untuk memudahkan tugas mereka dalam memberi penjelasan kepada publik. Bagaimana pun, beberapa persoalan yang timbul ialah sejauh manakah metafora yang digunakan seperti 'Pengganas' , 'Puak Pelampau Islam' ' Pejuang Kebebasan' , 'Ekonomi Rapuh' dan sebagainya melambangkan realiti? Oleh yang demikian, makalah ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sejauh mana metafora digunakan oleh kewartawanan dan sejauh mana ia dibenarkan. Berdasarkan kajian analisis kualitatif ke atas beberapa akhbar aliran perdana, makalah ini cuba menilai penggunaan dan salahguna metafora dalam beberapa kategori berita.

Keywords: methapors, semantic, weapons of mass destruction, war heroes, terrorists

Introduction

Metaphor has long been treated with both reverence and suspicion. To the empiricist metaphor is at best an ornament of speech, that improves the sound and appearance of language but does not add to its comprehensibility. In contrast, there is a conception of metaphor as a fountain of meaning and truth that adds colour and force to human beings' expressions of evaluations of certain phenomenon and occurrences. Metaphor is perhaps a very useful language tool that adapts well in our changing needs. However, metaphor when used imprudently by insensitive individuals can be inappropriate and may result in misinterpretations.

In the global context, news content via media language and metaphors are transmitted by the mass media and international news agencies within seconds to the mass audience. In the haste of facing news deadlines and new occurrences, journalists, both local and international, tend to use metaphors to add colour, meanings as well as to make their task easier in the process of explaining news stories to the public. However, the question that arise is to what extent metaphors used for instance 'War heroes', 'Terrorists', 'Muslim Fundamentalist', 'Freedom Fighters', 'Fragile Economy' and the like depict the reality?

In times of war, for instance, we have often heard of the controversial WMDs (Weapons of Mass Destructions) and have heard of the role of language, both words and metaphors, which become important tools for peace negotiations and conciliations. Indeed, appropriate words used could lead to peace negotiations but what about inappropriate words? Could it be another 'WMDs'?

(metaphorically dubbed as *Words of Mass Destructions* or rather *Weapons of Mass Deception*).

Hence, the central aim of this paper is to analyse to what extent are metaphors used in journalism and to what extent are they allowed. Based on a qualitative content analysis of several Malaysian mainstream newspapers, this paper tries to evaluate the use and misuse of metaphors in several news categories.

Metaphors and 'WMDs'

Certainly metaphors seemed very innocent and harmless to readers. After all, it is 'them' who always tend to add colours to a fairly dull and straight forward sentence. Day by day, people use metaphors to verbally express meanings and as a way to illustrate abstract words. And that is probably one of the reasons why it is too accepted far and wide in journalism. So why question the danger of using metaphors in daily news? How can metaphors harm the news delivery and be seen as 'Words of Mass Destructions' or 'Weapons of Mass Deception' (WMDs)?

Truthfully, metaphors are being used in journalism as shortcuts to language and easier strategies to state something *is* something else. The importance of time in our life is likened as time is money, being greedy is replaced by hog, stubborn is mule, light is feather, and deceiving is a snake. In a Malay culture, metaphors are often used to avoid harshness or to accentuate certain qualities: a group of youngsters who like to hang out at night till the wee morning is called 'kutu embun' (misty lice) ; and a beautiful and untainted woman is 'merak kayangan' (Bird of paradise). While it's true that some metaphors are used to help audience or society to understand a particular situation, it may also indirectly suggest a depiction beyond the true meaning of reality.

What are metaphors? Are they the same as similes and analogies? According to Searls (1997) metaphors say one thing *is* another thing, such as 'silence is golden'; whilst similes say one thing is *like* another thing, such as 'gone like snow on the water' and anologies suggest *partial similarities* between unalike things, as with 'licorice is the liver of candy' or 'newsroom is the pulse of media organisation'. Indeed, metaphors may seem similar to similes, but in actuality, they are not.

To the empiricists like Miles and Huberman (1984) metaphors are data-reducing devices, taking several particulars and making a single generality of them. For instance, the 'scapegoat' metaphor pulls together facts about group norms, treatment of deviants, social rituals and social rationalizations into one package.

Metaphors are also pattern-making devices. When exposed to metaphoric sentences in the news, readers may find it easier to

understand the larger context since metaphors help to simplify things and can convey a particular shade of meaning concisely than other words (Fuziah Kartini & Faridah Ibrahim 2004).

For metaphor guru George Lakoff (1987), metaphor is a language device that matters. He says "We may not always know it, but we think in metaphor. And more to the point, metaphors can kill". The daily-used metaphors are imperceptible because we understand them instantaneously; therefore we feel there is no need to pay attention to the underlying meanings behind it. Metaphors usage in journalism can spawn generalization among its readers, which are capable of creating misunderstanding. This happens when the readers associate too much between a situation and the metaphors used.

Nonetheless, a lot of metaphors are still being popularly used among journalist because of its ability to give a so-called "clearer" picture of what is going on. However, in some cases, metaphors are overused or overworked to the extent that they become dead metaphors. Such is the case in journalism where metaphors are used as shortcuts to explanations.

Having metaphors used in mass media especially in this new media age can definitely multiply if not triple the impact towards its readers. With the presence of globalisation and the potential of global wired communication apparatus such as the Internet, it worries us to see that a lot of metaphors will be misunderstood because of the different culture we all live in.

Some metaphors, particularly those used in journalism have a deeper meaning than what it is supposed to connote. "Metaphor, on this view, is a dangerous deviation from the reliable literal resources of natural language and we should restrict ourselves to these literal resources in the systematic pursuit of truth" (Grey, 2000). Therefore it is prudent for journalist as well as editors to be careful and conscientious in the choice of metaphors in news writing.

Holmgreen (2005) in her research found out that there are few different patterns of metaphors used in journalism. In economic reports, organism metaphors are being largely used. Words like rash, healthy, mild and hiccups are significantly found in business and economics news to describe the current market situations. Holmgreen also noted that in news writing, the economy is constantly being described using orientational words such as downturn, upturn, bouncing back, shrunk and contracted. Meanwhile, words of substance and entity such as *wreck, catalyst, triggered* and *deepen* are being used to describe war state such as terrorist attacks.

In time of war, words and metaphors are used beyond our imagination. For instance, lets take a look at the metaphors used by the media provided by news sources during the US-led wars on Afghanistan and Iraq during the first Gulf War and US-Iraq war in

2003.   Words like *coalition of the willing, precision bombing, collateral damage, paramilitary, surgical strike, daisy-cutter, laying the carpet, friendly fires* and many others, have become the language of war.   These are metaphors disguised under army terminologies.   Several scholars say that these are euphemism to soften the impact of war.   When civilians are killed -   it is collateral damage or they are said to be *paramilitary* – soldiers disguised as civilians; *liquidation* stands for murder; *combat fatigue* describes traumatized veterans suffering from "shell shock"; *precision bombing* refers to the exact target although some precision bombing in 2003 Iraq war hit neighbour country, Syria ; while surgical strike refers to small fires to deny the enemies of infrastructure; and the oxygen-sucking bomb used in the US war against Afghanistan and Iraq is known as *daisy-cutter*. Not everyone understands military metaphors and many might not be able to imagine the disastrous effect this "flower-cutter" has on human beings.

Other researches found that family metaphors, such as father-child relationship are relatively being used to describe a nation. According to Lakoff (1995), "the strict father model, which brings together the conservative metaphors for morality, is what unites the various conservative political positions into a coherent whole when it is imposed on political life by the Nation-as-Family metaphors."

'Magical' Powers of Metaphors

Words including metaphors from spoken to written have certain magical powers (Faridah and Rajib 2003). Metaphor, like words, has the ability to create and to destroy; to influence and to change. Using metaphors, meanings are constructed by specific words chosen to describe a situation. More often than not these metaphors used do not precisely carry the actual meaning. In contrast, it has the ability to either understate or amplify the connotation.

For instance, the expression *plunged* used in business news depicts a sudden negative change and that it would exemplify a tragic and disastrous condition. Using *plunged* as a metaphor may not be entirely accurate and appropriate in all circumstances. In such cases, the situation which was supposed to be described as just a decrease has been redefined to a drastic fall to a place which is excluded from contact with the surrounding world. This subtly invites readers to accept the 'metaphorical meaning' rather than the true meaning.

Oesch (1996) too expressed his concern on the ability of metaphors to simultaneously both deconstruct old meanings and reconstruct new ones, transforming ceaselessly the boundaries between semantical fields. At some point, the meaning will be shifted from one domain to another and it would be referred to as

something else. When this happens, one will likely to decipher the metaphor used and disregard the rhetoric intended.

More often then not, metaphor used in journalism is concerned with moral strength. For instance, being *upright* always signifies to being good and responsible; being *low* means bad; *failing* means you are doing evil etc. These are moral strengths qualities that are easy to relate to and can deconstruct and reconstruct new meanings and interpretations. Lakoff (1995) mentioned that much of the metaphor of moral strength is a set of correspondence between the moral and physical domains. He explained that people always interpret moral value metaphors by imagining physical condition. People look at a morally week person is likely to fall, to give in to evil, to perform immoral acts, and thus become part of the forces of evil.

Orientational metaphors also suggest positive or negative connotations. For example, *up* and *high* is used to describe positive reactions. Statements like "The current exchange rate is *up*," or "The stock market is closed at sky *high*" depict positive business state. In contrast, statements like "The company is facing a *downturn*," or "The margin has shrunk to half" will definitely illustrate negative impacts. What's worse is that these metaphors tend to accentuate twice over the actual situation. Readers are inclined to interpret positive statements overwhelmingly while negative statements are perceived twice as bad. This misinterpretation could pose a silent yet dangerous conception towards the media audience in trying to understand the situation happening.

A good and responsible journalism should not misrepresent facts with similes. Manipulating a situation using metaphors would cause misunderstandings and misled its readers. However, sadly, bad journalism still prevail in everyday news. Gans (1980) once wrote in his book that the news media has long been "distorted". Distortion occurs when a journalist has "enduring values and political inclinations and sometimes journalists take favorable or unfavorable attitudes towards certain ideologies and public officials," (Faridah and Rajib, 2003). When this happens, journalists are more concerned with personalities more than the issue itself in news writing. This in result would lead to hyperbole or overstatement in writing, instead of reporting the actual events.

Conversely, this could be easily avoided if a journalist write objectively and adhering to the rules and ethics of writing. Still, to achieve an utterly objectivity is a bit tricky as we humans have feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, one should make an effort to be as objective as he/she can be and not to over/understate news contents by using metaphors. Faridah Ibrahim and Mohd Rajib Ab Ghani (2003) has concluded three options for a journalist to pursue objectivity that is:

1. The area of news selection or the way a reporter or editor uses the standard criteria to determine news worthiness, which includes proximity, prominence, timeliness, impact, controversy, crisis and threshold, among others.
2. The ethical problem involving news that is detrimental to other parties or sources.
3. The use and misuse of language. A reporter or editor must ensure appropriate words, sentences, captions usage and narration to describe a situation.

The third option is very substantial especially when a journalist attempts to substitute words using metaphor. From the general semantics perspective, words are based on an individual's perception. Each individual has different perception to words like "terrorism", "fundamentalist" and even "Islam".

Grey mentioned that "When the literal meaning is deactivated, because of the falsehood of the sentence, a switching happens and the secondary meanings latent in the penumbra are activated." This observable fact is indeed interesting and fascinating. For instance, suppose that Manny is a pet snake. When we say "Manny is a snake", our brain construes Manny as an animal and there is no encroaching of associated meanings. However, if we say "Danny (a man) is a snake", it would definitely stir some interesting baffle towards the statement's literal meaning. As soon as the brain unconsciously apprehend that the description is literally false, the expression becomes semantically charged with secondary meanings latent in the associated semantic penumbra. And above that, the interpretation of this 'secondary meaning' varies in each individual. That's why it is very dangerous to assume that other people have the same word interpretation as us. Hence, adds the more reason for us to be more careful and prudent when using metaphors especially when writing for the mass media which are for public or mass consumption.

Metaphors and General Semantics

Thus far, we may reach an understanding of the way the media report their news and how they use metaphors and terminologies appropriately or inappropriately. Whether metaphors are being coined by the media to make writing more creative, juicy and interesting or the metaphors are being coined by the news sources, to soften the impact of words, the underlying truth is that words and metaphors have magical powers. "We think in words. One who controls words and language controls the minds," says journalist Achin Vanaik (2001).

From the general semanticist perspective, words such as "terrorism", "war heroes", "fundamentalist", "freedom fighters" are words created to dehumanise or humanize certain individuals, events, nations or objects. To make killing another person more easy, individuals are called Satan, demon, evil or Hitler. One can be an instant hero or warrior for his or her bravery for killing this enemy of mankind labelled as "Satan." These are metaphors that evoke instant emotions and response.

Whilst, metaphors are also used to humanize the inhuman. For instance, an act of cruelty is made acceptable by naming it positively such as the word *liquidation* is used instead of the word, *murder*; *collateral damage* is used instead of civilians killed. These are examples of metaphors which are at the highest level of abstraction.

S.I. Hayakawa (1974) said that sometimes metaphors are over and over again till they become ineffective and these are called dead metaphors. No longer are they appropriate to convey the true meanings of things. For instance, the words *terrorist* and *terrorism*, which have been used redundantly, became diluted and no longer carry long-lasting meanings in the minds of people.

To be effective information providers, says Hayakawa, writers and journalists need to identify the right terminologies or try to define clearly the metaphors that are being used to avoid further abstractions and misinterpretations. Beer (2001) who supports Hayakawa's contentions reiterates that language, via words and metaphors, is indeed very powerful. The choice of terms such as *terrorist* and *freedom fighter* evoke different interpretations. He stressed that different patterns of actions may unfold from different interpretations.

On the use of abstract term, and in this case metaphors, Edward Said has said, "we must dissolve words like 'war' and 'peace' into their basic elements to a deeper understanding of what they mean. It is time to tear language, and the experiences it communicates away from numbing oversimplications and reinvest it with nuance, depth and dimension" (in Mishka Moujabber Mourani aljazeera.info). Hence abstract terms need to be defined not just from the intensional meanings, which are basically dictionary-based definitions, but also the extensional meanings so that they are free from manipulations. Extensional orientations provide both clues and guidance in the search for adequate and precise language habits. Like scientific method, extensional orientation utilizes discovery and verification procedures.

According to Alfred Korzybski (1950), founder of the general semantics philosophy, to realize fully the difference between words and what they stand for is to be ready for the differences as well as similarities in the world. This contention is based on his famous general semantics philosophy - "The map is not the territory". This

readiness to accept that "a map does not represent the actual territory" is mandatory to scientific thinking, as well as to sane thinking. Korzybski's simple but powerful suggestion is to add 'index numbers' to all terms according to the formula: a1 is NOT a2; it can be translated as follows: President 1 is NOT President 2; Politician 1 is NOT Politician 2; and etc. When one reads, listens or watches the news, the habit of indexing will help one to visual more concretely, and therefore understand better what is being said. And if nothing is being said except deceptive things, then the habit of indexing may at least part of the time, save one from snapping.

Methodology

Content analysis, from the qualitative and interpretive perspective was used to explore how four Malaysian mainstream newspapers used language, especially metaphors and to what extent metaphors are appropriately used. The newspapers namely *The New Straits Times* (NST), *Utusan Malaysia* (UM), *Berita Harian* (BH) and *The Star* (TS) were systematically selected over a one-month period in June 2005, using Carter's constructed one-week sampling. From the selection, the seven days identified were 1, 4, 9, 14,18, 23 and 27 June. Given the need for further research of metaphor usage in local print media, news were analysed according to the following research questions:

1. How were metaphors used in journalism and to what extent are they allowed?
2. What are the categories of news that tend to use metaphors and to what extent they are appropriate?

Findings

From our content analysis, we found that the words used as metaphors in English newspapers are different from the ones used in Malay newspapers. Some of the metaphors have different meanings in both languages that may well suggest this variation. On top of that, the subsistence dissimilarity of taxonomy and cultural definitions among Malaysian readers has contributed to this variance. We also found that the metaphor used in both Malay and English newspapers are so real that they are blended within the meaning and the context of the objects or events that they are describing. These are found in the health metaphor exhibited by business and economic news. However, a good way to use metaphors are in quotation marks, which some headlines have done. Quotations allow freedom of interpretation by readers.

Findings in the cultural and war metaphors show some appropriate and inappropriate usage of metaphors. To what extent

are metaphors allowed in journalism? Basically journalism espoused factual and objective reporting. Metaphors should be used sparingly to enhance creativity, and should be allowed for as long as they do not "lead the mind to deviate".

The study found that metaphors have been commonly used by the newspapers, perhaps without realizing that they are actually using metaphors to make sense of things. Like their Western counterparts, the findings also show that the Malaysian mainstream newspapers are also not free of metaphors. Among the metaphors popularly used in all the four newspapers are health, orientational, object, cultural and war metaphors. The followings are some of the observations made based on our analyses.

The health metaphor

Health metaphor is common in business news. For instance, in business writing, all the newspapers used health words to describe monetary conditions:

- *Berita Harian* (Economy section), 9th June 2005, used *pemulihan* (recovery) to describe the improving economic situation
- *Berita Harian* (NadiBiz), 18th June 2005, used *tenat* (dying) to describe a company's bad financial condition.

The orientational metaphor

There is also a noticeable orientational metaphor found to describe various conditions:

- *The Star* (Commodities section), 14th June 2005, used *plunged dramatically, slower* and *slumping* to describe negative movements and *pent-up* and *shoring up,* to describe the positive shift.
- UM (Front page) 18th June 2005 talks about PTPTN's failure to trace borrowers due to helter-skelter (lintang-pukang) records. The word *lintang-pukang* describes the chaotic situation the educational funding board is facing in getting borrowers to pay up their loans. Poor management and records handling are several of the reasons given for the failure. In this case the word *lintang-pukang* is placed within quotation marks. This is a good strategy in using metaphor.
- *Berita Harian* (Hip section), 24th June 2005, used *goyang gerudi* (drill) to describe an exciting hula-hoop dance routine by a famous *Dangdut* singer.
- *Berita Harian* (Economy section), 24th June 2005, used *jajaran sempit* (narrow path) to describe the difficulties faced by a company

The object metaphor

Others used prominent locations, actions and objects to substitute expression.

- *Berita Harian* (NadiBiz), 18th June 2005, used *dipahat* (carve) to describe an unchanging currency rate
- *The Star* (Stock Analysis), 27th June 2005, used *candlestick* to describe stock charts
- *Berita Harian* (Sentral), 24th June 2005, used *kain singkat* (short skirt) to bear a resemblance of a water crisis
- *Berita Harian* (Rencana), 24th June 2005, used *syurga* (heaven) to describe Kuantan city as an entertainment center for youth
- *Berita Harian* (Dunia), 24th June 2005, used *tercalar* (scratched) to describe America's bad image

In sports reporting, metaphors used to make reading more stimulating. Adding metaphors avoid readers from being bored by motionless words. For instance:

- *The Star* (Sport), 27th June 2005, used *marathon penalty shootout* to describe the long endured penalty shoot at a football game

- *The Star* (Sport), 24th June 2005, used *slapped* to describe a sudden blow towards a football coach when he was fined RM50,000

These are some of the metaphors used in Malaysian newspapers. Sure, it sounds pretty innocent and may not cause any perplexity towards the real meaning. Nonetheless, it has a huge potential to magnify and intensify the 'metaphorical meaning' and baffle the semantics as well as connoting the wrong message.

The culture metaphor

Metaphors are also every so often connected with culture definitions. And most of the time, metaphor used in local newspapers may not be well understood in other countries. This can cause confusion towards some readers, thus proving metaphor is inappropriate to be used in journalism. Some cases in point are as below:

- *Berita Harian* (Sukan/Sports), 4th June 2005, used *menuai* (harvesting) to describe victory.

The word harvesting has very much to do with the Malaysian culture whereby traditional farmers harvest paddy for living. It is always associated with hard work and determination. In such case, the writer is using this particular metaphor to illustrate the team's well-earned victory. Readers from non-plantation-based countries would definitely find the usage of 'harvest' as a metaphor quite puzzling.

- *The Star* (Focus), 27ᵗʰ June 2005, used *bull-run,* to describe a rough situation.
- NST (Business Times) 2ⁿᵈ June 2005, used headline *MAHB bullish on performance* to indicate the perseverance and optimicism of MAHB (Malaysian Airports Holding Berhad) in time of economic challenges.

To most of us, bull is almost always associated to rough and brutal. This metaphor may easily mean that you are facing a challenging journey. But to the Indian community, bull is a sacred animal as the Hindus consider them as their god. Is it an appropriate word to use to show strength, vigor and force? The semantic difference is so wide that it doesn't just cause confusion but also may create tensions among ethnic groups.

The war metaphor

- NST (Sport) 2ⁿᵈ June 2005, used headline *Lions out for revenge* to show the seriousness of Singapore's football association to win in a tournament.
- NST (Sport) 2ⁿᵈ June 2005, used headline *Malaysia go down tamely*

We talked about *revenge* in time of war, and every time the word *revenge* is uttered it will be accompanied with all kinds of emotions including hatred and animosities. Hence, the metaphor about *lion's revenge* in the above football tournament between Singapore and Malaysia, where Singapore is going all out to beat Malaysia for the loses they had experienced (4-0) in the 2002 Tiger Cup, might not be appropriate in such a sporting spirit. The word "revenge" is equated with so much anger in times of war. Whilst the metaphor that places Malaysia as a *tame* Malaysia likened the country like a timid person, not capable of showing response.

- NST (Prime News) 2ⁿᵈ June 2005, used headline *Abdullah: War on corruption a continuous effort* to describe the government's seriousness and intensified effort to fight against graft.

The word *war* in the above news does not signify *war* in the real sense that make use of weapons or perhaps the real WMDs. However, in the effort to find better words, authorities and the media resort to the *war* metaphor to denote government's seriousness which may connote a different meaning altogether. In this case , the 'weaponry devices' used in the *war against corruption* are not missiles, bombs or guns and others but armaments which include Malaysian Integrity Institute, the Anti-Corruption Agency, decentralising strategies (to cut red tape) and the Royal Commission of Police. Perhaps a better headline would be 'Step up efforts to reduce corruption'.

- UM (Front page) 18th Jun 2005: Michael Jackson wants to take revenge (balas dendam) on individuals who have planned to damage his image .

The word *revenge* is too strong a word and emotion-laden. Here, the war metaphor used to signify seriousness and anger, has an impact especially for Jackson's fans worldwide.

By Way of A Conclusion

Language is the lens through which journalists report their news to the public. It will be a good and an ideal situation if the news are reported according to the journalists' own professional lense. However, too often, journalists get their lense, their language, from the news sources. We are actually witnessing not only a new kind of war and WMDs, but a new kind of journalism. Today, in warfare, both conventional and non-conventional, the real WMDs are no longer in widespread use, but words (Words of Mass Destructions) are.

From the general semanticist point of view, journalists' words have the potential to become Weapons of Mass Deceptions, or rather Words of Mass Destructions, when inappropriately used. Hence, metaphors do matter because they structure our perceptions, the way we make sense of the world around us, and the way we talk and understand about things that affect our lives and identities. It is indisputable, taken together, the proliferation of new media technology, growing media conglomerates, professional norms and values and the onset of globalisation, the media have become one powerful force that shape the lives and destinies of peoples and nations. And central to the media language, is the role played by metaphors, which have become powerful tools in shaping perceptions and opinions of the masses. And for the media, to be aware of the use and misuse of language, to be aware of what are

being said, and how they say it, they can help reduce tensions, animosities and bias worldwide.

References

Abd. Ghani, M. R. & Ibrahim, F. (1996, 19-22 August 1996). *The use and misuse of language in the media: Semantic analysis of human rights coverage in Malaysian national dailies.* Paper presented at the IAMCR Conference, Sydney Australia.

Abd. Ghani, M. R. & Ibrahim, F. (2002, 21-26 July 2002). *Symbols, labels and straight news: A study on the nature of prejudice in the media.* Paper presented at 23rd IAMCR Conference and General Assembly: Intercultural Communication, Barcelona,Spain.

Hayakawa, S. I. (1974). *Language in thoughts and action.* New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich.

Ibrahim, F. & Abd. Ghani, M. R. (2003, 16-18 December 2003). *Peace or annihilation: A study of war news coverage from the general semantics perspectives.* Paper presented at the International Conference on Language and Nationhood: confronting new realities, organised by School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Korzybski, A. (1950). *Manhood and humanity: The science and art of human engineering.* (2nd ed.). Lakeville, Conn.: Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Co.

Lakoff, G. (1987). *Women, fire and dangerous things: What categories reveal about the mind.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Searls, D. (1997). Make money, not war. Retrieved from http://www.searls.com/metaphor1.html

The language of war. (2001). Retrieved from http://www.colarado.edu