

**Medium of instruction (MOI) policy as a symptom of
nationhood: A critical analysis of the MOI policy
discourses in Malaysia**

By

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This thesis is presented for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Linguistics

Faculty of Human Sciences

Macquarie University

March 2016

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Abstract

Medium of instruction (MOI) policy as a symptom of nationhood: A critical analysis of the MOI policy discourses in Malaysia

The aim of this research was to explain the discursive ‘rules’ of the construction of the medium of instruction (MOI) policy in Malaysia. The study of rules includes an exploration of the discursive techniques (e.g., intertextuality and interdiscursivity) employed by various individuals in their construction of the MOI policy debates in Malaysia. The discourse data obtained was collected from (1) the national parliament archives and (2) the archives of a selected number of mainstream and non-mainstream news media in Malaysia. The analysis focused on a specific MOI policy, i.e., PPSMI (*Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris* tr. Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English) Policy that ran for six years (2003-2009). The discourse was analysed based on critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2001, 2009, 2013). The thesis explains the micro features within the textual formations and the macro features or the ‘conditions of possibility’ of textual formations. The analysis shows that the discursive formations were effects of local realities constructed in political terms. These formations were also effects of external factors, like the rise of English in the contemporary world. The analysis also shows that the members of the parliament and the writers of the newspaper articles made frequent reference to the global and local ‘realities’ in order to perspectivize (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and to legitimize (van Leeuwen, 1999, 2008) their claims. The pro-policy individuals in their arguments minimized the foreignness associated with English in Malaysia. In their discourses English was constructed as a language of opportunity. Other constructions foregrounded were discourses of globalization, open market, modernity and so on. The anti-policy discourse on the other hand used the occasion of policy debates as an opportunity to address various socio-political antagonisms within the country. The pro and the anti-policy statements in Malaysia appeared to be a ‘symptom’ of a multilingual and multiethnic nationhood with large minorities.

Statement of the candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled *Medium of instruction (MOI) policy as a symptom of nationhood: A critical analysis of the MOI policy discourses in Malaysia* has not been submitted for a degree or part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research written by me. All sources of information used are indicated in the thesis, and any help and assistance that I have received in my research work have been appropriately acknowledged.



Mahmud Hasan Khan

03 March 2016

Acknowledgments

I started off with Christopher N. Candlin as my principal supervisor in September 2012. His untimely death in May 2015 devastated many of us who were his supervisees. Alan Jones was kind enough to accept the role of the principal supervisor. Without his constant thoughtful comments and meticulous editing of my drafts, it would have been very difficult for me to complete writing this thesis. I am extremely grateful to Alan for his patient guidance throughout. I am also indebted to Stephen Moore, the Director of HDR, for his consultation whenever required. Collette Ryan, the Administration Manager at the Department of Linguistics and Margaret Wood, the Administrative Assistant, I must also thank for their kindness and help regarding administrative matters.

I am immensely grateful to everyone who shared their perspectives on Malaysia with me during my stay there from 2000 to 2012. My PhD may have focused on a specific period of time, and on a specific policy-controversy, but by listening to their stories, their “lived experiences,” who were academics and non-academics, friends and acquaintances, and colleagues and former students from the University of Malaya, I benefitted immensely. I cannot mention all of them due to limitation of space, but a few names that I must mention are: Subramaniam Govindasamy, Moses Samuel, Azirah Hashim, Kamila Ghazali, Stefanie Pillai, Ramesh Nair, Rajasegaran Krishnasamy, Maya Khemlani David, Ng Lee Luan, Mary Varghese, Aishah Ahmad, Siti Munira, Ang Pei Soo, Siang Lee, Hisham Salim, Noorhana Hashim, Uma Rani, Sharmane Raphael, Evelyn Ghazali, Cheang Kean Wai, and Wai Mun Soh. I also express my gratitude to my friends at Macquarie University, namely Anita Trastuti, Fazelah Noor, Wendy Hiew, Truong Du, Truong My, Bophan Khan, and Chan Narith Keuk from whom I had the opportunities to learn about formation of identity in Southeast Asia. Special thanks to my dear friends Dariush Izadi and Radika Subramaniam for always being so supportive. Also thanking Laura Ficorilli, Xi Li, Yu Hailing, Wujian Han and Chen Yi for their kind support whenever required.

I am grateful to Shapla Parveen for reading various drafts of my chapters. The two lovely boys at home, Samir and Mikail were a constant source of joy and happiness during stressful times. I missed spending time with my mother Mahmuda Khan, sister Kamrun Nahar Khan, nephew Shuvo and niece Mou. Without the help and sacrifice of all these people it would have been very difficult for me to complete this dissertation.

Dedication

For Christopher N. Candlin (1940 - 2015)

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Chapter One

Introduction

[W]hat language is being planned, who is doing the planning and on behalf of whom, for what local and state purposes and with what anticipated effects (Candlin, 1991, p. vi)

1.0 Aims of research

The aims of this research were to study the discursive formation of medium of instruction (MOI) policies in Malaysia. The policy debates studied addressed MOI issues in educational institutions below the tertiary level, which included the country's national primary and secondary schools. The debates have been explored within two sets of texts: (1) politically contested institutional documents, i.e., the parliamentary Hansard and, (2) the debates within the country's mainstream and non-mainstream media. Based on the above aims, the research questions posed in this study are,

1. How do the Malaysian parliamentarians construct the MOI debates discursively? (*Data from the parliamentary Hansard available at the National Parliament website*).
 - a. How do the individual MPs construct a text as a discourse of identity (i.e., ethnic, local and global) and pedagogy (i.e., education in general and MOI in particular) to perspectivize and legitimize their arguments?
 - b. What is the mechanism (i.e., intertextuality and interdiscursivity) in these discourses that holds them together in the discursive formation?
2. How do the Malaysian media construct the MOI policy debates discursively? (*Data from the news media, i.e., The New Straits Times, The Star, Malay Mail, Utusan Malaysia, Malaysia Insider and Malaysiakini*)
 - a. How are the individual discourses (e.g., on ethnicity and pedagogy) represented in the discursive formation?
 - b. How do the specific newspapers perspectivize and legitimize their discourses?
 - c. What is the mechanism (i.e., intertextuality and interdiscursivity) in these discourses that holds them together in the discursive formation?

1.1 Theoretical considerations

There exist in every society socio-political antagonisms. These are voiced by individuals within various sites of contestation. The antagonistic discourses, constructed discursively (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) are often viewed as effects of specific identity categories, e.g., ethnicity, language, religion and class among others (Block, 2013; Edwards, 2009; Rowley & Bhopal, 2006). On the other hand, attempts to imply a deterministic relation between antagonisms and any of the specific identity categories, for instance social class, ethnicity or ethno-linguistic idiosyncrasies, have been criticized by poststructuralists (Howarth, 2013). The point made by the poststructuralists, often in conjunction with post-Marxists is that there are always possibilities for alternative articulations of these variables within a society. The likelihood of alternative articulations, reduce these variables into merely ideological claims. Articulation is “any practice” that establishes “a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). For instance when an ethnic identity is articulated with a religious and/ or class identity each identity will be “modified” by the mechanisms of the established relation (Torfing, 2003, p. 298).

In a ‘discourse theoretical’ (Torfing, 2003) sense, identity and social antagonisms are fluid concepts. The fluidity allows the formation of symbolic chains of hegemonic or counterhegemonic discourses when individuals align and re-align themselves for pragmatic purposes within a contestation (Laclau, 2005). A contestation can be defined as a publically enacted debate over the norms which are constitutive of a given social regime, i.e. a clash of discursively realised ideological positions. Antagonisms, mediated by identity politics, can be conceptualized as an articulation or a discursive formation meant to be contested perpetually within a society.

Discursive articulations of language planning policy may take place both “synchronically” and “diachronically” within a society (Blommaert, 1999; Ricento, 2006). These articulations reveal specific contradictions within a society, particularly, within a “plural” (Milner, 2003) society that aims at constructing a homogeneous national identity through policy debates.

Based on existing literature, this thesis assumes that MOI study can be defined as a sub-field within the broader field of language policy (henceforth, LP) or language planning policy (LPP) research. Tollefson (1991), however, distinguishes between LPP and LP discourses. He offers the categories based on the criterion of ‘voice.’ That is, LP discourse

is to be constructed solely by the government in contrast to LPP discourse which is a discursive formation produced by a wider group of stakeholders including the experts on the issue. To date, a very extensive body of reported studies exists within language policy literature, across countries and continents (see, *inter alia* Clyne, 1997; Gill, 2013; Grin & Vaillancourt, 1997; Guan, 2007; Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Liddicoat, 2004; Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008, Obaidul Hamid, 2010; Rannut, Skutnabb-Kangas, & Phillipson, 1994; Rappa & Wee, 2006; Takala & Sajavaara, 2000; Tollefson, 1991, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007; Tupas, 2009; Wee & Heng, 2005).

1.1.1 Managing language policy

Much of the existing LP literature has focused, largely, on infrastructural issues. That is, how a language policy is “managed” in a specific context resulting in the “language management” argument (e.g., Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Spolsky, 2009). Concurrently, several LP studies focused on socio-political contestations. That is, why a policy is adopted within the context of its use by developing a critical argument (e.g., Canagarajah, 2005; Heller, 2010b; Johnson, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Pennycook, 2002b, 2013, 2014; Phillipson, 2006b; Ricento, 2006; Shohamy, 2006; Stroud & Wee, 2007; Tollefson, 1991, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007).

One may claim that the “language management” (LM) argument, a concept proposed by Spolsky (2009) and others (e.g., Nekvapil & Sherman, 2009), ‘neglects’ the position that language policy issues are often the results of ‘ideological contestations’ within a society. Language policies from an LM perspective appears as a necessary top-down process determined by certain ‘pragmatic’ choices that the top stratum deem are best suited for everyone in a language policy context. Some of the metaphors widely used in language management literature are: domain analysis (Fishman, 1972), language ecology (Haugen, 1987), and network analysis (Milroy, 1987).

Both the ‘language management’ and the ‘contestation’ based arguments have their pros and cons; and, it is not the aim of this thesis to evaluate their respective worth. This thesis, written in a discourse-analytical tenor, on the other hand, studies, how different claims either pedagogical or rights-based (i.e., based on ethnicity, equity and so on), made by both the language management and the critical groups, are ‘manipulated’ in various public

spheres to perspectivize (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and legitimize (Van Leeuwen, 1999, 2007, 2008; Van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999) MOI policy making imperatives in Malaysia.

1.1.2 Critical tradition in language policy arguments

The current thesis uses more recently introduced post-structuralist and post-Marxist concepts like discursive construction, articulation, and socio-political antagonisms (see Chapter Four for a detailed discussion on the concepts). Thus, the literature written with a critical orientation in language policy literature is deemed theoretically relevant. A quick review of the tradition shows that in contrast to the language management perspective, analysts within the critical orientation, mainly after Tollefson (1991), tend to use, what they call a “critical historical” framework. Such framework, they believe, captures the socio-political realities better in specific language societies (Ricento, 2006). Similar to Tollefson, but extended over a larger period of time, is the critical outlook by Pennycook (2002a, 2013, 2014) which he developed to study “the cultural politics of English” resulting in specific policy-making decisions. Pennycook’s critique of colonial language policy (Pennycook, 2002b) is crucial to this thesis as the current study analyses the policy discourse produced in a postcolonial society, i.e., Malaysia. Within the critical tradition, Heller (2010) adds a neoliberal critique of policy discourse. These analysts explored, in general, the distinctive forms of ethnic and/ or other ideological arguments promising socio-political changes, in the form of case studies. Besides, there is also a proliferation in ethnographic studies (cf. Canagarajah, 2006; McCarty, 2014).

A preliminary theoretical position, which would be constantly examined throughout this thesis is that *MOI policies are types of articulations mediated by socio-political antagonisms within a specific historical point of time*. This view on MOI policies turns our attention to the wider domain of policy debates, beyond the LP and MOI policy debates.

1.1.3 Policy discourse analysis

In the last few decades, policy debates have been viewed as discursive manifestations of socio-political antagonisms within a society (Howarth, 2013). This is a development in conjunction with the development within the field of applied linguistics (McNamara, 2012). That is, applied linguists have shown their increasing interest in the socio-political contexts in which the production and consumption of a linguistic assertion (or discourse)

takes place. Most policy researchers tend to explain the policy debates by employing various offshoots of poststructuralist schools, and also, by drawing on the concepts of ‘antagonisms,’ ‘hegemonic contestations,’ ‘articulation,’ ‘nodal points,’ ‘floating’ and ‘empty signifiers,’ ‘contingency’ and so on (Samuel, Khan, Ng, & Cheang, 2014). Researchers with such theoretical presuppositions – epistemological biases – are put in general under discourse theoretical school (Carpentier & De Cleen, 2007; Torfing, 2003) developed by Glynos and Howarth (2007), Howarth (2013), Laclau (Laclau, 1985, 1996, 2005, 2006) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985) among others.

Within the European discourse theoretical approach the contestations around hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulations within the confine of modern states have been studied widely (Torfing, 2003). Discourse analysts have developed complex methodological approaches within an inter/multi/trans-disciplinary approach. One of the major discourse analytical groups, i.e., Critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA), has dubbed such cross-disciplinary critical efforts as moments of “conceptual pragmatism” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2001).

Policy researchers, within the broader discourse analytical framework, may tend to distinguish also, between a deliberative approach, after Habermas, and an agonistic approach following Mouffe (Bond, 2011). Their arguments are basically rooted in the discourse of participatory democracy (Hillier, 2003). The fundamental difference between a Laclauian and a Habermasian discourse model is based on the former’s use of hegemonic contestation in contrast to the latter’s use of participation within an “ideal speech act situation” (Habermas, 1979) by bracketing socio-political antagonisms. At present, with the proliferation of public forums, non-governmental and rights-based organisations, due to an increasing democratic consciousness of citizens throughout the globe, most societies, including Malaysia, participate actively in the discursive act of policy formations.

The above theoretical positions indicate that socio-political antagonisms in any society would eventually lead to hegemonic contestations. And these contestations would result in concrete moments of articulation or discursive formations within different public spheres. The job of an analyst would be to investigate the empirical evidences of these contingent articulations so that one can explain the reasons why and how a specific articulation took place within a particular polity. In other words, a discourse analytical framework presupposes the Kantian question: What are the *conditions of possibility* of such

articulations? For us, the question prompts us to explore the Malaysian situation in some depth.

1.1.4. Conditions of possibility as contextual variable

Kant's question on the conditions of possibility has been posed by Foucault (1972) in discourse analytical terms (see *Archaeology of Knowledge*). Foucault (by combining his later works) provides two answers to the question on the formation of an articulation in a specific society, (1) archaeological (i.e., historically the way a discourse exists) and (2) genealogical (i.e., which power mechanisms allow a discourse to exist). In this sense, the explanation for the conditions of possibility of a discourse requires both a technical and a critical explanation. In the Malaysian context, the utterances made in the two sites we explored, could be explained via the archaeological mechanism; while, for the debates to be realized in genealogical terms, the socio-political formation of Malaysia needs to be explored. Various other Foucaultian concepts can help to explain the genealogical structure, which are, 'order of discourse,' 'governmentality' 'bio-politics' and so on. These concepts have direct influences in the formations of various policy discourses, and consequently, towards the shaping of a society via articulations of such policies.

1.1.5 Discourse as a concrete object of study: A CDA perspective

One of the basic premises of this thesis is the idea that it is necessary to draw on the works of discourse theorists like Foucault, Laclau and Mouffe, who tend to 'philosophise' the conditions of possibility of discourse. However, I rely much more on the critical discourse analysts because of the latter's emphasis on structures and historicity of discursive utterances (Fairclough, 1992a, 1992b, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2003, 2013a, 2013b).

Unlike CDA practitioners, Laclau and his associates are less interested in analysing specific utterances by using grammatical tools within a discursive formation. The current thesis takes the position that Laclau's notion of 'specificity' of politics and 'antagonisms' need to be translated in specific utterances. Critical discourse analysts 'concretize' a debate based on empirical discourse data, located in a specific context of utterance. Also to add, instead of making transcendental ahistorical claims, CDA researchers focus on a particular space and time (refer to Kant's notion of conditions of possibility discussed at section

1.1.4.) as they deal with issues that affect a society *at the moment*. What CDA provides is a “textually oriented discourse analysis” (Fairclough, 1992a) in order to interpret the precise moment of articulation.

As CDA analysts view discourse as a social product, they explore the socio-political conditions in which such discourses evolve dialectically (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). In other words, the contestations around a discourse and their expressions into social movements are constructed in a society by individuals from the centre and also by the ones from the periphery. Various discourses result in hegemonic and counterhegemonic discourses. These voices within contestations can be captured effectively when discourses are read “symptomatically,” (Althusser, 1971). That is, how those discourses are effects of a context within a specific time in which individuals occupy specific subject positions. A symptomatic reading in that sense may help an analyst to challenge the subjective utterances made by individuals articulated albeit in universal or transcendental terms for a community or society. The ethno-religious discourses would be produced in transcendental terms evoking an ideal identity in political discourses. To unmask such utterances another reading technique, suggested by Bourdieu, i.e., “skewed reading” (Bourdieu, 1998) can be helpful. In his reading of Heidegger, Bourdieu found the technique as effective in order to explain how the author of *Being and Time* veiled the traces of a specific brand of political faith behind his philosophical discourses. In policy debates, specific ethnic aspirations can be built around the signifiers of ‘equity’ or ‘fare distribution,’ which for instance, need a skewed reading.

The theoretical issues raised above, rooted in political philosophy and theories of discourse, imply that policy-making discourses are political articulations contested within a specific polity. Hence, I will attempt to analyse policy-making discourses in order to be able to conceptualize the specific socio-political reality of one particular polity, e.g., Malaysia, in this study. The domains of discourse chosen in this study (i.e., Hansard and media) would enable us to explain how the abstract conceptual variable of socio-political antagonism could be realized at micro levels via discursive textual formations.

1.2 The historical background

Malaysia is a multiethnic, multi-religious and multilingual society which is located in Southeast Asia at 2030 N 112030 E with its capital in Kuala Lumpur. The country is

divided into two parts by the South China Sea, the West or Peninsular Malaysia and the East Malaysia. The West Malaysia comprises two states, i.e., Sabah and Sarawak; while the 11 other states are located in the East Malaysia. Besides these 13 states, administratively, the country has three Federal Territories, namely, Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya.

The historical material development of Malaysia, the context of this research, has been discussed in detailed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Thus, in this section, it is discussed only briefly. Malaysia, formerly, British Malaya, is a postcolonial nation. The British colonial administrative measures taken till the independence of the country (b. 1957) shaped, powerfully, the country's governmental policies, including its language policies (Samuel & Khan, 2013). Many of the British administrative policies were quickly dissolved after the independence while the rest were re-written in order to suit the needs of an independent nation based on its ethno-cultural preferences. Looking at the contemporary debates in contrast to the ones which took place in the colonial era, the aforementioned needs (i.e., the specific ethno-cultural preferences) can be viewed as "vanishing mediators" in Jameson's terms (see Jameson 1973; *The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber*). That is, the needs of a colonial nation, a newly emerged nation and the needs of the contemporary Malaysia (within the evolved regional and global contexts), are very different. Crucially, the needs determined during one era have lost their efficacies in another era resulting in the creation of new discourses (or articulation).

As Malaysia grew over the decades, the nation erased most of its colonial and/ or immediate postcolonial marks. A number of material changes occurred, resulting in a number of policy changes based on a new set of "social imaginary" (Taylor 2004) as the country added other complexities. For instance, the Chinese and the Indians who came to the *Tanah Melayu* (tr. Malay Land) once merely as "sojourners" (Wang, 1996) in the 18th and 19th centuries, are no longer 'new comers' or '*pendatang-pendatang asing*' (tr. foreigners). It would be viewed as 'derogatory' and 'unacceptable' to use the term "*pendatang asing*" in today's context since non-Malays too participate in the formation of the *Tanah Melayu*'s various policies as rightful citizens. They articulate their discursive positions in numerous public forums in order to signal their presences and to enact their duties as active citizens.

In recent times, specially, after the 2008 General Elections, racially integrated socio-political platforms have become a persistent reality (Chin & Huat, 2009; Sani, 2009; Fee &

Appudurai, 2011; Noh, 2014). However, the ethnicity based politics has not disappeared entirely (Welsh, 2013). Accordingly, there are multiple avenues for the different ethnic groups of the country to express intra-group solidarity, while there are platforms too to express inter-group camaraderie for the formation of political or policy-making discourses. Hence the question appears that to what extent the language policy debates in most multiethnic and multilingual societies (including Malaysia), are solely about pedagogic concerns. Whether or not these debates are often determined by other factors, like ethnic and religious identity politics, resulting in socio-political antagonisms. In addition, these debates may feed on external realities like global capitalism or neoliberal economy (Heller, 2010a; Piller & Cho, 2013; Ricento, 2006, 2015). Hence, the specific empirical examples of the debates need to be collected. The exploratory question that we may ask is: *What are the unique historical conditions in Malaysia that produced such and such discursive formations? Or in other words: To what extent are these formations reflective of the symptom(s) of a nationhood?*

The next few sections will introduce the “ideological brokers” (Blommaert 1999), who contribute to the MOI policy debates in Malaysia. These participants represent the country’s civil society, various non-government organizations and language and education activist-groups. There are also members of the parliament who represent different ethnicity-based political parties to debate the policies. The specific sites of contestations which we focused on are the national parliament and the mainstream and non-mainstream media outlets in Malaysia.

1.2.1 Demography of Malaysia

The multiethnic Malaysia has an estimated population of 28.3 million (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2010). There are three main ethnic communities in the country who can be divided into the *bumiputera* (Tr. Sons of the Soil) and the non-*bumiputera*. The Malays are the *bumiputeras*, a label they share with a few other non-Malay indigenous groups namely, Kadazans, Ibans, Minagkabau, Banjar, and Melanau among others. The *bumiputeras*, together, make 67% of the population. The rest of the population are non-*bumiputeras*. The majority of the non-*bumiputeras* are the Chinese (23%), while the rest are the Indians (7%) and others (1%).

The three main ethnic groups in the country (i.e., The Malays, the Chinese and the Indians) are not homogeneous communities. Many of the Malays have Achenese, Javanese, Thai, Arab and even Indian or Pakistani origin; while the Chinese are Hakka, Hokein and Foochaow among others. Indians are largely ethnic Tamils, but Malaysian Indians are also of Punjabi, Gujrati and of Bengali origin. While the national language of the country is Malay, officially, Bahasa Malaysia (BM), the different dialects of the Chinese and the Indians are widely spoken by the respective ethnic communities. Class, creed and religious denominations have added further levels of complexities into the ethnic tapestry of Malaysia.

1.2.2 School system in Malaysia

The demographic variety has been reflected in Malaysia's school system. There are two types of schools in the country catering to the needs of the three main ethnic groups (i.e., the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians). The schools are namely, the National (*Sekolah Kebangsaan - SK*) and the National-type (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan - SJK*). In the national schools the medium of instruction is the national language, i.e., the Bahasa Malaysia (BM); while in the national-type schools students are taught in Mandarin (for the Chinese – SJK[C]) and Tamil (for the Indians – SJK [T]). The two national-type schools (Chinese and Indian) limit their service at the level of primary schools. Primary education begins at the age of 7 (seven) and it continues for 6 (six) years. At the end of the primary school, students need to sit for the Primary School Achievement Test known as *Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah* (UPSR).

The secondary school starts at Form 1 and the students need to study till Form 5. To graduate from the secondary school students need to sit for the Malaysian Certificate of Education examination, which in Malay is, *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* (SPM). At the secondary level, all Malaysian students are taught in the national language BM which is also the mother tongue of the ethnic Malays. Some secondary schools offer a one-year transition period in order for the Chinese and Tamil speaking students to cope with the curriculum in Malay (David & Govindasamy 2005). Ideally, each secondary school that accepts students from national-type schools must offer the transition-period facilities.

There are 77 private Chinese secondary schools in which the Chinese primary school students can continue their studies in Mandarin. English medium schools and religious

schools (*Sekolah Agama*) are two other prevailing features of Malaysian schooling. However, these schools are privately run, and therefore, the national language policy would not affect their premises.

1.2.2.1 MOI debates in the Malaysian national institutions

Due to its demographic composition, the country has the history of experiencing MOI debates, both before its independence in 1957 and in its later period. Most of the education reports drafted in the Colonial Malaya, and in later Malaysia (e.g., Barns Report in 1950, Fenn-Wu Report in 1951, Razak Report in 1956, Rahman Talib Report in 1960, and Mahathir Report in 1979), contained sizeable sections on the status of medium of instruction in schools.

In contemporary Malaysia, as the country aims to become a regional education hub, the tertiary education policies are increasingly more open to the use of English as an MOI mostly due to its global appeal (Cheng, Mahmood, & Yeap, 2013; Gill, 2004). The burgeoning tertiary education of the country could be seen as an inevitable effect of the proliferation of neoliberal agenda, globally, resulting in seeing education-as-a-commodity (Connell, 2013; Phillipson, 2006a, 2006b). Challenged by the ‘commodification’ of education, tertiary education system in Malaysia responded quickly by accommodating English in order to promote the education industry in the country and beyond. It is obvious that unlike the primary and secondary schools, tertiary institutes could ‘ignore’ the identity politics mediated by language policy debates in the country.

For possible economic benefits the language policy at higher learning institutions has been kept being more flexible in line with the regional and global needs (Gill, 2004). The MOI policy debates involving the country’s pre-tertiary academic institutions are of a different nature. The arguments for a pro-English tertiary education are motivated by economic imperatives (which are often read synonymously with the country’s promise to become a developed nation by 2020). On the other hand, the arguments for school-education system are essentially motivated by identity politics and ethnic concerns. These concerns have become more obvious in post-1997 and post-Mahathir era as the nature of Malay politics in general and non-Malay politics in particular received a new dimension (see section 1.2.4 to read more on the nature of this new dimension of politics in Malaysia).

In this thesis language policy debates covering the country's higher education has not been studied as the debates on language policy in the tertiary institutes do not help to capture the ethno-political dimension of the debates – a key concern in this thesis (for the arguments on higher education one can refer to Ali, 2013; Knight & Morshidi, 2011; Marginson, Kaur, & Sawir, 2011; Morshidi, Razak, & Koo, 2009; Tierney & Sirat, 2008). The national schools (national and national-type, mentioned above) are considered the ground for national integration due to the reason that these schools serve the citizens of the nation-state solely, unlike the institutions of higher learning institutes. Public universities in the country enrol foreign students while public schools do not.

1.2.2.2 The Historical transformation of Malaysian schools

Malaysian schools changed its structure as it evolved from a colonial to a postcolonial society. The concern in the colonial Malaya, like in many other British colonies, was, to produce a nation to serve the British administration, while in the postcolonial Malaya the government was “committed” to produce citizens with a sense of national identity (Gill, 2004).

School enrolment could be seen as an indicator for national awareness on a centrally coordinated MOI policy. A quick look at the secondary schools, on the eve of the independence, in 1956, shows that 61% of the enrolled students went to the schools in which the medium of instruction was English. The English schools were government aided. While an overwhelming minority, i.e., 34.4% went to the Chinese-medium, followed by 4.1% Malay-medium and 0.4% went to the Tamil-medium schools. The non-English medium schools were not funded by the government. The situation changed dramatically after the independence in 1957 and in a decade, i.e., by 1967, the percentage of enrolment in English secondary schools decreased by 69.1%; while the number increased for Malay medium by 30.9%.

In 1970, the Malaysian Ministry of Education decided to stop enrolment in English-medium schools completely starting from 1971, with a view that by 1982 the Malayanization would be accomplished (Guan, 2007). This process of Malayanization has been shown in the following Table:

Table 1.1: Malayization of education system

Year	Event
1970	The phased-conversion of English-medium national type primary school to Bahasa Malaysia medium national type primary schools was started in the first year of primary school
1975	The conversion of English-medium national type primary schools to Bahasa Malaysia-medium type primary schools was completed
1976	The phased-conversion of vernacular and English national type secondary school to Bahasa Malaysia medium national type primary schools was started in the first year of the secondary schools
1981	The conversion of vernacular and English national type secondary schools to Bahasa Malaysia-medium type secondary schools was completed

By the early 1980s, the English medium schools had stopped operating in order to mark an apparent break from the British colonial legacy. By then the status of national language has been felt ‘restored’ in the public schools. It is around this time when the country’s political elites felt the need to re-introduce the English language in order to keep pace with the English-speaking developed countries (Lee, 1997).

While the tertiary education institutes were allowed to use English widely after the 1996 Education Policy, the medium in the national schools remained the national tongue. Finally, the country’s longest-running Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003), towards the end of his premiership, introduced the teaching of at least two subjects (i.e., mathematics and science) in English at both the primary and the secondary levels.

Mahathir Mohamad in 1981 felt that Malaysia as an oil producing fast growing economy needed to herald its position in the region and in the greater Muslim world. Throughout his regime, he wanted Malaysia to be seen as a moderate Muslim country opened to global capital and hence prioritized the use of English (Ridge, 2004). A policy that he could not implement in the 1980s, was accomplished finally just before his departure as a Prime Minister. In 2003 the new policy was implemented in the national and national-type schools in the country. The policy was named, English for Teaching and Learning of

Science and Mathematics (ETeMS) or *Pembelajaran dan pengajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (PPSMI), in Malay.

The PPSMI policy was implemented in detail during the regime of the next Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi (2003-2008) in office. The policy however was reversed to Malay in 2009 by the next Prime Minister Najib Razak (2009-till date) in office. While Mahathir was always vocal about his MOI policy, Najib did not issue any direct statement, he instead, let his education minister and deputy prime minister Muhiddin Yassin to decide on the matter. The Education Minister advised a 'slow landing' into Malay medium and that by the end of 2016 the changes from English to Malay in teaching the two subjects were aimed to be completed.

Historical development in relation to language policy in Malaysia has been fast forwarded in the above paragraphs. A description of the multiethnic and multilingual country that provided the background for different streams of school systems in the country has been discussed in the above sections. However, a description of the structure of political institutions in the country would enable us to shed a deeper insight. It is a common knowledge that contestations do not take place in a vacuum but by politically conscious subjects who may articulate their realities in opposed terms by referring to some "sublime" signifiers in order for them to legitimize their political claims (Laclau, 1990).

Sublime signifiers are entities which occupy elevated or special status within a community. Žižek (1989) however suggests that a sublime object is made sublime while they could be "an ordinary, everyday object" which, "quite by chance" turns into an "impossible-real object of desire" (p. 221). In this sense, such signifiers need to go through a discursive process in order to be defined as something which may not be due to their inherent qualities. A specific ethnic, religious, cultural or national entity can be assumed to carry special status. Within a plural political climate such elevated entities may divide or unite a community. Theorizing within education policy paradigm, Clarke defined sublime signifiers as "things that are at once elevated and elusive, as untouchable objects of inestimable value that serve as ultimate horizons, fascinating and capturing us as 'policy subjects'" (Clarke, 2014, p. 585).

1.2.3 Political parties in Malaysia

The ethnic reality in Malaysia has been translated into party politics, directly. The ruling political coalition comprises a Malay (United Malays National Organization or UMNO) two Chinese (Malaysian Chinese Association or MCA and Gerakan) and an Indian (Malaysian Indian Congress or MIC) political party. On the other hand, in the opposition exists, the Malay dominated Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) and Parti KeAdilan Rakyat (PKR), and the Chinese dominated Democratic Action Party (DAP); however, a large number of Indians are found to support both PKR and DAP. When a political picture like this is drawn, the parties in the mainland, the only parties represented appear to be the ones in the West Malaysia. The Federation of Malaysia is divided between East (comprising the states of Sabah and Sarawak) and West Malaysia. The East Malaysia political parties are grouped as Sarawakian and Sabahan political parties to represent the indigenous population. As such, they often *lack* the *tension* usually obvious among the West Malaysian political parties while debating various national policies in the parliament. Indigenous population as *bumiputeras* (see section 1.2.1 for definition) cited by various MPs in the parliament (we will encounter in Chapter Six) ultimately become the MPs' excuse to present the Malays as the main if not the sole indigenous group within the geographical space of *Tanah Melayu*.

The political structure of Malaysia follows a consociational form of democracy within a constitutional monarchy (Sani 2005), in which, different power blocs engage and collaborate. Consociational democracy may sound appropriate in a Malaysian context, since it ensures a "government by elite cartel designed; to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy" (Lijphart, 1969, p. 216). However, the consociational structure in Malaysia may look a little lopsided, or that it may seem favouring a particular social group more than other groups due to the inclusion of constitutional monarchy. There are arguments that the monarchy has been used as a "sublime signifier" (Laclau, 1996) for the UMNO politicians to rule the country that appeals to the largest 'vote bank,' i.e., to the Malays (Singh, 1995).

Due to the history of a long communist guerrilla movement in the country since the 1950s that continued till 1989, a class or a Marxist-Maoist reference in politics had always been suppressed. The only class-based political party, *Parti Sosialis Malaysia* (The socialist party of Malaysia) has never been that influential obtaining parliamentary seats. One of the strongest opposition, i.e., DAP, which claimed to be a socialist party, hardly associates

themselves with any direct reference to class or frame their political struggles in relation to Marx or Mao.

The mainstream Malaysian political discourse has most significantly been shaped by Mahathir Mohamad who served as the country's premier for more than two decades (1981-2003). Mahathir's discourse helped to shape the country's politics more in ethnic than in class terms. As the chief of UMNO, he gave his supporters discursive resources to identify themselves with not only the ethnicity but also 'progressive' Islam (Camroux, 1996). In the quest of how to articulate a new Malay identity, *Melayu Baru* (tr. New Malays) was formulated. The New Malays are *para tokoh korporat* (tr. corporate figure-players) and *golongan usahawan dan eksekutif* (tr. entrepreneurs and executive groups). They are the Malay bourgeoisie and are predominantly linked to the Malay middle class (Shamsul, 1999, p. 89). The UMNO political elites are largely these New Malays (Shamsul, 1996) who 'played' around the concept of *Ketuanan Melayu* (tr. Malay supremacy) to claim that the Malays have a more privileged position in the country in contrast to other ethnic groups (Lim, Gomes, & Rahman, 2009).

The officially preferred national political identity in British Malaya was *Bangsa Melayu* (tr. Malay nation). This has later been replaced by *Bangsa Malaysia* (tr. Malaysian nation) by Mahathir Mohamad during his era of premiership. Under the current prime minister of the country Nazib Razak, the official slogan is: *1Malaysia*. The official unity-metaphors however can be read in contrast to opposition led discourse. For instance, DAP's Malaysian Malaysia may not be read as an equivalent of Nazib's *1Malaysia* or Mahathir's *Bangsa Malaysia*. Malay hegemonic discourses produced during Malay-dominant political congregations fight at two different fronts, (1) against the non-Malays and (2) against the Islamist political party, namely Pas (Liow, 2004).

1.2.4 Civil society, NGO and Activisms in Malaysia

In post-*reformasi* Malaysia, civil society movements and activism in general became a common feature. *Reformasi* (tr. Reformation) movements began in 1997 after the country's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad sacked his deputy Anwar Ibrahim. Anwar was a "charismatic" leader (Moten, 2009). Formerly as a Finance and Education minister he had a strong institutional support within the state mechanism. The sacking of Anwar was translated by many individuals, both pro and anti-government, as a manifestation of

the then Premier's 'autocratic' ruling, otherwise dubbed as a "controlled" or "limited" democracy (Abbott, 2000, 2004; Aziz, 2013; Case, 1993; Slater, 2003). The resultant situation provided an ideal context for activism in the country.

Anwar was a prominent student leader in the 1970s. He had been an activist in a pro-PAS (the Malay Islamic political party in the opposition) student organisation, i.e., ABIM (*Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia*, tr. Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia) before he joined the ruling Malay nationalist party, UMNO. This activist identity helped him to broaden his base to both the Islamist and nationalist segments of the Malay population (Weiss, 1999, 2006). Since 1997, the opposition politics has depended largely on the leadership of Anwar.

In relation to activism one can refer to Bourdieu's (2007) autobiography in which he implied that the post-1968 Paris demonstrations changed the reality about how to theorize in France. Partying with Bourdieu, the Malaysian studies researchers may ask that to what extent activism in post-1997 Malaysia shaped the country's politics and policy formation. Post-1997 Malaysia is a society which is post-Mahathir, post-UMNO Anwar and post-traditional-media that unfolded overwhelmingly in the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

In discourse theoretical terms, the events of '68 resulted, as Torfing (2005) claims, in a European discourse analytical approach. Torfing explains the power of articulation in post-1968 political struggle concluding that "'discourse matters' and 'politics matter', and discourse theory emerged exactly in order to flesh out the analytical consequences of this understanding" (Torfing, 2005, p. 5). He elaborates further that

The events following in the wake of May 1968 aimed to liberate subjugated knowledges from the repressive grip of the dominant ideology and challenged the traditional understanding of politics in terms of the activities of elected politicians and their administrative advisers. The critique of structuralist theories revealed the mutual interaction of, on the one hand, social, economic, and linguistic structures and, on the other hand, social and political agency...[and] called for a renewed focus on the political and moral-intellectual struggles for the hearts and minds of the population (Torfing, p. 5).

The post-1997 politics, and increasingly after the fall of UMNO's two-third majority in the 2008 General Elections, the traditional politics of inter and intra ethnic relationship within the national politics has acquired new articulations (Chin & Huat, 2009). Following

the events of *Reformasi*, many NGO groups became vocal in participating in issue-based activism often blurring the lines between political and social movements. Numerous pressure groups survived in Malaysia, some of the recent pressure groups have joined the old ones; however, the activism in post-*Reformasi* Malaysia has become more participatory than before (Weiss 2006). The pressure groups as “interest groups,”

are organized associations that aim to influence government policies but do not seek to place members in office. Such groups tend to have a narrow issue focus; they may be distinguished from social movements both by their formal organization and methods of operation. Pressure groups are commonly classified as either sectional or promotional (Collins, 2006, p. 300).

Collins further argues that pressure groups may also “straddle” the sectional/promotional divide, that is, they may appear fighting for a specific social group or community instead of fighting for a common cause across communities in a plural society, or they may fight for both the causes. In the case of Chinese education pressure group, Dong Jiao Zhong (DJZ), while they have “a specific interest in protecting mother tongue education,” Collins argues, “the association has also played a role in promoting the wider interests of non-Malay citizens in Malaysia” (Collins, 2006, p. 300). DJZ represents two authorities which are: the United Chinese School Committees’ Association (UCSCA) and the United Chinese School Teachers’ Association (UCSTA).

Malay language-rights groups like GAPENA who fight for the ethnic Malay rights may claim that they fight for a common national cause affecting all the citizens, i.e., to uphold the dignity of the national language which has been ensured in the Constitution. While a completely different position is that of the PAGE, a Kuala Lumpur-based activist group born after the abolition of the country’s MOI policy in 2009. This group, till-date, fights for the retrieval of 2003 pro-English policy. If the national schools cannot continue with English language in the teaching of certain subjects, the group wants the parents to be left with the decision for sending their children to national or English medium schools. It appears that they ignore the possible effects caused by knowledge divide between the haves and have-nots who can afford sending their kids to English medium schools.

1.2.5 Media in Malaysia

The political struggles in the streets get wider circulation when they are represented in the media. In Malaysia, the media can be divided between mainstream and non-mainstream. Mainstream media in Malaysia can be viewed as a synonym for state-controlled media. Also featuring that multiple media outlets are controlled by a handful of consolidated news conglomerate. These companies are either closely related or are directly owned by the government or large political parties (Nain, 2002).

State-controlled media is however not a unique Malaysian case, such control can also be found in different degrees in the neighbouring countries, e.g., Singapore (Lee, 2013), Vietnam (Cain, 2014) and China (Zhao, 2012). While the mainstream media in Malaysia is directly and/ or indirectly owned by the individuals close to political parties in the ruling coalition; non-mainstream media can be found to be “opposition-friendly” (Weiss, 2009).

1.2.5.1 Print media

The then National News Agency, *Bernama*, Editor-in-chief Yong Soo Heong in 2011 put it straightforward in an interview that “nonbelievers” of mainstream media may always look for alternatives. The opposition DAP has *The Rocket* while PAS has *Harakah* as party mouth organs to reach their target readers. When asked if government would loosen their grip over the media, Yong confirmed that the government “would not let go of it” in recent future (*Bernama*, 2011, n.p.).

The way the mainstream media operates in the country political activism organized by the opposition, i.e., ideas opposed to the government could only be held outside the state-controlled media. The government appears to dictate that what is legitimate can only be voiced through ‘legitimate,’ in other words, via Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) (Althusser, 1971).

Like many other enterprises and vocations in Malaysia, newspaper industry too grew under colonial supervision. The first newspaper was published in 1806 in Penang, The Prince of Wales Island Gazette. It is however, in the early 20th Century that Malay language newspapers alongside other ethnic language newspapers grew rapidly. The popular Malay language newspaper *Utusan Melayu* was first published in Singapore in 1939. The newspaper helped igniting political consciousness among the Malays. For Milner (2009), it is through the newspapers like *Utusan Melayu* that the Malays constructed Malayness as a

political identity, as a *bangsa* or race in contrast to the identity of a collective Islamic nation, i.e., *ummah*, an attempt which was quite popular in other British colonies, e.g., the Indian sub-continent.

Utusan was not negligent of paying tributes to the royal court, i.e., to the sultan as a head of the Malay nation. But the concept of nation as an “imagined community,” in Anderson’s (2006) terms, was made more popular than nation as an entity under the supervision of a feudal lord. Besides, there was no biological genetic connotation either, instead *bangsa* or race was understood more in constructivist terms. The *Utusan* popularized territory terms like *negeri* (state) *tanah air* (homeland) and *tanah melayu* (Malay land) to shape a national identity, a *bangsa* consciousness and as such helped to construct a political community.

Established in 1957, *Berita Harian* turns to be another leading Malay daily in Peninsular Malaysia. The largest Malay daily is *Harian Metro*, owned by the government-run Media Prima group, with a daily circulation of 394,000 in 2012. By the mid-2000s, the print media industry had grown to 57 daily and 24 weekly newspapers in the major languages—Malay, English, Chinese, and Tamil. *The Star* and *The New Straits Times* are the two leading English dailies in the country. *The Star* has a daily circulation of between 298,000 to 338,000 copies (Audit Bureau of Circulation 2014). The newspaper is owned by the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), a major ally in the ruling *Barisan Nasional* (BN) coalition. Other English language dailies include *The Sun* and *The Malay Mail*. The popular English dailies in the East Malaysia are Sabah’s *New Sabah Times* and *The Borneo Bulletin*, and Sarawak’s *Sarawak Tribune* and *The Borneo Post*.

Malaysia has a long history of publishing newspapers in its all vernacular languages. Currently, there are some 22 Chinese newspapers of which the most popular are *Sin Chew Daily*, *Nanyang Siang Pau*, and *Guan Ming Daily*. For Tamil language newspapers, *Tamil Nesan* and *Malaysia Nanban* are the two most popular newspapers. *Navjiwan Punjabi News* is a weekly Punjabi language newspaper.

According to the media act in the country, print newspapers are required to renew their publication licenses annually. Based on evaluation, the publishing permits can be suspended or revoked by the Information Ministry. The Printing Press Act, originally introduced by the British in 1948 is today’s Printing Presses and Publications Act, amended in 1984. To note, in 1987, several newspapers, including *The Star*, had their

publishing license and permit suspended as the newspapers made comments on the volatile political situations in the country.

1.2.5.2 Online media

In 1992, the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronics Systems (MIMOS) launched JARING (Joint Advanced Research Integrated Networking), the country's first Internet service provider. The mainstream dailies chose to go online by June 1995. *The Star* was the first newspaper to have an online edition; later *Sin Chew Daily*, *Utusan Melayu*, and other newspapers chose similar directions. In the wake of political turmoil in the country in 1999, *Malaysiakini* became the country's first non-mainstream online newspaper (est. 1998). The two other popular online news portals are *Malaysia Today* (est. 2004) and *Malaysian Insiders* (est. 2009).

It appears that the government does not want to control the online media the way it controls the print media, albeit many people deem that the ruling coalition almost lost the last two general elections to the opposition mostly because of the freedom of social media (Tapsell, 2013; Gomez, 2014). Licensing and ownership are two of the main tools that the Malaysian government use to control media in the country. However, till date no website has been closed due to licensing regulations. By controlling the online voices, the government, instead of gaining, might lose the battle to the opposition due to the reason that such punitive measures have any material effect on the proliferating online communities.

1.2.5.3 Constitutional rights and the legal measures to 'regulate' media industry

The dialectics of a free online media and a state-controlled mainstream media in Malaysia can be explained through its legal measurers watching the media industry in the country. The most draconian laws which could be used against media offences are, the Malaysian print and media Act 1984, the Official secrets Act (OSA) and the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012. The Security Act replaced the colonial era Internal Security Act (ISA). For many, even the recent Whistle-blower protection Act 2010 is not promising enough to critique the government policies from within and/ or bring issues to public spheres.

In this regard, the Malaysian constitution may sound conflicting on the issues of releasing or sharing information. The Constitution ensures that “every citizen has the right to freedom of speech and expression” (Federal Constitution, 10(1) (a)). Clauses 10(1) (b) and (c) state that “all citizens have the right to assemble peaceably and without arms” and that “all citizens have the right to form associations.” These rights are however subjected to clause 10(2) (a):

...such restrictions as it deems necessary or expedient in the interest of the security of the Federation or any part thereof, friendly relations with other countries, public order or morality and restrictions designed to protect the privileges of parliament or of any Legislative Assembly or to provide against contempt of court, defamation, or incitement to any offence (Federal Constitution 10(2) (a)).

The “Restrictions on the right to form associations conferred by paragraph (c) of Clause (1) may also be imposed by any law relating to labour or education,” stated in 10 (3) of the Constitution. To specify penalties, the clause 10 (4) outlines that

In imposing restrictions in the interest of the security of the Federation or any part thereof or public order under Clause (2) (a), Parliament may pass law prohibiting the questioning of any matter, right, status, position, privilege, sovereignty or prerogative established or protected by the provisions of Part III, article 152, 153 or 181 otherwise than in relation to the implementation thereof as may be specified in such law (Federal Constitution 10 (4)).

Whereby, the Articles 152, 153 and 181 involve, largely, the position of the Malays, their language, religion and the status of the Malay Sultan. In this regard, an overview of the above clauses in the Constitution implies that language, education, rights and freedom of speech of the citizens in the country are mediated by the ethnic position of the Malays.

When the above are interpreted in the light of the specific Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, specific clauses show how activities considered ‘seditious’ would be dealt with. Clause 4 (1) in the Act can be useful to get an insight about how to read the constitutional cautions within the confines of newspapers. The clause states that if someone prints or produces in his printing press any publication or document

which contains an incitement to violence against persons or property, counsels disobedience to the law or to any lawful order or which is or is likely to lead to a

breach of the peace or to promote feelings of ill-will, hostility, enmity, hatred, disharmony or disunity, shall be guilty of an offence and shall on conviction be liable to imprisonment... (Federal Constitution 4 (1)).

The licences for the printing of newspapers and publication of magazines and newsletters are further subjected to the conditions that they would be “valid for a period of twelve months from the date of the granting or issue of such licence or permit or for such shorter period as may be specified in the licence or permit,” and also that “The Minister shall have the absolute discretion to refuse an application for a licence or permit” (Federal Constitution 12 (1 & 2)).

One may compare the Malaysian situation with that in the neighbouring country Singapore, a small nation-state that maintains a similar publication culture wherein the media should fulfil an “educational” role to help the citizens understand government policies (Brown, 2005; Ortmann, 2009). In Singapore too the mainstream media outlets are owned by government-linked corporations, and similar to Malaysia, its Press Act gives the government the power to issue or revoke licenses for publications, and to appoint management shareholders to newspaper companies (Ortmann, 2009).

Sani (2005) 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” (Sani, p. 341). Malaysia has various laws to control media activities. 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.

1.3 Structure and Outline of the Thesis

The above sections in this chapter contextualize the research problem as an interdisciplinary matter. This section describes the body of the thesis. The thesis is divided into 9 (nine) chapters. The chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction

Chapter Two: The Context: The ethno-political tapestry of Malaysia

Chapter Three: Language and MOI policy studies

Chapter Four: Conceptual Framework

Chapter Five: Data and Methods of analysis

Chapter Six: Contesting MOI Policy at the Malaysian Parliament: The Malay-centred discourses

Chapter Seven: Contesting MOI Policy at the Malaysian Parliament: The Chinese-centred discourses

Chapter Eight: Media representation of MOI Policy in Malaysia

Chapter Nine: Conclusions and Recommendations

1.4 Key terms

The key terms used in this study have been explained in chapters Four and Five. The terms are: historical materialism, dialectics, identity-politics, antagonisms, governmentality, social imaginaries and order of discourse categorized under macro concepts. The micro concepts used are: discourse, text, genre, articulation, contextualization, interdiscursivity and intertextuality. The thesis has been written within the domain of medium of instruction (MOI) policy (see Chapter Three) by citing a specific historical political context, i.e., Malaysia (see Chapter Two).

1.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an introduction to the thesis. Written in discourse analytical terms with poststructuralist nuances, the current study borrows heavily from different schools of discourse analysis. The insights came from different branches of social sciences. As such, the study underlines the contemporary urges for an interdisciplinary research framework in order to address a real world problem, i.e., MOI policy discourses within a plural society, following the logics of “conceptual pragmatism” (Wodak, 2001; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The current chapter and the subsequent chapters re-iterate the Marxist dictum that *the point is not just to describe but to change the existing situation!*

It is believed that the methodological rigours of discourse analysis may contribute to the study of policy debates more effectively, in contrast to looking at it abstractly. While policy could be theorized as an articulation, a critical discourse analytical model may help to explain the “hidden” agenda behind such articulations (Fairclough, 2001, 2009, 2013a,

2013b). The school of CDA led by Fairclough acknowledges the reference to Foucault's 'order in discourse' and also the praxis of Kantian concept of 'conditions of possibility' to explain discursive articulations. By combining a post-structuralist discourse analytical method within Fairclough's framework of CDA, the current thesis adopts an innovative approach in order to explain a specific MOI policy within a specific society (i.e., contemporary Malaysia). However, the novel approach adopted here is expected to clarify not only the wider political controversies within a specific site, but also beyond it, once we acknowledge the potentials of such a discourse analytical framework to explain the mechanisms of policy formation in general. The general contribution of this study is that it underlines sharply the usefulness of a discourse analytical study to explain policy formation processes.

By mapping the discursive formations constructed in multiple "fields" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and "sites of engagement" (Scollon, 1997a, 1997b) during various "critical moments" (Candlin, 1987), the current study posed the question that why a discourse exists in the horizon of a polity? While in the post-independent Malaysia, the country's "prevailing societal values, distribution of political power, communication flows, economic and technical arrangements, and political styles condition the behaviour of public administration" (Milton, 1972, p. 16); hence, the need to study public documents. On the other hand, the country's media became increasingly vocal as Malaysia is hardly a homogeneous society as it is implied in the official discourses.

The forces of change and the forces of maintaining the status quo are perhaps equally at work in Malaysia, like in many other societies. Even an apparently homogeneous political party could accommodate contradictory voices when it comes to policy issues on language rights for example (Brown, 2007). These contestations surfaced frequently in the Malaysian mainstream and non-mainstream media.

Despite Malaysia being dubbed a case of "limited" (Case, 1993) democracy, different stakeholders including state functionaries or "bureaucratic intellectuals" (A. B. Shamsul, 1996) still debate policy matters in the name of saving various "sublime" signifiers (Laclau 1996) rooted in the "social imaginary" (Taylor, 2004) of the country. While it is necessary to check the profile of the participants via "membership categorization" (Schegloff, 2007; Van Dijk, 1993) to explore the "hidden" (Fairclough, 2013b) meanings behind their discourses on national interests and policy formations, the question remains – *Is language policy a 'fantasmatic' element, an ideological pretext for doing Politik Malaysia?*

Chapter Two

MOI policy debates and the ethno-political context of Malaysia

“[I]t is in history alone that the explanation of our existence lies”

Gramsci, Avanti, 29 August, 1916

2.0 Introduction

Chapter One of this thesis has introduced the main participants who performed the medium of instruction (MOI) debates in Malaysia. The participants represent various ethnicity-based political parties, media houses, non-government organizations and education groups in the country. These diverse groups as concrete historical products have certain “synchronic” and “diachronic” values (Blommaert, 1999). That is, they carry the values from the past and the present as the members of a specific polity. Hence, it is useful to delineate the historical-material background, i.e., the ethno-political context of Malaysia further that shaped these MOI debates, discursively.

MOI debates may occur in any multilingual society with large minorities. Much has been published on this topic in other contexts (see Chapter Three for discussion on MOI debates conducted elsewhere). The citizens may cite a series of identity concerns – covering values across generations. The concerns usually found within MOI debates may not be traced within other types of policy debates, for instance, health policy. On the other hand, the citizens may also refer to a series of pragmatic considerations – focusing on synchronic values - which they may find relevant in their current context.

2.1 Why Malaysia?

Malaysia is an ethnically-divided society. A more politically correct way to define the nation is to call it a “plural society” (Kim, 1998; Nagata, 1974; Shamsul, 1997b). The British colonial rulers to solve their problem to obtain “cheap labour” for the colony’s mining and plantation sectors, imported workers from China and India (Alatas, 1977). But the regime left the people in the colony alone to address the issues arising from “the unintended consequence of creating a multiethnic society” (Hirschman, 1987, p. 559). To

ensure the growth of capital, the Malayan colonial administration brought in these '*pekerja asing*' (tr. foreign workers), which ultimately led to the creation of various socio-political antagonisms in the society as each community became aware of their ethnic, social and cultural identity gradually. The contemporary multilingual and multiethnic Malaysia addresses those antagonisms by allowing ethnicity-based political parties to articulate their community-specific rights (see section 1.2.3, Chapter One for the relationship between ethnicity and political parties in Malaysia).

Whether problems around writing a common national MOI policy are subjected solely to the problem of multiculturalism and of tolerance, within a plural community can be challenged through the concepts of "culturalization of politics" and "tolerance as an ideological category" (Žižek, 2008). The language policy debates in Malaysia may allow us to explain the contradictions in the society beyond sheer cultural differences felt by the ethnic groups which can be found in many other plural societies. The colonial administration was a capitalist agent without any relation to the land and the people therein. When they left Malaya for self-governance, the "questions of Malayan (later Malaysian) citizenship, educational policy, and political loyalty gave rise to intense discussion and controversy, often leading to widening ethnic divisions" (Hirschman, 1987, p. 559).

Malaysia offers itself as one of the strong cases to be studied in order to explore an ethnicity-based rights argument articulated by different groups. The historical context of Malaysia shows how colonial interventions destroyed the fabric of local cultures and insisted on a multiculturalist argument to tolerate *Others* (see Chapter Three for an overview of other postcolonial conditions, also cf. Pennycook, 2002). The contemporary articulation of neoliberal dictums disguised as identity-politics adds another dimension in this complexity.

English in colonial Malaya was used as the language of administration and educational institutions. That policy was decided by the colonial officers in the absence of a proper political participation. However, alienation through language use experienced during the colonial era, can be seen now as a memory from the past to recall the struggle against the colonial rulers. In contemporary Malaysia, only a handful of its citizens may view English as an 'alien' language, a language of the colonial *Other*, or a language of the local elites, engaged in the reproduction of "colonial servants" (Hassan, 2005). The contemporary Malaysia views English simply as a fact of life.

Policy-experts and mainstream political leaders since the 1980s tend to explain current anti-English attitudes as a manifestation of old-fashioned nationalist sentiments. In short, for many Malaysians today, English is a language of opportunity (Gill, 2013). In the mainstream official discourse, the learning of English is framed as a means to transform the country into a developed nation – this is also in line with the official target of turning Malaysia into a developed state by 2020 (Vision 2020 was a concept coined by the country's then Prime Minister in 1991 to transform Malaysia into a developed industrialised nation by the year 2020).

Malaysia, as it is known to the world today is no more that “sleepy tropical backwater stereotyped in the novels of Anthony Burgess and Somerset Maugham’s short stories,” on the contrary it is a “high-tech urbanized regional powerbroker” (Hooker, 2003, p. 1). However, in classical Marxist terms, all societies bear the relics of their past, and this applies to Malaysia as well. In other words, Malaysia like most societies, does not show a complete break from its past. In fact, the society can be described as torn between its two opposing ideals: firstly, its semi-feudal collective identity that it carries from the past (Holst, 2012); and secondly, a pragmatic desire that it upholds to embrace the globally pervasive neoliberal dictates of fierce competition and individualism (Beng, 1998). We should also add that Malaysia in its contemporary appearance bears all the features of a heavily urbanized society; a reality that made the country to carry all the dilemmas of urbanizations, a phenomenon which can be traced in other developing countries of the world.

Over the last few decades Malaysia has continued its developmental agenda via its adherence to liberal economic policies, along the lines of a free market economy (Jomo, 2013). While the country adopts economic globalization warmly, Malaysia is yet to sever the umbilical cord with its feudal past, as it can be used for political gains. Scholars of Malaysian studies have remarked that various state mechanisms have kept Malaysia tied to its feudal past – the existing Constitutional Monarchical system in the country is a prime example (Kobkua, 2011; Milner, 2012; Singh, 1995).

The state-mechanism and its functionaries, in present-day Malaysia, are largely rooted in the values of the largest ethnic group in the country, i.e., the Malays, who by religion are, Muslims. Islam has a privileged status in the country’s political and administrative mechanisms. The Constitution declares that “Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation”

(Malaysian Constitution, Article No. 3:1). The emphasis on Islam in a country which has only a little over the half of the population as Muslims, has led many historians to explore the postcolonial Malaya's concerns about ethnic and religious identities in the country (Hooker, 2003, p. 3). The Constitution adds that the Monarch is the caretaker of the religion and as such a caretaker of the Malays too. This is how the religion, the ethnic group and the monarchy created an administrative trinity in Malaysia.

The main political party in the ruling coalition since independence, the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), centres its political discourse on the needs and priorities of the *Bangsa Melayu* (tr. Malay race). The constitution of the country maintains too that the Prime Minister should be a Malay by ethnic identity. Here lies the source of many of the contradictions of multiethnic Malaysia and its policy debates. The complexity requires taking into consideration a number of 'fields,' in the technical sense that Bourdieu used it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), namely the fields of ethnicity, religion, politics, and education among others.

2.2 The Malays

Malaysia is a melting pot of different ethnic groups who came to find their fortunes in different historical eras. The most powerful Malay empire was Sri Vijaya (7th – 13th Century), a Buddhist kingdom with its capital on the south-east coast of Sumatra, at Palembang. A Malay sultan by the name of King Parameswara (1344-1414), who later converted to Islam and became renowned as Iskandar Shah, established Malacca Sultanate in 1400. This is the beginning of a strong Malay-Muslim Empire in the Malay Peninsula. However, according to Milner (Milner, 2002, p. 14), there was "No supreme Malay sultanate existed" till the early 19th Century. For Milner (2002), they were merely different "polities" before the British occupation which evolved into nine Malay sultanates or states (i.e., Kedah, Kelantan, Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perlis, Perak, Selangor and Terengganu) later.

In the early 16th Century, perhaps with the Portuguese attacks, a sense of identity evolved along the lines of religion. *Sejarah Melayu* (*The Malay Annals*, written by Abdullah Munshi), one of the early sources of Malay historiography, claims that otherwise "the Malays were primarily concerned with their differences rather than their shared features" (Milner, 2002, p. 14). When Malacca was taken by the Portuguese in 1511, the "virtual

crusade against the Moors” (i.e., Malay) by the Portuguese during the next hundred and twenty-five years “strengthened” Islam in the region (Gullick, 1981, p. 15). Over the next few centuries the Malaya evolved, finally to become a significant British colony by the late 1800s. The colonial rulers who came as an “alien” and “transient” force (1786-1942), changed the country’s future to its core (Gullick, 1981). They transformed the country’s administrative, economic and educational systems. The British formed a multilingual multiethnic population which ultimately helped them to divide the locals and rule, a typical administrative method that the British had used in other colonies too (Alatas, 1977).

Indigenous communities like the Kadazans, Ibans, Melanau, Bajau, Sakai and the Jakuns had been living, in harmony with the Malays, as Ongkili (1985) suggests in the lush forests and Kampongs of Malaya for many centuries. The rulers were Malay-Muslims since the 14th Century. However, Islam was not a *rigid* political force yet. Therefore, communities like the Penang Baba Chinese and the Malacca Chettys, for instance, could grow easily, unhindered politically (Hooker, 2003). The Baba Chinese formed a family with a Chinese father and a Malay mother, while the Chettys formed their families with an Indian father and a Malay mother. This family structure is unimaginable in today’s context of Malaysia, a country that forbids marriage between a Malay and a non-Malay who is a non-Muslim. Malaysia practices Islamic family law for marriage, custody, conversion and religious observance for Muslims (Moustafa, 2014; Peletz, 2002). A number of cases have been reported in relation to the conversion of one of the parents into Islam and the custody of their children resulting in tension between ethnic and religious communities in recent Malaysia (Hamayotsu, 2014; Kuek & Tay, 2012).

The Indian ‘Mamaks,’ usually South Indian Muslims speaking Tamil initially, married Malay women. Mamaks are however seen to “negotiate” with a Malay identity by “assimilating” within the Malay culture (Daniels, 2005, p. 53) so as to be considered, eventually, as Malays. The phenomenon of *masuk Melayu* (tr. entering Malays) occurs when someone converts to Islam (Liow & Noor, 2010; Milner, 2009). By converting, the person enters, not only into the faith of Islam, s/he shifts his/ her identity to Malay (Reid, 2009). The first Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tunku Abdul Rahman, explains the phenomenon of *masuk Melayu* in one of his speeches in following terms,

If a man whose ancestors are Malay should forsake Islam and embrace Christianity or such like he will simultaneously lose his Malay nationality, according to the present-day definition. On the other hand *if a person is Chinese or Siamese and*

embraces Islam we do not look upon him as Siamese or Chinese but as Malay (Tunku Abdul Rahman, 2 Aidilfitri Message over Radio Malaya, 20 April 1958, emphasis added, cited in Ahmad, 2009, p. 365).

The Tunku in the above text echoed the Malaysian constitution, which states: “a person, who professes the religion of Islam, habitually speaks the Malay language, conforms to Malay custom” can be considered as a Malay (The Malaysian Constitution, Article 160). In his *Introduction to the Constitution of Malaysia*, Sufian bin Hashim states that,

An Indian is a Malay if he professes the Muslim religion, habitually speaks Malay and conforms to Malay custom. Conversely even a genuine Malay is not a Malay for the purpose of the constitution if for instance he does not profess the Muslim religion (Siddique, 1981, p. 77).

Despite political interference, the colonial regime maintained the Malay hegemony at its centre (Gullick, 1981). But as soon as the British left, the political power of the Malay hegemony was questioned and challenged by the other ethnic groups. The Malays did not want to lose the political power. It was at this hour when the contestation(s) between different ethnic communities became apparent for the first time. In fact, the socio-political events that occurred on the eve of Malayan independence tell more emphatically about the historical becoming (and political contestations) of contemporary Malaysia.

The *Tanah Melayu* (Tr. Malay Land) has been considered by the Malays as their exclusive homeland for centuries. The massive non-Malay migration that occurred during the colonial regime has given the country a pluralistic demography and associated ethno-political antagonisms. In 1948, when the British were about to leave Malaya and the Federation Agreement was drawn up accordingly, the colonial administration felt the need to solve the issue pertaining to the legal status of the immigrants and of their native-born descendants. It was a context in which,

Despite the facts that their sultans still played a substantial role in conjunction with the British in the administration of Malaya and their own position in the civil service, the Malays had begun to feel that they were being reduced from a “nation” to a mere “community”, or just one ethnic groups among several (Nagata, 1979, p. 36).

The British colonizers were cognizant of the complexity of the situation and of the ‘rights’ of the Malays. Accordingly, the British acknowledged the ‘special’ position of the indigenous people and suggested to make provisions in the constitution that “special educational training for the Malays” should be conducted in order “to enable them to maintain their position in the sphere of politics and administration” (Nagata, p. 37). This acknowledgement took care of the matters related to “citizenship” too, as the British put the emphasis on “indigenusness” and “Malay culture” instead of “place of birth or residence” (Nagata, p. 37). Such emphasis on indigenusness, in reality, concretized the future identity politics of the country. Thus Malaya continued to maintain a complex ethnic tapestry (created by the British), while putting the Malay ethos, norms and tradition at the centre of power (Nagata, 1979).

2.3 Identity-politics in plural Malaysia: Malays, Chinese and Indians

Today, indigenous Malays try to hold on to their local identity, but at the same time, the country’s Malay-dominated political government declares its growing commitment to becoming ‘international’ or ‘global.’ The country also aims to increase its role as a power broker within the region. Malaysia chairs the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) for 2015. As the country opens up regionally and globally by embracing neoliberal agenda – both via economy and through the cultural practices (e.g., music, film and many other cultural commodities) – Malaysia’s desire to stay rooted in the local culture remains strong. The society at large can be viewed as trapped in the dialectics of these two opposing currents. The current Prime Minister Najib Razak (2009-present) described this scenario as the dream of a *Glocal Malaysia*. And as we shall see the education system could not stay unresponsive to the various demands of this globalization either.

The tension between the local and the global is not a unique Malaysian case. It appears that to *catch the neoliberal train* is the only preferred local slogan in today’s global world. For Fairclough (1993), this late-capitalist economy has specific implications, for instance, the ideological shift has brought with it the marketization of many traditional practices including that of education. What makes the Malaysian case more complex is the existence of its several large ethnic minorities who may react to the changing economic reality differently. The Malays cannot be seen as the only force to inflect the discourse of Malaysian identity in contrast to the political reality of the colonial past, depicted above.

The minorities, i.e., the Chinese (21%) and the Indians (7%) may wish to define the local, global and *glocal* identities in different terms, which may stand in stark contrast to those of the dominant Malays.

Originally, the Chinese and the Indian minorities came as “sojourners” and had always sought their roots in China and India respectively; and they did so even just prior to the independence in 1957 (Wang, 1996). While the Malays perceived themselves as a perpetual presence within *Tanah Melayu*. The Malay Land was also defined as *Nusantara* and *Melayu Raya* to include territories beyond the Malay Peninsula comprising Indonesia, Brunei, and some parts of the Philippines and Thailand (Aljunied, 2009; Ismail, 2003). That Malays are ethnically rooted in this land, has always surfaced in the Malay-dominated political discourses, perhaps to exploit the sentiment of the soil, toil and body within local politics. However, since Malays originally came from South Sumatra, which is present-day Indonesia (Andaya & Andaya, 2001); they may not be defined as the natives of contemporary Malaysia in a technical sense. The people identified as *Orang Asli* (tr. natives) can claim to be the earliest inhabitants or *bumiputera*, a position secured in the country’s Constitution, and they are ensured special privileges. From an *Orang Asli* perspective, the Malays could be seen as settlers too who ‘subdued’ the original natives or *bumiputera* of the country.

The Malaysian situation may also look similar to the British settlers’ case from Australia and New Zealand. The settlers in these two countries, maintain that the aboriginal communities as the first peoples should be given due respect. Due to space limitation and disciplinary boundaries this study cannot engage in a detailed discussion on issues of settlers’ politics (Johnson, Cant, Howitt, & Peters, 2007). The issue has been raised here, briefly, to respond to some recent debates in Malaysia in regards to the claim that the Malays should also be deemed as immigrants, along with the Chinese and the Indians (Raja Petra, 2014).

Historical accounts support the fact that the Malays were in Malaya long before the Chinese and the Indians came in bulk. Another argument is that the Malays came to Malaya “voluntarily,” and that they were not brought in by the colonial rulers to solve their labour problems (Rusli & Mohammad, 2014). While the history of Malay-Muslim sultanates goes back to the 14th Century, the history of Malay non-Muslim empires goes further back in history. On the other hand, the bulk of non-Malay immigration took place only in the 19th Century.

In his classical account of Malaysia, Victor Purcell states that “Historically, Malaya is a Malay country” (Purcell, 1965, p. 40). The Malays are “nearly all Muslims, speak some variety of Malay, and fuse together readily into a single community” (Purcell, 1965, p. 41). Indonesian Muslims had migrated to Malaysia and assimilated into the greater Malay community. Migration from Indonesia existed before the independence (Purcell, 1946, 1965) which continues till present (Spaan, Van Naerssen, & Kohl, 2002). The diverse Malays are one imagined community by the facts that

(a) they are all Muslims, and (b) that even if they arrived in Malaya yesterday, they are all automatically ‘subjects of the Rulers’ of the States and, as such, Malayan citizens (Purcell, 1965, p. 41).

Besides, the national language of Indonesia has originated from the Johor-Riau Malay dialect spoken in Riau Archipelago (popularly known as *Alam Melayu*, tr. Malay Heartland), which is a province of Eastern Sumatra in present-day Indonesia. The Malays too seek their language origin in the very same dialect. The shared identity of the Malays may sound complicated, but there are clear reasons to distinguish the Malaysians from the Indonesians as members of two modern political states in contemporary terms.

While the Malays who live in Malaysia and those who live in Indonesia, are, ethnically the same people, Indonesia is not populated by the Malays only. In reality, Malays are only 4% of the Indonesian population. But when the non-Malay Indonesian groups (e.g., Javanese, Sundanese, Minangkabau and so on) of Muslim origin migrate to Malaysia they are considered as Malays within the official record. Based on census reports Nagata (1974) claims that in Malaysia, till 1931, the Indonesians were grouped as “Indonesians.” Their identity was changed to “other Malaysian” in 1947 and in 1970 census to “Malays,” as if the assimilation was “complete” (p. 335).

In recent Malaysia the new Muslim migrants (*pekerja asing*, tr. foreign workers) perceived to be assimilated (due to the country’s constitutional definition of Malays) are migrants of Muslim origin from different countries of South and Southeast Asia. These migrants during the 2008 and 2013 general elections were depicted as ‘reserve’ voters to facilitate the ruling coalition’s win (Brown, 2013; Saravanamuttu, 2009; Welsh, 2013). It appears that different regimes can use different groups of migrants to achieve their economic and political purposes within a plural polity.

Plural society, as a term, appeared first in the renowned orientalist and colonial officer Furnivall's (2014) *Colonial Policy and Practice*. Malaya became a plural society in the sense that different ethnic groups began to feel the need to create a political space in order to articulate their ethnicity-based rights. Before the colonial regime, the Malay Sultans as sovereign rulers did not feel the necessity to distinguish between the small minorities and the dominant Malay ethnic group in their sultanates. The reason could be that the number of the minorities was insignificant. With the beginning of the colonial regime, the British authorities felt the needs to categorize the population for administrative purposes. The administration made systematic colonial "mistakes" in categorizing the Malays and the other natives by putting them as a homogeneous community (Noor, 2002, 2005).

In order to ensure the harmony in the multiethnic Malayan society the colonial regime eventually devised a division of labour by keeping the ethnic groups separate. For instance, the migrants would serve the various mining industries along with small businesses in the urban areas; while the Malays would carry on working in their paddy farms and fishing in their backwater. The British endeavours were, according to historians, largely built on the basis of economic benefits for the colonial government (Alatas, 1977). The British division of labour translated in concrete 'relations of productions,' had serious future economic implications dividing the country's ethnic groups.

Pre-Independence census in 1931 shows that the non-Malays outnumbered the Malays. The British felt at this juncture that it was necessary to decide on how the infrastructure of the new nation would look like, including its bureaucracy, education system and language policies and so on. The use of force and violence were common colonial means to impose harmony in most colonial regimes, Malaysia was not an exception either (Coates, 1992). The colonial regime began to dictate Malaya's political discourse more emphatically in the 1930s to confront the rise of Malay nationalist politics (Hirschman, 1987; Kahn, 2006; Milner, 1995; Shamsul, 1999, 2001). At this juncture a section of the Malay elites sought their political loyalties to the royal authorities. Their attempts resulted in a state mechanism that largely resembled the pre-colonial Malay sultanates. Immediately before the country's independence, Tunku Abdul Rahman, a product from one of the royal families, later the first Prime Minister of the country, stated:

With regard to the proposal that independence should be handed over to the "Malayans", who are these "Malayans"? This country was received from the Malays and to the Malays it ought to be returned. What is called Malaysians, it is not yet

certain who they are, therefore *let the Malays alone settle who they are* (emphasis added, cited in Cheah, 2002, p. 1).

The above statement was articulated by Tunku in a speech that he gave on the occasion of his becoming the president of the Malay political party UMNO in 1951. Tunku made it obvious that administratively, the Malays should rule the country. It was also a political environment in which many politicians, including prominent Malay leaders like Onn Jaffar dreamt of an inclusive definition of the Malaysians in contrast to that of Tunku's. Onn Jaffar could be seen by many as a last British attempt to solve the 'political error' that grew out of the colonial economic urges to make Malaya plural (bin Tadin, 1960; Stockwell, 1984). The 1930s and 1940s could be interpreted as decades when the contestation to occupy the space of the signifier, called "Malayan," became intense and which continues, albeit in different forms, till today.

When the British proposed equal citizenship for the non-Malays in the Malayan Union Proposal in 1948, the Malays – channelled through their political mouthpiece, UMNO – did not accept it (Lau, 1989; Rudner, 1970; Shamsul, 1997a; Stockwell, 1977). The Malayan Union proposal stated that the vast number of the Chinese and the Indians would be considered Malaysians along with the Malays in the new nation and would enjoy equal citizenship rights. Amidst this conflict what became apparent is that while the British had a role in creating Malaya's plural society, they 'failed' to ensure the mutual presence of these diverse ethnic communities at the end.

Given the above background it is not difficult to imagine why in the British Malaya, the issues related to infrastructure, administration and policy making were nonetheless raised along the fundamental lines of its ethnic composition (Crouch, 1996; Guan, 2007; Ongkili, 1985). As it is mentioned above, in the historical Malaya, the Malays were deemed as the 'rightful' owner of the land; but the non-Malays, who came to the Malay Land, adopted it as their own too. They were "converted" as the Malaysians. Writing about pre-independent Malayan Chinese Wang (1970) reported that "there is still a deep cleavage between Chinese who look to the politics of China and those who accept the immediacy of Malayan politics and between both these minority groups and those who are primarily concerned with the preservation of the community as a whole" (p. 22). The leadership of Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) worked prior to the independence and during the early years of postcolonial era to construct a common Chinese identity in Malaysia.

Chinese steps taken to fight for a Malayan identity have been shaped by many leaders of MCA including Tan Siew Sin, who became a finance minister (1959-1974), and also the President of MCA (1961-1974). To respond to Tunku's question about the identity of the Malaysians (see above) Tan stated that,

You asked who are these 'Malaysians?' and I must admit that this remark really worried me...in the last analysis what converted not me, but many other Chinese, was your magnificent leadership (quoted in Chea, 2002, p. 1).

Tan belonged to a group of Chinese leaders who had not taken the communist line but grew along the nationalist line similar to the dominant Malay leadership. Tan's quote above indicates that this group of Malayan Chinese sought their recognition from the Malays, i.e., from the political elites who led UMNO. In other words, they had accepted the political hierarchy within the Malayan nation. There was another segment of the Chinese community which on the other hand initiated a different political narrative by side-stepping the dominant ethnic arguments for a nation-state. Their argument was based on class struggle, which was articulated mainly by the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). Later, the People's Action Party (PAP), based in Singapore – albeit part of British Malaya and of Malaysia till 1965 – proposed a socialist model too. They began to fight for a 'Malaysian Malaysia,' their esteemed party slogan. Both MCP and PAP had included some Malay members, but they were pre-dominantly Chinese-based political parties with a handful of Indian members. Today's Malaysian Democratic Action Party (DAP) is an offshoot of Singapore's PAP and remains a Chinese-dominated political party till today. In Malayan identity politics, class struggle, articulated by the communists, had always been dubbed as pro-Chinese (Short, 1970; Brown, 1996). Hence, the opponents, i.e., the nationalists, largely the Malays, were able to create a 'fear' of the ethnic other. This is how the Malays retained the administrative edge over the Chinese or the non-Malays. But this is also how the possibility of a class-based struggle had eventually diminished in Malaya.

2.4 Colonial ways of governance and the exclusion of the politics of class struggle

Class struggle as a political aspiration lost its way as the discourse of emergency developed in British Malaya. The colonial regime established specific administrative tools to promote "a discourse of order and habit...through the simultaneous use of persuasion and force" (Coates, 1992, p. 56). The main objective of the British regime was to reduce

the armed rebellion of the Malayan Communist Party as a law and order issue. The colonial attempts those were adopted in the early-1950s left “a lasting effect on governmental practices” in Malaysia by instilling ‘authoritarianism’ observed today (Coates, p. 58).

It appears that the communist insurgency in Malaya gave the colonial regime the opportunity to curb the political aspirations in general packaged in the discourse of Emergency. The discourse was reproduced by the future governments in postcolonial Malaya whenever necessary. In his classic literature on bureaucratic reproduction in postcolonial societies, Frantz Fanon (1963, p. 35) argued that “decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain ‘species’ of men by another ‘species of men.’”

The point made here is that subsequent national governments built on the ruins of colonial discourse, found many of the colonial administrative measures to be effective - the continuance of the Internal Security Act in the country is one example. Since the insurgency continued in the independent Malaysia and ended only in 1989 with the surrender of the MCP leaders, the punitive legal acts continued in the country but also to suppress political contestations in general (Harper, 1999). Much of the legislation currently in force in Malaysia could be a direct result of the Emergency (e.g., Internal Security Act, 1960; the Sedition Act, 1969; the Societies Act, 1981; and the Official Secrets Act, 1986, Security Offences Special Measures Act 2012). All of the above laws have the potential to be abused in a plural society and the examples of such abuses are not rare.

2.4.1 Identity formation and its discontents

Identity politics in a multiethnic polity may take different directions. The political formations depend, largely, on the members of the polity comprising the political elites and also the administrators or in other words the state functionaries. At different historical junctures different directions can be felt active, based on, which hegemonic group has the power to direct the historical incidents. Pre and post-Independent Malaya took different paths of identity formations. In the pre-independent Malaya the antagonisms within the society articulated by the Malay political elites seem to be mainly expressed based on a perception of the original settlers’ (i.e., *Bumiputera*) fear of the *Other*. The sublime signifiers were race, ethnicity and nation.

A famous Malay saying that became the mantra of the nationalists in the early 1900s was, *Takkan Melayu Hilang di Dunia* (tr. The Malays are not going to be annihilated from this word). This saying comes from the mouth of Hang Tuah, the legendary hero within the tradition of Malay classical literature (*Hikayat Hang Tuah*, tr., The Legend of Hang Tuah). The emancipation of Hang Tuah as a national hero would explain why not class struggle but an ethnicised nationalist struggle was articulated in the dominant national politics. The colonial regime tolerated the rise of a Malay nationalist while they maintained a harsh attitude towards a Maoist-communism inspired class-politics. Chinese minority and the political faith of communism became so synonymous that the Malay political elites learnt how to package class struggle in ethnic-nationalist terms. This political practice adopted by the Malay leaders brought them closer to the British colonizers. The British colonial rulers also felt it 'safe' to leave the British companies in the Malay hands instead of allowing the Chinese communists to nationalise the enterprises in the future Malaya.

Along the discontents of Malayan identity formation came the infamous race riots in May 1969. The Malays in the late-1960s felt that a politically strong Chinese community would be more dangerous than an affluent Chinese community running the economic wheels of the country. But the 1969 national elections reflected a Chinese majority win in the urban Malaya. A clash erupted immediately in the city of Kuala Lumpur between the Malays and the Chinese which went on for a few days leaving hundreds dead and injured. The 1969 race riots have always been defined in the mainstream Malay political discourse as a manifestation of the Malays losing the political power to the Chinese. This threat to find themselves annihilated has been used frequently as a signifier in post-1969 Malay political discourse. Ghazali Safie, a veteran UMNO leader said after the riots that:

The politics of this country has been, and must remain for the foreseeable future, native-based; that was the secret of our stability and our prosperity and that is a fact of political life which no one can simply wish away" (Milne & Mauzy, 1978, p. 352).

In Malaysia, as Milne and Mauzy claimed, ethnic issues, remained "genuine and legitimate components of political life" (p. 353). One of the reasons mentioned typically behind the race riots is, the uneven economic distribution between the Malays and the Chinese. The country's Malay-based political camps felt that for a "better future together" the ethnic communities should have an equal stake in the national economy (Hooker, 2003, p. 10). The statistics shows that the distribution of capital in 1971 was, 63 percent foreign, 34 percent non-Malay, and less than 3 percent Malay (Hooker, 2003). In the changed

political climates enabled by the riots, the Malays became more confident of the fact that their political power would keep the non-Malays (i.e., the Chinese) away from overpowering them, who owned the most of the country's economy. The economic argument became prominent in the 1970s resulting in the formation of the New Economic Policy (NEP). This was an affirmative policy to empower the Malays in the fields of education, finance and banking and so on. Through the implementation of this policy Malaysia entered into an era of Malay participation in economy, even to the extent of creating a new segment in the Malay society, namely, *Melayu Bahru* (tr. New Malays) (Harper, 1996). These Malays were conscious of their cultural roots but at the same time were more outward looking and financially successful urban Malays.

The British policies in Malaya and later the initial policies adopted by the post-colonial governments in the independent Malaysia attempted at trying to diminish the feudal characteristics of the country. The historical trajectory shows that while to some extent many typical feudal aspects of the society diminished, the “psychological feudalism” remained strong (Alatas, 1968, 1977). The main Malay political party of UMNO often made use of the feudal lord, as a ‘sublime’ signifier to solidify support of a vast “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006). The sultan in the Malay society as a supreme authority was not supposed to be questioned in public; this structure is well explained through terms like *derhaka* (tr. treasonable behaviour or rebellion) and *daulat* (tr. sovereignty). In the modern context and especially during the leadership of Mahathir in the 1980s, the power of sultan was reduced drastically. However, with the presence of constitutional monarchy the political institutions may still use the seat of the sultan when there is a need for it (Kobkua, 2011).

In 1971, the UMNO published a book titled, *The Mental Revolution*. Published originally in Malay, *Revolusi Mental* attempted to construct the main characteristics of the Malays. The book compiled articles written by prominent UMNO politicians from different eras. The book supported the colonial myth about the Malays being a backward nation, lacked in discipline and crucially that the Malays were a nation without a vision. There was another book to define the Malay nation, *Malay Dilemma*, published in 1969. *Malay Dilemma* written by Mahathir Mohamad, who later became a prominent UMNO leader and also the long serving Prime Minister (1981-2003) of Malaysia, was equally critical of the Malays in the manner of the authors of *Revolusi Mental*. In his seminal work, *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, Alatas (1977) critiqued the dominant view of the national character of the Malays.

For Alatas, the colonial masters had to invent the Malays in a specific way, which he suggests was “for the purpose of extracting economic benefits” (1977, p. 213). The UMNO leaders’ caricature of the Malays, Alatas found, as being equally controversial. The attempts by the colonial regime and the postcolonial UMNO-led government to define the Malays support Laclau’s (2006) concept of “empty signifier.” The political leaders need to define a population by emptying characteristics which do not serve the purpose of their political agenda.

2.4.2 NEP and the bureaucratization of ethnic positions of the Malays vis-à-vis the non-Malays

The Malayan nationalism since the 1940s oscillated between a Malay and a Malayan nationalism. That is, there were political aspirations to establish a nation, based purely on Malay worldviews. While, a group of nationalists emphasized on forming a nation comprising all the ethnic groups seen as, equal. The fact remains that such discourses were taking place at the backdrop of the economic gap between the Malays and the Chinese. The gap added a dimension in the ethnic politics of the country which manifested in the discursive formations of such antagonisms.

It is through the National Economic Policy (NEP) that the special position of the Malays has been re-established in the modern Malaysia. The political leadership of Tun Abdul Razak, the father of the current Malaysian PM Najib Razak, introduced the NEP while he was the Premier of the country. The critics of the policy are divided with opinions that such policies in fact polarized the society further (Gomez & Jomo, 1999; Jomo & Hui, 2003).

Political economists commenting on the NEP often suggested that the economic policy, via crony capitalism, has hindered growth in the country (White, 2004, p. 391). NEP has also fostered a relation between “Chinese big business and the Malay political elites,” which in fact “was a by-product of the electoral alliance between UMNO and the Malayan Chinese Association (MCA) in the end-of-empire epoch” (White, 2004, p. 391). White further notes that

The Chinese towkay (community and business leaders) entered the political arena through the alliance of their party, the MCA, with UMNO during the 1950s. This pact within the Sino-Malay elite ensured the defeat of Dato Onn Jaafar’s

Independence of Malaya Party (later Party Negara) in municipal, state and federal elections and underwrote the winning of early independence for the Federation of Malaya (White, 2004, p. 392).

The pact between the mainstream Malay and the Chinese political parties was not however always stable. One of the reasons why the political alliance was re-written is along the line of different education and language policy planning. In general, the Malaysian socio-political struggle has often been fought fiercely in the sphere of education or language planning politics. The next section discusses education in Malaysia.

2.5 Education in Malaysia

In his *Seeds of Separatism: Education Policy in Malaya 1874-1940*, Seng (1975) discusses the origins of discontentment in the colonial Malayan education sector in detail. The British education policy reduced the vernacular schools into peripheral institutions while the English medium schools received the state patronage. The ethnic dimension of the distribution of students in schools in British Malaya shows that the British attitude was to let the respective ethnic groups deal with their ethnic-language schools for a long time.

Serious effects resulted from the British policy. Firstly, the social class dimension of such policy measure affected the poorer section of the society, that is, the segment which did not have the means to receive knowledge in English remained outside various state privileges. There was an urban versus rural dimension of the distribution of knowledge as well. Most urban Chinese received such education while vast majority of the Malays in the rural areas and the Indians children in the rubber plantations did not receive English education at all. It is only in the 1920s that the colonial regime in order to control the infiltration of Chinese communists into their schools became interested in ethnic-language schools.

In the ethnically divided Malaysia the need for community-languages based schools was highlighted in colonial reports (e.g., The Barnes Report, 1950 and The Fenn-Wu Report, 1951). The later Reports, i.e., the Razak Report in 1956, the Talib Rahman Report in 1960, and the Mahathir Report in 1979 in due course paved the ways for the country's education policies. The post-independent education policy reports considered and contested the classical reports. The following section provides a brief trajectory of Malaysia's education system in historical terms that contributed in the country's MOI policy debates.

The Razak Report (1956) published on the eve of independence became the basis of future education policy in Malaysia. The Report was a synthesis of Barns and Fenn-Wu reports while bending much towards Malay hegemony. In 1959 when the Chinese component in the ruling coalition, i.e., the MCA lost support amongst the Chinese professional classes, it was read as a result of the Chinese leadership's compromises on language and educational issues (White, 2004, p. 394). "There is a strong belief that in order for Chinese culture to survive and flourish in Malaysia, Chinese schools are essential as the transmitter of Chinese culture to the next generation" (Chin, 2001, p. 82).

Unlike Indonesia, the neighbouring country, which adopted Bahasa Indonesia as the national language, as a post-colonial independent nation-state, Malaysia, 'lost' its nationalist bid at the very outset (Sneddon, 2003, pp. 114-127). The permission to allow different language stream schools (i.e., in Chinese and Tamil) to thrive, shows that the role of national language was already 'compromised.' Hence, the policy shifts in relation to the medium of instruction may not sound unusual.

As agents of change, the country's intellectuals under different regimes produced different repertoires to accommodate or reject the current official policies during contestations. Antonio Gramsci in his popular account of the formation of intellectuals within a polity asks the question that: "Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialised category of intellectuals?" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 5). Gramsci's question has specific value in the discussion of policy formation in Malaysia. This is because intellectuals from various backgrounds were involved in the articulation of policies. Thus it is possible to ask the question that *Are Malaysian intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every ethnic community has its own particular specialised category of intellectuals?*

The numerous NGOs and political parties with their ethnic 'biases' constantly fed research studies articulated in intellectual terms in Malaysia. That is, each organisation has its research bodies to express things in apparently neutral academic terms. When such findings are expressed in political gatherings, opinion pieces in the media and in the parliament they may sound convincing for many as they are written in academic languages. Like many other countries, Malaysian research bodies are often closely linked to academia.

Lopez (2001) suggests that Malaysian studies, and in general the discussion on Malay history has been chronicled by two types of scholars: (1) European and western-trained

Malays with orientalist touches and (2) Malaysian scholars in the late colonial and post-independent era with nationalist overtones. While the nationalist descriptions claim to capture the Malay worldview(s) better than the colonial historians, they however, “tend to idealize subject matter in question” (Lopez, 2001, p. 4). According to Lopez,

In short, both the orientalist and the ‘nationalist’ positions may be woven with an implicit set of biases arising from these writers, each immersed in their own positions with reference to the subject matter, their worldviews and their times. Both genre are useful to the study of Malaysian history; as long as readers are able to keep in mind the position of each author vis-a-vis the subject matter (Lopez, 2001, p. 6).

As the intellectuals during different periods constructed the formulas for nation-building via education, the political sites were equally dominant in creating an intellectual tradition for constructing policy arguments. Gordon (1991) provides an account of the production of a new set of idioms defining Malaysia during Mahathir era (1981-2003). As the country’s Education Minister (1974-1977), Mahathir saw and perhaps shaped Malaysia’s education system immensely, culminating in the Report of the Cabinet Committee to Review Education Policy, which is known as Mahathir Report 1979.

2.6 The role of Malaysian media in explaining the policy debates

Foucault in the preface to *Madness and Civilization* wrote that “To interrogate a culture about its limit-experiences is to question it at the confines of history about a tear that is something like the very birth of its history” (Foucault, 2006, p. xxix). This view is in line with another Foucaultian concept, i.e., authenticity. However, the flip-side of the concept is that how do we determine that an historical incident is authentic unless we take into consideration all the contesting voices in the struggle? In Malaysia for instance, was the discourse of race riots of 1969, an authentic expression of the Malays against the Chinese hegemony? Can the same riots be constructed as the expression of merely a group of Malay politicians by excluding the Malay sentiment in general? The national elections in 2008 and in 2013 have been viewed by many experts (Sani, 2009; Weiss, 2009) as manifestations of the abolition of ethnicity-based politics in plural Malaysia. Can these voices in 2008 and 2013 be defined as authentic expressions too? A question that will be explored further in later chapters is regarding how to explain the country’s MOI policy

debates conducted at two historical junctures, i.e., in 2002 and in 2009. Should these articulations be read as authentic expressions manifesting the aspirations of the Malaysian nationhood and as such as a synchronic issue instead of a diachronic issue in Malaysia? Or can they be read as accidental issues (as opposed to essential characteristics of a nationhood) sparked by the mainstream and the non-mainstream media outlets of the country?

The notions of specificity of culture and the specificity of politics can be of vital importance here. The idea that specificity is a culmination of an entire political thesis at a specific historical juncture could also be defined as a problem of articulation, and as such, a problem within discourse analysis. In any discursive formation the question arises that which version of the history, i.e., which particular articulation should we be listening to? Are we taking into consideration all the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses or are we just listening to those discourses which escaped the caretaker of a “limited democracy” (Case, 1993)?

The author of an opinion editorial published by the mainstream Malay language newspaper *Utusan Malaysia* once claimed that political leaders alone do not construct history; the media has a prominent role in shaping the country as well. In his words, *Malah, tanpa akhbar-akhbar dan majalah-majalah, orang ramai tidak akan dapat disatukan perasaan dan keinginannya untuk bergerak menuntut kemerdekaan* (tr. In fact, without newspapers and magazines, people would not have been able to put together the feelings and desires to move for the Independence) (Adam, 27 August 1999). Media’s role of agenda setting that always existed in Malaysia has however been explained as Malaysia’s entry into ‘deliberative democracy’ to shape the country’s politics and policy formations in recent times (Sani, 2005).

Others argue that Malaysian media in general follows the model of ‘development journalism’ by which “the media openly practise pro-government policy in aid to nation building” (Taylor & Kent, 1999, p. 138). One may however question that within contemporary ‘mediated’ reality (Meyer, 2009) can media shape an issue without obstacle. It is also ‘risky’ to claim following Sani (2005) above that in developing countries including the context of this research i.e., Malaysia media performs an agenda-setting role similar to a watchdog in order to critique and inform the government and the citizens on policy matters without any political biases (cf. Walgrave & van Aelst, 2006, as they question the agenda-setting quality of various media platforms). Similarly, to claim that

media facilitates an ideal communication (Habermas, 1985), i.e., a dialogue between the policy makers, the government and the public in general, may also need to be accepted with caution.

2.7 Conclusions: Politics of identity in Malaysia

The multiethnic multilingual Malaysia has experienced different political identities at different historical moments – *Bangsa Melayu* (tr. Malay Nation) at the colonial era, *Bangsa Malaysia* (tr. Malaysian Nation) in the 1990s) and *IMalaysia* in 2010s. Many of the identity-labels constructed in colonial Malaya can be found in the contemporary Malaysia. While groups of Malays sought their identity in Islamic tradition, others referred to a nationalist or a class-based discourse. Furthermore, Islamic identity is not a fixed identity either across different segments of Malay population. The Arabs, the Indians and many others from the vast region of South and Southeast Asia became Malays (see the discussion on *masuk Melayu* in section 2.2. That Malays are not homogeneous has been discussed in great length (Nagata, 1974; Reid, 2001; Shamsul, 2001). On the other hand, the Indians and the Chinese who lived in the colonial era and those who were born after the country's independence may have very different views about China and India while constructing their identities. Features of non-homogeneity however did not stop these ethnic groups to claim uniqueness, authenticity and being homogenous while fighting for a common political cause.

It is also possible that in a multilingual and multiethnic country, citizens become aware of their ethnic identities more to forge new political alliances when they have more economic resources. Besides, while it is apparent that a country's education policies can be shaped by the existing ethnicity based politics, the dominant discourses can also be resisted at the national level by using participants' ethnic identities. The identity discourse can also be affected by the existing economic distributions and class struggles (see Tarling & Gomez, 2008, eds., *Ethnicity, equity and the nation*).

An ethnic group's framing of political discourses around their ethnicity can be divided based on their awareness of other issues like globalization, and also of their social class positions. The ethnic category often obscures the category of social class. Not everyone within an ethnic community can fit into the same economic class as it is often heard within populist ethnicity-based or nationalist politics to earn certain political mileage. Those who

subscribe to a cultural (Pennycook, 2002a) perspective argue that social class position, as a universal explanatory category, often fails to include the antagonisms sparked by the category of ethnic or cultural identity.

We have discussed above that class-based politics in Malaya was mostly if not entirely a Chinese phenomenon carried out under the leadership of Malayan Communist Party. But how was it possible that Malaysian Chinese Association became the key representative for the Chinese community since its inception in 1949? The popularity of Democratic Action Party in recent years as a socialist party cannot be explained as the rise of a class-based politics either. It is obvious that unlike the early Chinese migrants in the colonial Malaya, today's Chinese community tends to be middle and upper class more than working class or poor. Hence, to a large extent the shift in Chinese political discourse as they counter the dominant Malay hegemonic position can be explained through their shifted class position. In this regard, a materialist interpretation might claim that in the absence of class-based politics, an identity-based politics can be hyped, foregrounded or fetishized. On the other hand, we cannot entirely dismiss the category identity (e.g., ethnic identity) as it defines individuals deeply. Therefore, in order to explain a society we can construct a rather solid materialist theory of political formation. Such a theoretical framework can combine multiple categories, for instance, class and ethnicity including some accidental political aspirations determined by certain local and global phenomena realized within a specific society.

Chapter Three

Language and MOI policy studies in Malaysia and beyond

3.0 Introduction

The present chapter provides a description of language and MOI policy studies carried out in Malaysia and other postcolonial countries around the world. Policy discourses have been framed differently in different societies centring on the assumed needs and necessities of those societies. In later sections (3.4 and 3.5) of this chapter, a case has been made for discourse analytic studies followed by a discussion on the role of critical discourse analysis (CDA) with an aim to explain policy debates within a specific society, namely Malaysia.

3.1 Language and Medium of Instruction (MOI) policies

A general description of language policy studies has been provided in Chapter 1 (1.1.1 & 1.1.2) of the current thesis. The key points are reiterated here. Firstly, MOI is a sub-field within the wider field of language policy (or language planning policy) studies. Language policy (LP) studies, as a separate field of study, evolved in the early 1960s. Initially, the field was perceived to address problems around selecting an ideal language within the newly independent multilingual postcolonial nations. The experts chosen to solve the problem were mainly linguists (Johnson, 2011). The issues typically addressed in LP studies are similar to those of MOI studies due to the fact that both fields deal with the role of language in education.

Secondly, reviews show that MOI studies have widely borrowed from both descriptive i.e., “language management” (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Nekvapil & Sherman, 2009; Spolsky, 2009) and “critical” schools (Canagarajah, 2005; Heller, 2010; Johnson, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Pennycook, 2002a, 2013, 2014; Phillipson, 2006; Ricento, 2006; Samuel & Khan, 2013; Stroud & Wee, 2007; Tollefson, 1991, 2012; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007; Wee 2009; Wee & Heng 2005). The borders between descriptive and critical may however seem to be porous and are often difficult to be separated. The reason being the descriptive method is used as a first step to provide critical arguments later within the same study.

Furthermore, the descriptive trend could be seen as a preliminary approach when LP studies have evolved as a top-down pragmatic phenomenon in lieu of framing the issue from various critical socio-political contradictions within a society (e.g., identity-politics).

In the 1990s, Tollefson and a few other researchers felt the need for what is widely dubbed as critical language policy (CLP). CLP was welcomed “as an alternative to earlier language planning paradigms” since the earlier approach “attempted to analyze language as an entity devoid of socio-cultural context” (Johnson, 2011, p. 268). This shift in studying language situation in a given context can also be credited to Michel Foucault as he too famously shifted from an archaeological to a genealogical analysis in his preferred methods of analysis of historical phenomena. Foucault’s analysis has informed various studies in social sciences since the 1970s including language policy studies.

For Tollefson (2006), CLP research offers an epistemological break from language planning approaches in the previous decades. CLP “acknowledges that policies often create and sustain various forms of social inequality, and that policy-makers usually promote the interests of dominant social groups” (Tollefson, 2006, p. 42). In doing so, CLP studies drew insights from critical theory. Tollefson’s arguments can be read along the lines of Kachru, who, as early as 1981, claimed that ‘language planning’ is an “overused” term. In his words: “For almost two decades, *language planning* was presented as a cure-all for culturally and linguistically pluralistic societies in the developing Asian, African, and other non-Western countries” (Kachru, 1981, p. 2). Hence, Kachru considers the use of “policy” instead of “planning” or “engineering” as “a welcome departure” and “a sign of pragmatism and realism” (p.2). Unlike Tollefson (2006), Kachru did not use the term ‘critical’ to suggest a break from previous studies. Nekvapil (2006) on the other hand abandoned ‘language planning’ in favour of ‘language management.’ Terms like ‘planning’ or ‘management’ may still surface, despite Kachru’s cautions. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that ‘policy’ is a term that has been widely accepted among researchers who study the role of language in institutional settings either absolutely critical or not.

Finally, MOI studies in different contexts may serve the purpose of different objectives. That is, the context of Malaysia may not be repeated in other countries. Hence, the specificity of the site appears to be a prime concern, which can be translated to questions like *Why here?* Or *Why now?* This final concern can be explained via Pennycook’s notions of genealogical (Pennycook, 2002a) and ‘governmentality’ (Pennycook, 2002b) within LP

studies while there is a wide range of literature to explore the “specificity of the political,” borrowing a term from Laclau (1975).

3.2 Selected case studies on language/ MOI policy

Volumes of studies have been published on language policy (Blommaert, 1999; Tollesfson, 2002; Ricento, 2006; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007) and MOI policy (Tollefson & Tsui, 2003; Puteh, 2006) debates. A number of dissertations have been written on the policy debates in different postcolonial societies across Asia, Africa and elsewhere. However, dissertations on language policies, and particularly, focusing on their ideological implications in Malaysia seem to have been left unexplored (e.g., Tan, 2009; Choi, 2010; Selvarajah, 2011; Ali, 2013).

Language policy situations, as it can be surmised may not be the same across different societies. However, some of the issues arising in a society can be found in fragments in other societies. The following section explores the reality of a selected number of contexts. The contexts include Timor Leste, which is a newly independent postcolonial country. The next case cited (i.e., Lebanon), is a relatively old independent country which went through multiple phases of colonization, similar to that of Timor Leste. The third context explored two countries, namely, Singapore and Hong Kong. These two countries were British colonies for a long period and are heavily Chinese populated. Unlike Hong Kong, Singapore has large minorities. Hong Kong, albeit handed over to China in 1997, has not changed much in relation to its English language policies after its 150 years of colonial rule (1842-1997). Finally, section 3.2.5 explores the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca (i.e., a neoliberal agenda for re-visiting empire in politically correct terms) to explain the global penetration of English language.

3.2.1 Language policy in a post-conflict country: The case of Timor Leste

Timor Leste is a country situated in the Southeast Asia. The country was a Portuguese colony from the 16th Century until 1975 when Indonesia declared the territory as one of its states. The people strived for independence since then and obtained its freedom in 2002. The country has adopted the indigenous language Tetum and the colonial language Portuguese as their two official languages. On the other hand, Indonesian and English are designated as working languages.

Drawing on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and symbolic violence, Skutnabb-Kangas' (2000) linguistic human rights framework and Ruiz's (1995) language policy orientations, Taylor-Leech (2009) explained the language situation in Timor Leste in her monograph. Section III of her monograph, in which she discussed "the legacies of colonial and post-colonial policy, planning and practice with regard to language use and literacy" (p. 2) raised certain points which are of crucial interest to the current thesis. In the section, the author "highlights the social, political and cultural variables that have combined and interacted to shape the habitus (Bourdieu, 1991) [...] to show how language ideologies have not just determined language use but have also played a key role in forming national and social identity" (p. 2). In sections IV and V, Taylor-Leech discussed contemporary and future implications for language policy concerns in the country.

Taking her cue from Skutnabb-Kangas, Taylor-Leech (2009) showed that the East Timorese Constitution "makes a definitive statement of national identity in officialising Portuguese and Tetum and privileging them over the national languages" (p. 26). In the context of Timor Leste where they have more than twelve national languages, it is important to focus on which language received more attention. These national languages retained their symbolic status while Tetum and Portuguese receive more prestige as these two languages have been given a secured institutional status. While Tetum is a statutory official, symbolic national and working language, Portuguese is an official and a working language. The provision of working language is similar to the context of postcolonial Malaysia in which English was adopted as a working language as long as it required Malay to take over in the country's various institutions. In Timor Leste similar phrasing "as long as it requires" has been used in the country's Constitution to secure the former colonial language Indonesian as a working language. The other working language of the country is English. The term 'working language' may have similar status as that of an official language in the context of some countries, for instance Ethiopia (Taylor-Leech, 2009, p. 26).

Also crucial here to note that the Timor Leste Constitution ensures that: the countries which use Portuguese as their official language will have special relation with the country. The country's national anthem, first sung in 1975, is written in Portuguese, while the Constitution acknowledges the contribution of the other official language Tetum for its crucial role to unite the country.

Also, the Catholic Church has a distinct position in Timor Leste. Since the 16th Century a “conservative, triumphalist Catholicism was promoted” by Portuguese Empire under the “ideological framework” translated “into the discourse of *lusotropicalism*, claiming that Portugal had a special affinity with peoples of the tropics enabling them to fulfil a civilising mission free of racism” and so on (Taylor-Leech, p. 30). The approach taken by the Portuguese colonizers was unlike the British and the Dutch colonizers in the region, that is, the Empire did not rule through colonial officers of ‘alien’ origin. Instead, the local elites were elevated to the status of the colonizers and “to become full Portuguese citizens with Portuguese civil rights” (p. 30). Such a membership necessitates the colonized people “to assimilate fully into the Portuguese way of life and faith, a practice requiring a shift to the Portuguese language” (p. 30).

Prior to 1975 (i.e., the year in which the Portuguese left the country), the only way to be part of an educated and elite society was to adopt the language of the Empire. The situation changed as Indonesia annexed the country. The role of ‘prestige’ language that controlled various public spheres, i.e., the Church, the media and the education in Timor Leste during different historical period explains that a population can be asked to accept any identity-label based on the hegemonic construction along the ‘needs of the time’ suitable for a community. This may lead one to the hypothesis that identity is merely a construction but the specific construction is possible due to the uniqueness of the site and of the political climate as well.

To decode upon the question that which language should be used in the public sphere of a country, specifically in its various institutions, requires a careful choice focusing on the identity politics in a post-conflict country with long colonial legacy. Timor Leste may appear as a unique site for its contemporaneity – for it has been composed at a very recent time. Other scholarly works on Timor Leste include Hajek (2000), Taylor-Leech (2009, 2011, 2012, 2013), and Macalister (2012) among others.

3.2.2 Arabic and the politics of identity

Yasir Suleiman (2006) provides an in-depth review of the status of the Arabic language in relation to the formation of national identity in the Middle East. He reviews language policy contexts in three countries, i.e., Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, and Jordan. Suleiman addressed the issue of conflict between Arabic and other languages (French and

Hebrew), between different dialects of Arabic within a state and between Arabic-speaking states since the 19th Century. Suleiman focuses on the politics of identity as a determiner for adopting a language to be used in the public sphere, including its academic institutions in different colonial regimes.

Lebanon had an Ottoman and French colonial past. It obtained its independence in 1941. Jordan (or Transjordan) was a Turkish colony under Ottoman Empire for four centuries (1516-1918) later to become a British colony in 1921 like Palestine. The following sections discuss the case of Lebanon.

Suleiman in his review refers to the legacy of an Arab scholar from the 17th Century, namely Germanus Ferhat (1670–1732), who highlighted his Christian origin and decoupled the Arabic language from Islam. While teaching Arabic to his students Ferhat used Christian names in his books, specifically, a grammar of the Arabic language that was published in 1708. In his book, he started with “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” instead of usual *bism* (tr. in the name of) used hitherto in the Arabic language teaching contexts. Some of Ferhat’s ideas were picked up in the 19th Century when it became necessary to forge an identity for different religion-groups through the means of a common language. Arabic was deemed to be a common language against the Turkish colonial regime in Lebanon. There were multiple languages available in the country and the general language situation can be described as that

French was associated with the Maronites and the Catholics Russian with the Orthodox communities, and English with the Protestant and Druze communities. This picture was not, however, uniform. Many Christians, Maronites, and Catholics included, never ceased to think of Arabic as their native language and as the most important marker of their group identity, thus challenging the attempts to dislodge the language from this ideological position (Suleiman, 2006, pp. 127-128).

Various concerned groups within the existing language situation looked for ways to “decouple” or “loosen” the “exclusive link” between Arabic and Islam. They argued that since for both the Muslims and the Christians Arabic is a mother tongue, the language identity should be emphasized more to forge a group identity instead of “the bonds of Islam that linked the Arab Muslims to their Turkish coreligionists in the Ottoman Empire” (Suleiman, 2006, p. 127).

Suleiman continues by stating that in the second half of the 19th Century, the country's elites kept on using "the mobilizing role of the language to resist the Turkification policies of the Ottoman authorities in education and the administration of the Arab provinces" (p. 127). The elites realized that in Lebanon, by delinking Arabic from Islam, Christians can be made to feel part of a nationalist movement through language to be united against a common enemy. Interestingly, by the 1960s when some writers (for instance Yusuf Al-Khal, 1917–1987) began to compose their Christian-themed literary works in Arabic, they were reminded of the tie between Arabic and Islam. Such attempts make it obvious that certain campaigns based on identity-politics are valid only at a certain political climate.

The above situation can be compared with a Malaysian example. In Malaysia, the national language Malay (which is officially known as *Bahasa Malaysia*, tr. Malaysian language) is viewed as a language of the Malays. The Malays are by default Muslims after the 14th Century first Malay Emperor Parameswara's conversion to Islam (see section 2.2 above), and as such, there are many Arabic words in the language. In 2014, the Malaysian government denied the publication and circulation of the Malay language Bible in the country (Neo, 2014). The Bibles were later released to be used solely by the Christians or the non-Malays – any kind of proselytization of the Malays into other religions is considered a serious offence by the Federal Law. The Bible-incident is believed to be associated with the country's weekly Catholic newsletter *Herald's* attempt to use Allah to denote God in their publications. Even though the term has been used by the Christian community in the country since the 16th Century (Hunt, 1989) – beside the Malay term *Tuhan* for God – it is now forbidden completely. The verdict was made in 2013 (Neo, 2014; Shah, 2015). The debate divided the nation along the lines of the freedom of religion and the national language.

3.2.3 Language politics in Singapore

Singapore is an island-state in the Southeast Asia neighbouring the federation of Malaysia. It has a small land (633 square km) and the population is 5.5 million (Department of Statistics, Singapore 2015). The four main races in the country are the Chinese (74.3%), the Malays (13.3%), the Indians (9.1%) and Eurasians and Others (3.2%). It was a British colony, in fact, one of the earliest British colonies in the region established in 1819 by Stamford Raffles, a British East India officer. It is crucial to mention that Raffles took Singapore as a lease from the Malay ruler of the Johor Sultanate.

Singapore earned its complete self-government in 1959. The island-country's political transformation was yet to be accomplished. In 1963, Singapore joined the Federation of Malaysia briefly, to leave in 1965, in order to be an independent state. A number of colonial education and language policies written for Malaysia also applied to Singapore as neighbouring British colonies (e.g., the Barnes and the Fenn-Wu reports).

Similar to the situation of Timor Leste mentioned above, each ethnic community in Singapore has a mother tongue. Although there are many Chinese dialect groups available, officially, it is Mandarin which is accepted as the mother tongue for all Chinese, Malay for the Malays, Tamil for all the speakers of Indian-dialects, and English for the Eurasians and the others. These four languages have the status of official languages.

Similar to the case of Lebanon mentioned above who wanted to resist a Turkish Empire, Singapore too was frightened of the 'intrusion' of 'foreign' culture. The reason for Singapore to promote mother-tongue is "to give students an anchor in their ethnic and cultural traditions, thus avoiding the excesses of westernization and hopefully preventing deculturalisation" (Gopinathan, 1998, p. 21).

The language situation in Singapore in its postcolonial moment was quite 'messy.' Upon observing the language situation of the multilingual island-state, the first Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew said In 1959 that "They were like tanks of fish in an aquarium, together and yet apart, each community in a world of its own" (in Lim, 2015). Lee wanted to give an identity to this newly born postcolonial nation. His initiatives resulted in the implementation of a pragmatic multilingual language management situation as it is often defined by Neustupný, Jernudd, and Nekvapil among others (see above on language management). The authority-defined version of this language policy in Singapore was predominantly part of a top-down decision-making attempt which in fact encouraged English language to the extent of establishing Singlish, a particular variety of English recognized by the scholars of World Englishes (Bokhorst-Heng, Alsagoff, McKay, & Rubdy, 2007; Kramer-Dahl, 2003; Park & Wee 2012; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006). While there is an attempt to encourage the learning of mother tongues, Singapore's language policy since then has been defined following economic reasoning, i.e., neoliberal propaganda for English language use (see Heller, 2005; Ingrid & Choi, 2012 for more discussion on neoliberal agenda and English language).

3.2.4 The story of Hong Kong

Hong Kong became a British colony in 1842. Till 1974, it had only one official language, i.e., English. The Official Languages Ordinance (1974) adopted Chinese as a co-official language. The definition of Chinese however is kept undefined. The Chinese in Hong Kong means Cantonese and not Mandarin as it is understood as the de facto Chinese language in almost all other Chinese-language contexts. Besides, it follows the written standard of Taiwan, not of Beijing. Hence, the 1997 handover did not change much in the language policy decisions made by Hong Kong. The Chinese identity in Hong Kong stands at a stark contrast to that of Singapore. They are different not only in political sense, that is, one is a national sovereign while the other is not. The language identity of the two Chinese communities is also different. It is not conclusive whether Singapore's use of Mandarin can be seen as an acknowledgement of its connection with the Republic of China, while Hong Kong's use of Cantonese as an attempt to signal a departure from the source country. Hong Kong's adoption of traditional Chinese characters in their writing system instead of adopting the simplified version followed by Beijing signals a different return to the nostalgic cultural past of Old China, a language policy, also followed by Taiwan.

A number of studies have been published till date on the language policy situation in Hong Kong (Bolton, 2012; Evans, 2013; Johnson, 1994; Pennycook, 2014; Poon, 2013; Tung, Lam, & Tsang, 1997). This brief overview discusses the situation in Hong Kong through the lenses of "cultural governance" and "governmentality" explained by Pennycook (2002a, 2002b). Language policy situation in Hong Kong may not sound different from other colonies in which the colonial administrations wanted to construct the communities therein as "politically passive" (Pennycook, 2002a, p. 91). This construction was used to justify the colonial regime's intervention in order to regulate the people in an efficient way. For Pennycook language policies worked as "crucial cornerstone of cultural governance" which thrives on constructing the figure of an *Other* (2002a, p. 91).

Pennycook read Hong Kong's language policy through three interrelated concepts, the first two are taken from Foucault, the notions of governmentality and of docile body. The third concept was 'language policy as cultural politics'. Governmentality is not based on a strict centralized regulation of the docile body of the *Other*. It rather is a localized version of order in a society. The society, through its miscellaneous organizations decentralizes the jobs of the reproduction of the society, or rather expedites the continuation of the status quo in a specific way. These organizations work closely in tandem with the population by

disseminating different kinds of discourses (i.e., concrete language-texts both as written and spoken) to interpellate the addresses into various identity-positions. According to Pennycook (2002a) what happened in Hong Kong during the colonial regime was that a specific discourse was constructed to stereotype the Chinese population who used to consume opium and thus, their docile bodies could be 'regulated' by the disciplined European colonizers. These discourses became hegemonic (albeit with occasional counter-hegemonic effects as Pennycook reported a number of political movements in the early 20th Century) in general, and as such, the 'civilizing agenda' of the colonial rulers accepted as common-sense. This phenomenon, Pennycook argued, was present in other Southeast Asian colonial nations (e.g., Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia).

Johnson (1993) reported that when in 1974 the language policy in Hong Kong changed in order to incorporate Cantonese as its co-official language, the attitude towards that mother tongue changed too. These changes include an institutionally recognized version of Cantonese in contrast to the layman version of it. Other changes were inclusion of more English words in the lexicon. In that way, the English language policy had an effect on the mother tongue Cantonese. More recent works show that there are many English speakers of Chinese origin in Hong Kong who consider the language as their first language. The situation can be compared to the phenomenon of 'I am not English but my first language is English' (Pillai & Khan, 2011) in Malaysia.

3.2.5 English as a lingua franca

Phillipson (2003, p. 176) warns that the use of English across Europe is leading to "a simplified, pidginised but unstable 'Euro-English' that inhibits creativity and expressiveness, whether English is used as a mother tongue or as a foreign language, a language that is spoken with so much imprecision that communication difficulties and breakdowns multiply".

The spread of English around the globe has been studied under different names, e.g., English as a global language (Crystal, 2003), English as a lingua franca (ELF) (Jenkins, 2006; Kirkpatrick 2006; Pakir, 2009) and also World Englishes (Schneider, 2003). Instead of looking at English as a globally standard language (e.g., British, American and Australian Englishes), researchers of ELF demand that different regions may develop their own varieties of Englishes based on their common phonological/ syntactic roots. ELF

researchers are more concerned about how to stop communication breakdown due to differences in their use of English (Jenkins, 2006). With that view in mind they study the regional varieties often with large corpora.

While the ELF approach is tied to certain instrumental reasoning that language breakdown should not take place, the World Englishes approach celebrates the differences. There are arguments (e.g., Rubdy & Saraceni, 2006) too that ELF liberates the L2 speakers from the cultural baggage of local English celebrated by the WE and also from the standard global English that Crystal (2003) would have wanted. The peripheral communities or the people from Kachru's "outer circle," i.e., the people from the various former British colonies are becoming more conscious about their identity either due to their economic rise or for other reasons. Hence, the global campaign for a Standard English is disappearing as many around us decline to feel at home in the 'uncanny fluency of another's language,' borrowing a phrase from Bhabha (2012).

A different picture, contrary to Bhabha's dictum arises from Leipzig. In her exploration for 'The English-as-a-lingua-franca approach,' Fiedler (2010) cites an anecdotal reference which in a way establishes the point that the status of English as a superior language is not only an Asian or African phenomenon, it is a global phenomenon. Fiedler records a story she overheard in a tram in her hometown in Leipzig. The story involves two women, one of them was a native English speaker. The local German-speaking woman asked her about how she settled down in this new environment, particularly her son in the kindergarten. The English woman replied to her that her son not only adjusted well he was also "loved" by all in that international kindergarten. In this context international meant "English-speaking." Fiedler claimed that "there is a huge demand from parents for kindergartens with English programs in Germany" (p. 203). The attitude to English language in Germany is explained when Fieldler overheard the English mother narrating that she was told by the kindergarten teacher that her son was "very popular because the other parents encouraged their children to make friends with him and play with him, as he spoke proper English and that that would be very good for them" (p. 203).

The above Leipzig story can be overheard in other less developed locales more often as the non-English people ceaselessly enter an unequal battle in which the medium is somebody else's. As long as English retains its 'vehicular' role, i.e., the role of a language carrying the knowledge of the 'civilized' developed economies, the value of English as a symbolic capital will not be diminished. Along the similar lines of argument one may ponder how to

challenge what Muhleisen (2003, p. 117) claimed that “all science is useless if it is not accessible to other members of the discipline. This is easier with only one language as a scientific lingua franca.”

3.3 Previous studies on MOI policies in Malaysia

A number of studies have been conducted on language/ MOI policies in Malaysia (Mauzy, 1985; Asiah, 1994; Asmah, 1994; Gaudart, 1992; Watson, 1983; Wong & James, 2000, David & Govindasamy 2005; Tan 2005; Rappa & Wee, 2006; Gill 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2013; Gill, Nambiar & Ibrahim, 2012, Selvarajah, 2011; Yao, 2012; Samuel & Khan, 2013; Samuel et al., 2014). While Asmah is a pioneer in the language policy research in Malaysia, Gill has produced a voluminous body of studies covering various aspects of language and MOI policies in the country. However, apart from Tan (2005) Selvarajah (2011) and Samuel et al. (2014), other studies have not provided a thorough textual analysis of the debates. The three studies mentioned, have mainly focused on the analysis of newspapers data.

In his study, Selvarajah (2011) focused on the discursive construction of the MOI policy debates in the country's mainstream and non-mainstream newspapers. The framework he applied was the discourse-historical approach of Wodak (2001) within the paradigm of critical discourse analysis. His study showed that political parties across the divides use specific news outlets to advance their arguments. The pro- and anti- government newspapers appear to serve their political agenda. In order to construct an argument they made selective choices to quote certain segments of the population to construct a version of reality accordingly.

Selvarajah (2011) had a thorough view of the situation in 2011 as the MOI policy implemented in 2003 was reversed in 2009. Consequently, the researcher read the arguments longitudinally that also fit his method of discourse historical approach. On the other hand, Tan's (2005) study, also based on media reports, focused on the pre-policy argument stage. His data were collected between April to July 2002 when the MOI debates were at its peak but the new MOI policy was yet to be implemented. Tan's study on the debates analysed a corpus of 26,000 words comprising 57 texts from three news outlets. The data included the English newspaper titled *New Straits Times*, the Malaysian official

mouthpiece *Bernama* and the *Business Times*. In his data Tan included news-reports mainly with a limited number of opinion editorials (n=11).

Tan used a quantitative method on a small corpus but made conclusive remarks like “the majority of the Malaysians would like to re-instate English medium education” (p. 55). From a methodological perspective it can be viewed as too ‘daring’ as the author almost mimics the authoritarian leadership in Malaysia who too drew their conclusions from limited number of examples and minimal statistical analysis (refer to the use of pro-government MPs’ use of statistical figures produced at the national parliament in Chapter Six of the current thesis).

The strength of Tan’s study is that he explored a crucial question on language ideology of the Malaysian nation, that is, to what extent is English a Malaysian language. Tan however ignored two crucial issues, first, how many of the rural Malaysians, and second, how many of the poorer Malaysians (in both rural and urban areas) view English as a Malaysian language. By omitting the variable of social class Tan entered into the similar controversy embraced by those theorists of multicultural identity who define identity along the lines of ethnicity, religion and some other cultural identities at the expense of socio-economic class. Tan ends in a parochial dichotomous conclusion that Malay is seen as a vehicle for national identity while English is regarded as a vehicle for progress. Hence, a common language, i.e., Malaysian English can resolve the issue peacefully.

While Tan looked at the MOI debates in the media before the policy was implemented, Samuel et al. (2014) focused on a specific Chinese newspaper to read the debates on MOI in Malaysia constructed for a specific ethnic community. The study focused on news reports published between June to August 2009 when the country had abolished a six-year long MOI policy. Two key concepts used in this study were ‘plurality of struggles’ developed by Laclau (2006) and Laclau & Mouffe (1985) and ‘transmission of the speech of others’ credited to Bakhtin (1981). The study concluded on the notion that in a multilingual country the mouthpiece of a large minority can still articulate a criticism against an authority-defined policy via the theoretical tools of Laclau and Bakhtin. From the level of a praxis, the Chinese newspaper succeeded as they put into practice a theoretical position, which is, they used multiple voices ‘effectively’ by quoting them directly or indirectly to construct their arguments.

A general trend in the studies of language or MOI policy debates in Malaysia is that researchers mostly focused on technical aspects, i.e., the classroom participation, while media scholars have studied the agenda-setting aspects of the policy controversies. Hence, there is a dearth in discourse analytical studies. The next section discusses the role of discourse analysis in studying language/ MOI policies.

3.4 Language/ MOI policy - The role of discourse analysis

At the moment there is dearth in language/ MOI policy research following discourse analytical models with a few exceptions. We pursue an argument that language policy is perhaps better explained when it is seen as an articulation (Laclau, 1990, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) or a discursive formation (Foucault, 1991) within a specific site of contestation (Scollon, 1997) by following the logics of the ‘specificity of the political’ (Laclau, 1975). Different sites of struggle will result in different discursive formations. Sections 3.2.1-3.2.4 showed that even the postcolonial sites within the same region may define their struggles in different terms. Hence, it is no surprise that across continents the nature of struggles and the resultant articulations will be different as well.

Politics or political contestations after Laclau (1975, 1990, 1996, 2005) can be viewed as fought discursively. In language policy contexts it can be related to Pennycook’s explanation of colonial methods of governmentality formulated as specific identity discourse between us and them. That is, both the colonial government and the colonized population construct certain discursive strategies to create, combine and continue discrimination and/ or struggle to occupy the space of the ideal discourse. In the discourse of the colonial regime the cultural *Other* is ‘docile’ or ‘lazy natives’ while in the discourse of the colonized the regime is oppressive.

The next chapter (Chapter Four) will explain the various conceptual variables used in this study in further details (e.g., Historical materialism, Dialectics, Antagonisms, Governmentality, Social imaginaries, Order of discourse, Articulations, Discourse, text and genre, Contextualization, Interdiscursivity and Intertextuality). Therefore, the following section discusses, only briefly, what discourse analysis, mainly critical discourse analysis (CDA), in general can offer to policy discourse analysis.

For Ruth Wodak, one of the pioneers in CDA, language policy is a sum of

every public influence on the communication radius of languages, the sum of those top-down and bottom-up political initiatives through which a particular language or languages is/ are supported in their public validity, their functionality, and their dissemination (2006, p. 170).

For Wodak media debates, public polls, parliamentary debates and so on can be used as the data for analysing language policy in a polity. She encourages the mixing of ‘appropriate’ methodologies to explore different genres and contexts resulting in building a ‘multi-methodical’ framework (p. 171). She underscores the fact that different data require different analytical methods: the parliamentary debate in the form of proposals can be constructed in declarative mode, which may stand in contrast to the constitutional documents being written in heavily edited legal discourse. These two genres are different from ‘spontaneous conversations in semi-private publics.’ The first category of texts can explore the use of specific rhetorical tropes and figures while the second category should explore how the rules of dialogues and conversation are being used.

The version of CDA propagated by Wodak demands an interdisciplinary approach that “attempts to integrate large quantity available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive events are embedded” (p. 175). Her method also encourages researchers to analyse “the historical dimension of discursive actions by exploring the ways in which particular genres of discourse are subject to diachronic change” (p. 175). In other words, the analysis includes the constant changes into the reality on the ground, for instance, how political allegiance changes over time to articulate or to facilitate a certain kind of discourse. This echoes the Kantian notion of ‘conditions of possibility,’ but also, what Pennycook (2002b) defined as genealogical analysis in his reading of postcolonial language policy in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

What Wodak indicated by stating that discourse goes through historical changes, has been stated by Fairclough (1992a, p. 1) as that “changes in language use are linked to wider social and cultural processes” resulting in the needs for language analysis “for studying social change.” Language use in this sense is essential in the process of both reflecting and constructing the social changes under discussion. For Fairclough, CDA deals with existing social problems with consequences on people’s lives. The difference that Fairclough’s version of CDA has with a poststructuralist uncritical social constructivist formulation of social problems is that for him “Whereas problems are constructed in thought, the ‘difficulties’ they problematize are produced by material processes” (Fairclough, 2013b, p.

186). That is, a social problem can be developed as an abstract theoretical problematization. However such abstraction is a result of certain factual realities. At a discourse level the theoretical problematization cannot be left as an abstract problem of linguistic play of utterances. Those utterances are results of concrete socio-political antagonisms, which Laclau (2005) deemed, are constructed, along the lines of political differences (and similarities).

3.5 Conclusions: To signal an epistemological break from existing MOI research

Due to disciplinary preferences researchers may study a language policy from various micro and macro perspectives. For instance, researchers may study how a policy is implemented within classroom settings, while they can also study the existence of such a policy from a socio-political perspective by using an interdisciplinary framework. The current thesis defines MOI debates as an interdisciplinary issue and thus problematizes it by referring to the fields of education, political science and history for instance. The thesis also views the debates as matters of discourse, discursive formation and of articulation. Voloshinov (1973) rightly puts that “Without signs, there is no ideology” (Voloshinov, p. 9). Hence, the need for an interdisciplinary framework was felt, a framework that borrows concepts from different branches of social sciences.

Another limitation within the study of MOI policy controversies is that they are often problematized as the issue of multiculturalism within a plural society. Such an approach may result in a parochial definition of identity-politics. Furthermore, in most multicultural nations concepts like colonial baggage, postcolonial countries’ aspirations to become developed nations and so on are more research-worthy terms in contrast to the discourse of class-conflicts, and that of the formations of new political frontiers by questioning the status quo. When an MOI policy research budget in most postcolonial countries depend heavily on various funding bodies like World Bank and so on, the variables like class-struggle may not surface due to obvious reasons. Block (2013) has recently lamented that social class has disappeared from the discipline of applied linguistics. Similar observation applies to the studies on MOI policy as well. The current study, by forging an alliance with Fairclough’s version of CDA, develops an interdisciplinary framework in the next chapter (Section 4.4) to raise the questions on MOI policy studies anew.

Chapter Four

Conceptual framework or Theoretical underpinnings

Playing our language-game always rests on a tacit presupposition – (Wittgenstein 2009: 188).

All ways of thinking, more or less perceptibly, lead through language in a manner that is extraordinary – (Heidegger 1977: 3).

4.0 Introduction

The current chapter introduces the theoretical concepts used in this study on the medium of instruction (MOI) policy debates in Malaysia. The study is written within the paradigm of critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA is an interdisciplinary (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009) approach to analyse empirical data expressed through the means of discourse. As an interdisciplinary (also defined as trans or multi-disciplinary by Fairclough and van Dijk respectively within CDA) approach, CDA researchers use epistemological tools of neighbouring branches in social sciences to explain their naturally-occurring socially-situated discourse data (Fairclough, 1992a, 2009, 2013a; Van Dijk, 1993, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

The concepts used in this study are defined in this chapter by categorizing them as macro and micro analytical concepts. The macro concepts used are, historical materialism, dialectics, identity-politics, antagonisms, governmentality, social imaginaries and order of discourse, while the micro concepts are articulation, discourse, intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and re/en-contextualization. These concepts, to re-iterate, are seen through the epistemological lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA).

The previous chapters have provided an account of historical background of Malaysia by introducing the political parties, certain NGOs and also specific media houses which engage in MOI debates. Those who contributed to the production of various discourses, including those anonymous writers of letters to the editors in newspapers, have carried out certain “social actions” (Van Leeuwen, 1995) within the context of a specific society by following certain “orders of discourse” (for definition, refer to section 3.1.1.5 below) in that society.

4.1 Policy discourse analysis

Section 1.1.3 of Chapter One mentioned ‘deliberative approach’ as one of the key methods in policy studies. It is a type of analysis that claims to be “interpretative,” “pragmatic,” and “deliberative” (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). That is, within such an analysis a “network of actors” constantly realign their activities, both theoretically and practically, according to the “changing political topography” that “sprung up around concrete social and political issues” (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003, p. xiv). This shift in policy studies, according to Hajer & Wagenaar (2003) is an outcome of the proliferation in discourse analytical studies. Concomitant to this approach is the shift in the focus of studies, which is, a shift from ‘government’ to that of ‘governance.’ The notion of government, “within a state context” includes, “sovereignty,” “territoriality” and “citizenship,” while governance has a wider periphery as it covers a “network” of private and public organizations to approach any “concrete problems” within a state (Lievens 2015, p. 2). The fundamental difference between a government and a governance model is that the latter model does not exercise “coercive” power (Lievens, 2015).

The shift, Hajer and Wagenaar (2003) suggest, is also part of a critical development in the analysis of policies. A range of new vocabularies, e.g., governance, institutional capacity, networks, complexity, trust, deliberation and interdependence have replaced the old terminologies like state, government, power and authority, loyalty, sovereignty, participation and interest groups (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003, p. 1).

It may sound too radical to claim that old vocabularies have disappeared completely. One may still encounter those vocabularies to exist in many societies. Societies may focus on various clichéd values (e.g., the discourse of ethnic or religious exclusivities) while aspiring towards establishing a modern society. In order to accommodate views from two different worlds (i.e., traditional and modern), policy makers or political leaders may use ‘sublime’ institutions (e.g., constitutional monarchy in the case of Malaysia). However, sublime institutions can be questioned by the segments of a population even in semi-feudal countries within developing economies. To question various sublime and so-called authentic identity labels has become possible largely due to the rise of network society and a proliferation of new media outlets (Castell, 1996).

Within the evolved reality, a book that ‘revolutionized’ language policy research fundamentally, was the one written by James Tollefson, titled *Planning Language, Planning Inequality*. The book, published by Longman in 1991, under its *Language in*

Social Life series, signalled that “there is [even] a deliberateness about the title of the book” (Candlin, 1991, p. vi). This deliberateness and provocation was about a radical epistemological break from previous works within LP and MOI studies to ask questions like,

what language is being planned, who is doing the planning and on behalf of whom, for what local and state purposes and with what anticipated effects (Candlin, 1991, p. vi).

Planning Language, Planning Inequality set the agenda for future LP studies, which was that language policy is perhaps inherently political in a Laclauian sense, and as such, is a matter of contestation and of construction through the means of discourse. A critical epistemological stand that includes issues like socio-political antagonisms, power and hegemony was conceivable when Tollefson (1991) and later, Pennycook (2002a, 2002b, 2013, 2014), Blommaert (1999, 2006) Ricento (2006) and Heller (2010a) offered their analyses. These LP theorists questioned the existing language policy studies by underlining the fact that amidst technical analysis, the socio-political antagonisms disappear. Another theorist along this line is David Block, who in his recent book on the analysis of social class in applied linguistics claimed that by bracketing social class (in the planning of bilingual policies, for instance), does not stop antagonisms, and the construction of antagonistic discourses either (Block, 2013).

Chapter Two of this thesis made a point that the British colonial regime in Malaya created an administrative situation to keep citizens divided not only along the lines of production (Alatas, 1977) but also of education (Seng, 1975). Concurrently, the historians do not ignore the reality that the colonial takes on education policies were complimented by the natives, as the locals too expressed a sceptical attitude to the regime (Soenarno, 1960). When the colonial attitude shifted from Orientalism to Anglicism as Pennycook (2014) defined the situation, the Malays were uniting themselves gradually with a nationalist fervour to claim their schools (Sua, 2013). Yet, the absence of a ‘deliberative democracy’ to resist hegemonic discourse of the colonizers in the field of politics with proper counter-hegemonic contestations allowed a top-down policy-making culture to be continued. The different stakeholders, i.e., the *rakyat* (tr. Citizens) in the colonial Malaya were yet to find a language and an effective platform to voice their antagonisms. Such a reality made the locals to be found silent in the official documents on the issue of education and/ or MOI policies.

In the independent Malaysia, on the other hand, due to the rise of multiple socio-political actors and platforms, situation arose to voice language policy issues discursively (Gill, 2013). The administrative measures adopted in the post-colonial Malaya let the citizens celebrate ethnic and religious identities. The emerged situation allowed them to establish vernacular schools in different ethnic languages. However, instead of any reduction of socio-political antagonisms, towards building a common national language policy for its educational institutions, the society encountered other problems, most of which were, inherently, political in nature.

In order to get into the kernel of the debates in the independent Malaysia, a linguistic analysis of the assertions can help to distinguish the discourses of pedagogy and of sheer politics. Here lies the relevance of Bourdieu (1981, 1988) and his notions of field and habitus to unearth political message in philosophical texts. The views held by Bourdieu may direct one's attention to insert a critical layer in the existing theoretical concept of interdiscursivity (Candlin, 2006) in order to explain how some discursive fields perspectivize (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and legitimize (van Leeuwen, 1999, 2008) certain political agenda often in the name of people as a "sublime" signifier (Laclau, 1990, 1996, 2006).

4.2. Macro analytical concepts

Macro concepts in this thesis are mainly part of contextual variables. For instance, how Malaysia as a socio-political context shapes the production of a specific MOI discourse through certain text-types (i.e., media and parliamentary data in the current study). The Malaysian society has its specific structure which can be unfolded both synchronically and diachronically (Blommaert, 1999). But the unfolding of a polity can also be explained in multiple ways and the findings may vary depending on the various sub-categories used. The use of sub-categories depends, largely, on disciplinary or epistemological biases. The current study uses the sub-categories of historical materialism, dialectics, identity-politics, antagonisms, governmentality, social imaginaries and order of discourse.

The historical context of the colonial and the postcolonial Malay(si)a, delineated in the previous three chapters, offer a preliminary guideline to explain the 'conditions of possibility' of certain articulations within the domain of policy planning discourses in that

specific polity. A socio-historical context is however not a simple narrative. As such, while the previous chapters introduced the context in historical terms, the present chapter explains what is a materialist explanation and how do we explain the dialectical relations in a specific context. The definitions mentioned here will help the readers to appreciate the discussions in the previous chapters, read cataphorically, while the readers may see the rationale for the analysis of the discourse-data explained in the latter chapters. The strategy of re-visiting concepts and background information in order to reflect on empirical data has been classically defined as retroductive. Retroduction has been viewed as an effective strategy within socio-political analyses, particularly, within the paradigm of discourse theory (Glynos & Howarth, 2007).

4.2.1 Historical materialism (HM)

Historical Materialism explains why certain socio-economic formation evolves at a specific historical point. The concept is classically credited to the merits of Marx and Engels. For Engels, HM

designate[s] that view of the course of history which seeks the ultimate cause and the great moving power of all historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, in the consequent division of society into distinct classes, and in the struggle of these classes against one another (Shaw, 1991, p. 234).

The argument here is that the economic structure of a society or in other words, the “relations of production” in a society “correspond to a definite stage of development of [that society’s] material productive forces” (Shaw, 1991, p. 235). This theoretical stance results in a supplementary argument that “the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general” (Shaw, 1991, p. 236). The basic materialist standpoint is that the economic base determines the ideological superstructure in a society. As we re-visit the previous chapter, briefly, we encounter the affluent tin miners, imperial family members and bourgeois classes to send their children to English schools in colonial Malaya, while the poorer sections of the rural and urban population to study in the local schools which ran in vernacular languages. The colonial policies in Malaya secured a specific social formation of classes possibly creating a specific world view about education and a superior language. In other words, the economic

category of social class and the ideological positions on the language and education policies can be shown to be related.

When Laclau (with Mouffe) deconstructed the sublime position of social class within Marxist studies through a Foucaultian reading of Gramsci, the sublime position of the class-based analysis within Marxist analysis, was questioned. This Laclauian reading of historical materialism allowed a superior theoretical position of ideological superstructure over the economic base. Within applied linguistics, Block (2013) prioritizes social class but he also emphasizes the politics of ethnicity in the contemporary developed immigrant nations to explain language policies and bilingual education for example. In such problematizations, the transformation of a society from one type of economic practice to the next is hardly direct as Marx would have expected. As poststructuralist discourses on historical formation kept questioning the economic base since Gramsci and western Marxism in general, the analysis of societies like Malaysia (from a feudal to a colonial and later, to a modern free-market economy) becomes crucial to revisit along the lines of materialist interpretation in the contemporary era. This is the position of the current thesis vis-à-vis historical materialism as it explains the discursive formations in the contemporary Malaysia.

4.2.2 Dialectics

In discourse analytical studies the concept of dialectics has often been mentioned frequently to explain discursive formulations (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The current study understands that most discourse analytical studies use this term in a general sense that society progresses as antagonistic forces collide.

In his study of capitalism, Karl Marx (1818-1883) uncovers relations between antagonistic forces within a society and thus offered insights to explain how those forces relate to each other at a concrete (material) moment. The realization of, what (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 7) defined as “enlightenment” and “emancipation,” in this sense, are, not mere realizations at an abstract level. That is, certain material changes are expected to occur due to specific emancipatory realizations. Colonial discourses often framed the objectives of their language policies as an opportunity to change the lives of the people living in the orient (Pennycook 1998). Such a framing can also be viewed as part of an emancipatory claim.

By framing the policy as such colonial regimes could take measures to either completely eliminate or regulate previous systems of education (e.g., *Sekolahpondok* tr. Religious school in Malaya).

Marx claimed that “Philosophers so far have described the reality, the point is to change it” (Marx & Engels, 1970, p. 123). A similar doctrine is adopted by most CDA scholars who view an analysis essentially as part of an issue-based “emancipatory” agenda (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). An analysis should be able to explain the previous antagonisms in a society and thus predict a *solution* as well. In this sense, colonial’s regimes’ overthrow of previous models of education in Malaya and elsewhere was not an emancipatory change. The changes suggested by the regime were neither the result of a dialectics or antagonism proper between the two world views. The changes brought in by the colonial regime were based on a top-down policy imposed on a population by ignoring their worldviews. In the perceived emancipatory moment the location of conflict was elsewhere, which for Pennycook, was written on the “docile” bodies of the locals.

The dialectical relation as a “philosophy of internal relations” is not obvious “immediately” (Ollman, 2003, p. 2). The location of conflict are often “hidden” (Fairclough, 2001, 2013). However, a reduction of relational variables in deterministic terms, exclusively via class conflicts may frame the emancipatory agenda in missed directions.

Block (2013), in the context of language policy studies in the United States of America found an entirely different reality in which the variable of social class is neglected at the expense of ethnicity, gender and other identity markers due to the increasing disciplinary interest in multicultural studies. As the society experiences new realities, and makes eventually some changes in the existing policies, the dialectical relation may appear more complex, as it was claimed by Althusser (2005) through the concept of “overdetermination.” Fairclough (2013) too shares this Althusserian position within a general discussion on dialectics or contradictions in a society. For Fairclough (2013), a discourse that exists in a society is a response to what goes on in that society but the mechanism of such expression can only be explained efficiently when variables are thoroughly comprehensive. That is, the claims about the dialectic relation between discourse and society that Fairclough (with Chouliaraki, 1999) made once, needs to be supplemented by his latter claims, mainly that discourse is just one element within other elements during the construction of a social phenomenon (Fairclough, 2013).

4.2.3 Antagonisms

Contradictions in a society are manifested through social antagonisms. These manifestations can be conceptualized as necessary steps prior to the discursive constructions of the contradictions in a society. Real antagonism from a classical Marxist perspective is a manifestation of class conflicts ensued by the “relations of production,” in classical Marxist terms. But Laclau within his discourse theory (similar to Fairclough within CDA) does not want to fall into the so-called trap of economic determinism that sees contradictions as the sole effects of social class positions. Fairclough’s position is neither to find an excuse to offer a cultural explanation in a specific society as are offered by Pennycook (2002), among others.

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, a key text that theorized antagonisms, Laclau (with Mouffe) criticized the privileged theoretical status of class position within Marxist literature. By using the concept of hegemony, borrowed from Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), Laclau and Mouffe, through a reading of Foucault, reduced the issue of antagonism to the issue of a discursive construction of antagonism, which they defined as, articulation. That is, antagonisms are formations mediated by discourse. Within such a theoretical formation, the contestations or the struggles within a polity cannot depend on a specific sublime signifier, like class. Instead, the contradictions can be mediated by any other variables, for instance, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and so on which will be used by individuals to further their specific political claims. Laclau advanced this argument elsewhere to explain the rise of new social movements resulting in the possibility of the formation of plural societies (Laclau, 1985). The reality he depicted is that in the proliferation of various identity-discourses, non-government organizations today may ‘dictate’ authoritarian states how to formulate policy discourses.

Antagonisms can also be approached by using Frederic Jameson’s (1973) concept of “vanishing mediator.” According to this concept, within a political formation, a specific political agenda can be forwarded based on the needs of a particular historical era. However, the needs sprung from the necessities of an earlier era can be found to be obsolete or redundant in another era. In the newly emerged situation, the old antagonisms cannot be used anymore as valid political convictions. A society that developed from a feudal to a capitalist economy may find a return to its feudal values, as, not only difficult, but also unreasonable. The society however may re-phrase its ‘social imaginaries’ (Tylor, 2004) in order to forge new identities by referring to newly constructed “sublime”

signifiers (Laclau, 1985). The new identities are constructed against a political backdrop that allows a deconstruction of old antagonisms.

During the construction of new antagonisms each political struggle aims at finding its typical partners along the chains of “equivalence” and “difference” (Laclau, 2005). The political chains built privileges a specific identity, i.e., ‘we people’ along the journey (2005, p. 171). A symbolic unity (i.e., a political alliance) built like this to construct a specific political movement, however cannot be dependent on a fixed identity. That is the definition of “we people” or “us” cannot be nailed eternally. The movement may exist as a common political struggle only to result in new symbolic unity when certain goals are achieved (or failed). Re-adjustment of partnership within coalition politics in Malaysia and elsewhere supports such hypothesis. Thus, while constructing a people is the main task of radical politics (Laclau, 2006), or of any other politics, such construction is never universal.

4.2.4 Governmentality

Foucault developed a framework for studying government by concentrating on the discussions around political rationalities by concentrating on the genealogy of the subject and that of the state. Foucault found it central that it is necessary to link “governing (*gouverner*)” and “modes of thought (*mentalité*)” in order to study “the technologies of power” and that of “the political rationality” underpinning both of them (Lemke, 2002, p. 50). For Foucault concepts like “technologies of the self,” “technologies of domination,” “the constitution of the subject” and “the formation of the state” are closely connected (Lemke, 2002, p. 50).

The framing of a political state, government or bureaucracy as an organic phenomenon has also been reflected in Laclau’s conceptualization of political alliance through identity-politics (Laclau, 1985). Identity which is a process of “becoming” (Bhabha, 2012) is never complete and as such has a “floating” or transient dimension for Laclau (2005). Within political alliances such ephemeral dimension “becomes most visible in periods of organic crisis, when the symbolic system needs to be radically recast” (Laclau, 2005, p. 132).

The discourse within the domain of governance has in fact changed with the changes in the state formations across different historical eras. Pennycook in his depiction of the colonial language policies in the Southeast Asian region showed that the colonial subjects, i.e., the

people living in the colonies, have been constructed as a specific discourse within the colonial report. The rulers and the ruled were constructed along the lines of “us” versus “them” (Pennycook 2002). This discourse in the postcolonial era is constructed by changing the ownership of these “us” and “them.”

However, Fanon (1963) cautions us about the changes in the ownership of “us” and “them” in postcolonial states. In his classical work on colonialism, *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon made the claim that with the dislodgment of the colonial regime the bureaucratic system in the post-colonial era cannot claim to have eliminated the state functionaries entirely whom they have inherited from the previous era. The old state functionaries may continue a discourse by foregrounding antagonisms from a previous era while the postcolonial government is still looking for suitable discourses to construct its newly discovered national aspirations.

4.2.5 Social imaginaries

A conceptualization of state, government, political contestations and subjectivities shift our attention to the notion of “social imaginary” (Taylor, 2002, 2004). In general, how a society views its values is explained along the lines of its ideals, aspirations and ideological commitments. Broadly, each historical epoch creates its own discourse which can be explained as the *Zeitgeist* or the Spirit of the Age of the era as it was done within the philosophical discourses of Hegel (see his *Philosophy of Right*, entry 344) or the politico-philosophical writings of Heidegger (see Bourdieu 1998).

In sociological analysis after Bourdieu, these *Zeitgeists* can be explained in details, across the concept of “planetary vulgates” adopted by a society. The perceived values of the contemporary era have been translated into certain vocabulary: “‘globalization’ and ‘flexibility,’ ‘governance’ and ‘employability,’ ‘underclass’ and ‘exclusion,’ ‘new economy’ and ‘zero tolerance,’ ‘communitarianism’ and ‘multiculturalism,’” while next to these concepts rest “their so-called postmodern cousins, [i.e.,] ‘minority,’ ‘ethnicity,’ ‘identity,’ ‘fragmentation,’ and so on” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001).

Taylor began the discussion on social imaginaries by questioning the already well-established vocabularies that define the contemporary era, which, one can see, as an extension of Bourdieu and Wacquant’s list. These vocabularies are categorized under (1) new institutional forms like “urbanization” and “industrial production,” (2) “new ways of

living” i.e., “individualism,” “secularization,” and “instrumental rationality” and (3) “new forms of malaise,” i.e., “alienation,” “meaninglessness,” and “a sense of impending social dissolution” (Taylor, 2002, p. 91). While accepting these key terms to define the contemporary era, Taylor argues further that the modern era is not a homogeneous construct and that contrasting values exist in every modern society.

For Taylor, “social imaginary is not a set of ideas; rather it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society” (Taylor, 2002, p. 91). The notion of practice echoes Anderson’s notion of imagined community, a community which is tied to everyone, albeit loosely to make sense of their everyday life as “in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). Taylor’s (2002) attempt to define common ideas as practice can be read as a materialist interpretation of society. That is, ideas are not mere ideas but they allow the running of a system possible by contributing as active entities.

Taylor was nonetheless cognizant of the fact that he is theorizing within and for a western society. This acknowledgment of the specificity of the context does not stand as an obstacle to use him in non-western societies. Despite what Taylor defined as the “ways of living” and the “ways of governing” under new institutional forms in the west, such “ways” have also permeated into the peripheral societies. These later societies, however, may rephrase the western vocabularies according to the existing imaginaries of the local people. The specific use of constitutional monarchy is an example of how Malaysia localized the universal system of parliamentary governance (Aziz, 2013).

What can be borrowed from Taylor is the idea that social imaginaries as material agents may enter into any ideological discourse within the horizon of a society. Chapters One and Two have depicted the various social imaginaries of Malaysia along the vocabularies of ‘Malay Land,’ and ‘becoming Malays’ (section 2.2), ‘New Malays,’ (section 2.4.1), ‘*Bangsa Malaysia*’ (section 2.7), and so on. These vocabularies as “sublime” signifiers (Laclau 1990) enable a community to negotiate their common political objectives in contrast to their diverse moral subjectivities within a plural society (Taylor, 2002, p. 93).

Due to diverse understanding of the goals of a society, the citizens may use different signifiers to construct their community with a polity. Policy discourses in a plural society may capitalize on certain identity-politics based on their understanding of community or national identity (see Laclau, 1985, 1990, 2005, 2006 on the politics of identity; Hall &

Grossberg, 1985, on culture, identity and articulation; and for a specific articulation, i.e., Austrian national identity, Wodak et al., 1999).

4.2.6 Orders of discourse

The discussion above on Laclau's thesis on antagonism, and identity-politics, Foucault's governmentality and Taylor's social imaginary can be complimented by another Foucaultian concept namely, order of discourse. The order of discourse is a normative concept. The notion of normativity however is not homogeneous, so is evidenced by Taylor's 'multiple' modernity and in Laclau's thesis on antagonism. Normativity can be effects of an individual social subject's perception of his/ her ethnic, cultural, religious and similar other identities to articulate a "lifeworld" (Habermas, 1985), "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1998) or "ideology" (Van Dijk, 2006). The normative worlds of the political state and of the communities in a plural society may be opposed. This is how a discourse becomes plural. For instance MOI policy discourses within a country can be inherently plural to reflect multiple voices co-constructing the discourses.

Hence, the construction of MOI policy debates, following Foucault, is a discursive formation, which means, different people in a society use their distinctive discourses to define the phenomenon under discussion. The discursive formations can also be viewed as interpretation of social issues perceived by different individuals who are predisposed to a set of norms or social imaginaries floated within a society. It is not that each individual within a group/ community construct their discourses as a homogeneous voice. When the *sacred* rules of a community or the normative discourses forwarded by the state are rephrased by individuals into empirical linguistic constructions, the expressions may appear contradictory. For Taylor (2002), the contradictory social reality is explained through the concept of "multiple" modernity, while Laclau (with Mouffe) explains the same phenomenon through the concept of socio-political antagonisms (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

For Fairclough (1992) Foucault's use of the concept of discursive formation can still be perceived as an abstract phenomenon. Foucault did not draw a distinction between linguistic and extra-linguistic phenomena within a discursive formation (Howarth, 2000). For Fairclough the discursive formation in a society can only be expressed through concrete linguistic expression by acknowledging the semantic notion of plurality, i.e., the

presence of different orders. Fairclough draws himself nearer to Taylor and of Laclau, by acknowledging the presence of multiple “orders” but distances himself to some extent from Foucault by underscoring the concrete example of discourse.

4.3 Micro analytical concepts

The micro analytical concepts discussed below are discourse, text, genre, articulation, contextualization, interdiscursivity and intertextuality. The section has been concluded with a discussion about critical discourse analysis.

4.3.1 Discourse, Text, Genre

Discourse, a term that has appeared many times since the Chapter One of the current thesis was left undefined. We define discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002, p. 1). The term discourse is often used to refer to political, economic, and ideological discourses and so on. It is used in both singular and plural senses. When it is used as singular, it denotes the field of political discourse in general while in the plural sense it may stand for talking about different types of political faiths, entities and genres.

Also, political, economic and ideological discourses permeate each other, regularly. For instance, a political discourse can lean heavily on economic or ideological discourse. This issue can be dealt under the issue of interdiscursivity (see section 4.3.4). On the other hand, due to its context of utterance, a political discourse can be defined more narrowly as discourses at party gatherings, parliamentary settings or political interviews in the media. The problem of texturing a discourse in these various ways can be dealt through the concept of genre or text-type (Fairclough, 2003). The nature of contestation may appear typically divergent due to the text-type and the context of utterance. A political leader due to immunity within the space of the parliament may discuss an issue quite openly which s/he may not be able to repeat during a party gathering, political interview or when writing an opinion editorial for a national daily. Media discourse is further shaped by the ideological position of the media house (Fairclough, 2001).

The notion of text-type can be found to be further complicated as discourses can be expressed as written and/ or spoken. Written and spoken differences can be seen as problems of different mediums, not entirely as different text-types. However, written texts,

can also be read aloud, for instance, in a political speech drafted by speech writers while an undrafted speech can be transcribed in order to be circulated among a wider population.

In a news report we may come across a quote from an Education Minister which s/he made at a political gathering or during an interview with the media. As such genre-mixing, i.e., borrowing from a text-type (i.e., political speeches) to another (i.e., interview), appears to be another feature within discourses.

4.3.2 Articulation

The possibility of the presence of “multiple modernity” (Taylor, 2002) and “socio-political antagonisms” presupposes different orders of discourse in a society. Such an inherently plural reality can be expressed through hegemonic and/ or counter-hegemonic discourses within a society. Apart from these synchronic reasons discourses may differ due to diachronic reasons as well (Blommaert, 1999). For instance, language policies during colonial regimes were articulated as “emancipatory” projects of the colonizers while in postcolonial nations the policies were defined as matters of nation-building (Pennycook 1998, 2002). From a discourse analytical perspective, both the views can be defined as matters of articulation. The concept of articulation (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) is closely linked to the notion of “hegemony” of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), who was a journalist at *L'Ordine Nuovo*, later the Head of the Italian Communist Party (1924-1926), and a Marxist activist theorist throughout his life (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980).

When a discourse is produced by a hegemonic agent, it is shown to be as natural as a matter of “common sense” knowledge, and as such the discourse should be accepted without any doubt (Fairclough, 2013a). The hegemonic agent may use both the ideological state apparatuses (e.g., media, church and monarchy in Malaysia) and repressive state apparatuses (e.g., police and army to implement punitive measures) to disseminate and eventually to establish ideas (Althusser, 1971).

How a phenomenon is articulated as X instead of Y or Z can be made more comprehensive through the concept of ‘framing’ of Goffman (Scollon, 2008). But articulation is perhaps not a mere construction without any purposes. The question to explore thus is that what is articulation, or more precisely, what are the mechanisms of articulation? Is it a matter of a construction in language without any political goals as what we encounter in a “theme-oriented joint problematization” (Roberts & Sarangi, 2005), or is it a construction of a

specific conflict along the lines of equivalences and of differences within a society (Laclau 2005)?

According to Laclau and Mouffe,

[We] will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice we will call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we will call *moments*. By contrast we will call *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 105, italics in the original).

The concept of articulation in the above definition appears to be a concrete object of analysis. It is also defined as a practice. The discourse used by the individuals in the society, according to Laclau and Mouffe above, can offer individuals specific identity-labels within a society. Individuals may use the same medium, i.e., language or dialects of a language, but the way they frame a social issue makes them different from one another. Articulation in this sense may appear as a Goffmanian issue but with elements of socio-political antagonisms.

A quick note on discursive formation is necessary here. Discursive formation can be read as a synonym for articulations, that is, articulation with an ‘-s,’ i.e., in plural terms. When articulation is spelt with an ‘-s,’ it matches Laclau’s (and Laclau & Mouffe’s, 1985) rendition of Foucault’s notions of discursive formation. The notion of interdiscursivity may appear similar to discursive formation. However, while interdiscursivity involves the mechanisms of texturing, discursive formation include both how a text is constructed by multiple discourses (e.g., discourse of pedagogy, ethnicity and so on) and how multiple individuals (who are further divided on those discourses of pedagogy, ethnicity and so on) construct a heterogeneous body of discourse.

In their definition of articulation, Laclau and Mouffe rephrased the classical Marxist concept of the “relations of production” in the above quote, as the “relations of elements.” This departure can be explained through their departure from a classical western Marxism to a post-Marxist position. The position is also poststructuralist as they reduce the social practices into discourses (see McNamara, 2012 for a discussion on poststructuralism and applied linguistics).

Articulation remains a political category, an issue of contestation, and a construction based on “differential positions” on an issue within a society. Discourse on education policy for instance cannot be explained solely based on how we study discourse. The analysis involves an understanding of various other social practices, which make a discourse to exist (see Jones’, 2004, criticism of Fairclough’s,1993, thesis on marketization of education; and also of Fairclough’s, 2013a, stand on the issue that language-use is just one semiotic moment within a discursive construction).

Another issue to ponder on in order to appreciate how articulation works for Laclau and Mouffe (1985) is to acknowledge that for them the categories of economy and social class are not a priori to define contestations within a society the way the issues are viewed in classical Marxism. For Laclau and Mouffe articulation carries ontological weight similar to that of the economic base. In other words, they have shifted their focus from the base to that of the superstructure. Despite a shift in their position, from a discourse analytical perspective, their post-Marxist position on articulation can still be viewed as an effective tool to explain socio-political antagonisms experienced by individuals within a society.

Similar to many critical theorists Laclau and Mouffe’s focus was to explain what has (or has not) been articulated in a specific context or what has been excluded (‘backgrounded’ in CDA terms) or included (‘foregrounded’ in CDA terms) within a discursive formation. The construction of exclusions and inclusions within an articulation, according to these two post-Marxists is related to the notions of “political” (Mouffe, 2000) and “metapolitics” (Lievens, 2013).

Mouffe (2000) in her criticism of a “deliberative” in favour of an “agonistic” model demands for an “inclusive” model of political system within which each participant can articulate a position within a public sphere (Norval, 2007). For Mouffe, a deliberative model relies still on normative values of a society. While an agonistic model, constructed along the lines of Wittgenstein’s ‘language-game’ and Gramsci’s hegemonic articulation, allows individuals to enter into a communicative action by acknowledging their unequal status (Mouffe, 2014). A similar theoretical position is that of Bourdieu as he explained how individuals in a society enter a discursive field by admitting their specific subjectivities and power relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

That the position of individuals in terms of power sharing is not fixed and that individuals may articulate different discourses by radically changing their fidelities to a specific social

class or institution had been made earlier also by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (see the chapter on *The Intellectuals*, particularly the section titled ‘The different position of urban and rural-type intellectual’ [1971, pp. 14-23] in relation to ‘class-hopping’).

Due to mobility, individuals can be re-classed and de-classed in many societies, Block (2013) argued. Laclau and Mouffe’s concept of articulation of different identity-positions thus appears to be dynamic. Their concept is not trapped in a fixed and inorganic explanation about social subjects, a phenomenon which the classical Marxism has often been accused of by citing the concepts of “reification” of social class position (Lukacs, 1971) and economic determinism (Fairclough, 2013).

An understanding of articulation in above terms can benefit further from the concepts of perspectivization (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) and of legitimization (van Leewuen, 2008). Perspectivization, which may appear identical to framing (Goffman, 1974, 1981) and discourse representation (Fairclough, 1992, 2013), is a strategy used by any individual with an objective to position a speaker’s or writer’s point of view. It can also be used by an individual to express involvement or distance (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 94). The linguistic devices to be used to accomplish the strategy and objective of perspectivization are deictics, direct or indirect speech, quotation marks, discourse markers, particles, metaphors, animating prosody and so on (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 94).

Legitimation is a concept used by van Leewuen (2008: 105-106). He suggested that there are four key categories of legitimation, which are:

1. ‘authorization’, legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law, and of persons in whom institutional authority is vested;
2. ‘moral evaluation’, legitimation by reference to discourses of value;
3. rationalization legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to the social knowledges that endow them with cognitive validity; and
4. mythopoesis, legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate actions

Besides the concepts of perspectivization and legitimization, articulation can also be seen as framing (Scollon, 1997) as we have suggested above. To analyse news media discourses in Hong Kong, Scollon built a model by using Goffman's communicative roles.

These roles are enacted through the positions of a principal, author, and an animator. Scollon contextualized these participant roles to explain news discourses produced by two outlets, which were print and television media. The three Goffmanian communicative roles to suggest distinct subject positions or authorities within a communication are three forms of power. For Scollon, these positions are constituted socially and materially within the broader socio-cultural discourses of a society.

Scollon illustrates the communicative roles by asking, when a newspaper account reports that “Government sources disclosed today that the Governor is impatient with China's stand on the new airport” who in fact speaks in this statement. It is possible that the Governor said it to someone that “I am impatient,” and it is also possible that he “worded” it somewhat differently. In the newspaper the Governor is the person who is given the full responsibility to construct this utterance. Here, the Governor plays the position of the principal role that is, “Someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, [and] someone who is committed to what the words say” (Goffman, 1981, p. 144, in Scollon, 1997, p. 384).

The Governor may not have expressed his “impatience” to the press directly. The utterance merely came from a “government source,” and the source who has related the Governor's impatience, is the author. The author, i.e., “someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded” (Goffman 1981: 144, in Scollon, 1997, p. 385). However, these sentiments have not been made straight for the readers of the newspapers. It was the reporter who as a member of a specific media house constructed for the readers. In Goffman's terms, the reporter is an animator. That is, the reporter is “Someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded” (Goffman, 1981, p. 144, in Scollon, 1997, p. 385).

These three communicative roles for Scollon is an issue of power-relation. Power here is the power to be able to command animation or authorship; also, “the ability to frame discourse event and utterance” (1997, p. 389). Authorised agencies, i.e., governor, and news reporter can construct certain expressions. The above example underscores the reality that each media text “is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people's words” (Tannen, 1981, p. 338). In addition, these words are not neutral or innocent as they appear in a dictionary. In their different syntagmatic and paradigmatic constructions elements in a text attain the status of specific articulations. To situate it within the theoretical position of Laclau and Mouffe (discussed above in this section), these wordings, phrases and

utterances are “moments” or “elements” in discourse to construct subjectivities or specific identities within a discursive formation.

Within an articulation, for Scollon (1997) there are “framers,” i.e., the authorities to be able to frame. Frames as “situations” which are “built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events” (Goffman, 1974, p. 10). In the above sense, framing has an objective; it is done in order to achieve some communicative goals, and is closely linked to relations of power as well. Such an organic concept can constantly redesign its boundary by reframing or re-keying. That is, individuals may frame a discourse differently during a latter construction, either within the same text or in another text which will redesign the boundary of a discursive domain. For instance, within a discourse of unemployment, a political leader may construct the value of mother tongue differently to create different effects across texts, genres and contexts within the discursive formation MOI policy debates.

4.3.3 Contextualization

Contextualization is not an unplanned method of constructing a discourse. For Bauman and Briggs (1990), the process of contextualization

involves an active process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance in the speech itself (Bauman & Briggs, 1990, p. 69).

Reflexivity appears to be one of the main features of modern social life (Giddens, 1991). This act of reflexivity enables a discourse-user to rephrase his/ her position repeatedly, within a specific written or spoken text. According to the theoretical paradigm of symbolic interactionism (Blummer, 1986) and the ethnomethodology of Garfinkel (1967) and Cicourel (1973, 1975), the members of a society constantly aim at re-figuring how to make sense of their everyday contexts. Also necessary for the individuals is to be able to connect different contexts or carry elements from one context to the next.

For Blommaert (2004), the act of contextualization involves another texturing process, namely, entextualization. Entextualization is a process by the means of which “discourses” can be “decontextualized” and recontextualized “metadiscursively.” By doing so, a “new discourse” can be invented to be used within a “new context.” These new discourses can be related to “a particular metadiscourse which provides a sort of ‘preferred reading’ for the

discourse” (Blommaert, 2004, p. 19). Instead of its original context of production, discourse-users pay more attention to the newly discovered field’s appropriation of the discourse.

Once certain ways of articulating a phenomenon secures a new discursive dimension, discourse-users may capitalize on the new semantic values claimed about that phenomenon. New articulation is possible due to the fact that social phenomena as “floating” and “empty” signifiers (Laclau, 1990, 1996, 2005), are being constantly re-defined. The semantic value or the meaning (‘signified’ in Laclau’s terms) of a discourse originated elsewhere can be appropriated by individuals in another society based on their local needs.

Entextualization for Blommaert (2004) is related to another concept namely representation. He provides the example of professional jargon to explain the concept. In the professional world jargons are often used through the strategies of ‘lexical labelling’ to define their world – ‘this is who we are’ or ‘this is how we do things’. Blommaert explains further by quoting Mehan that “complex, contextually nuanced discussions get summed up in (and, hence, entextualized through), a single word” (Mehan, 1996, p. 253, in Blommaert 2004: 21). A common method to sum up complex expressions can be achieved through the use of nominalization (Billig, 2008a, 2008b).

Important to note here that only certain segments of the population with appropriate background can entextualize “authoritatively.” Due to the presence of the “politics of representation” certain individuals can “fix certain metadiscursive perspectives on texts and discourse practices” (Mehan, 1996, p. 11, in Blommaert, 2004, p. 22).

The issue of contextualization for Fairclough (2003) involves the act of recontextualization. His view is that discourses which originate in some particular social field or institution (e.g., neo-liberal economic discourse originated within academic economics and business) can be recontextualized into others (e.g., in the political field or the wider educational field). Fairclough introduces another concept, i.e., “recolonization” to explain recontextualization. For him the colonization of one field or institution by another can be seen as the appropriation of external discourses, the incorporation of discourses into strategies pursued by particular groups of social agents within the recontextualized field. For example, the transition to a market economy and Western-style democratic government in the formerly socialist countries of Europe (e.g., Poland,

Romania) has involved other discourses (e.g., discourses of privatization). These discourses have colonized the new discourses produced by entrepreneurs, government officials, managers of state industries and others (Fairclough, 2006).

It is apparent that those “planetary vulgates” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001) and “social imaginaries” within “multiple modernity” which define the contemporary era, provide resources for recontextualization. Fairclough suggested that operationalization of discourses by defining them as new ways of (inter)acting, new ways of being (identities) and new ways of organizing office spaces have resulted in a new management discourse. This new public management discourses have “colonized” public sector education and health for example, by creating new types of managers and so on.

4.3.4 Interdiscursivity and intertextuality

Interdiscursivity of a text is a part of its intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992b, 1992c). In other words, intertextual references which combines genres, discourses and styles within particular articulations render interdiscursive features visible (Fairclough, 2013a, p. 180). In his analysis of how religion and politics are combined in the Arab World, Abdul-Latif (2011) shows that “intertextuality of political texts with sacred religious texts (the Quran) leads to an interdiscursivity between two distinct discourses, which aims to invest features of the religious discourse to serve political ends” (2011, p. 50). The use of this interplay between religious and political discourses when interpellates the target audience effectively in a specific context, the practice of interdiscursivities can be deemed what Bourdieu defined as ‘symbolic capital,’ classically.

In his analysis of the political discourses produced by the late Egyptian politician Anwar Sadat (1918-1981), Abdul-Latif shows that a frequent reference to Muslim religious texts, e.g., by mixing the genre of political speeches with religious sermons (beginning his speeches with ‘In the name of God most gracious, most merciful’ and concluding with verses from the Quran), and by using lexical items like *fitnah* (tr. sedition) to explain the political controversies of the day, made Sadat’s discourse relevant to his target audience. To cite an example,

Today there is incredible hatred. But we as a people are responsible for eliminating it in its cradle, the same way this *fitna* [sedition] was eliminated in its cradle, and it will never happen again God willing. And I say to our people as our Lord the

exalted and high spoke to us and said, “Do not be sad, ye are the superiors” we will be victorious by God’s will and will reach our goals God willing. (In Abdul-Latif, 2011, p. 60).

The above example shows how interdiscursivity and intertextuality can be effective tools in a piece of discourse. It also shows how a classical text (i.e., Quran) with its authority and appeal among a group of people can be used to address a political leader’s specific local problem. A mere linguistic analysis may not render it visible the complex nature of the text cited. This is why Fairclough (1992b, 1992c) distinguishes between a typical linguistic and intertextual analysis within his exploration of form and content within discourse analysis.

Linguistic analysis can be viewed as a detailed analysis of the texturing, in the manner of Halliday and Hasan (cf. texturing, cohesion within a text). On the other hand, intertextual analysis shows how texts draw upon linguistic systems selectively to ‘recycle,’ ‘reframe,’ and ‘rekey’ words and topics (Tannen, 2006, p. 598). The structuring model of intertextuality has a theoretical debt to Bakhtin (1981, 1986), particularly in his discussion on text and genre.

4.4 Critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a textually oriented discourse analysis

The above sections in this chapter defined a number of macro and micro concepts which are frequently cited by critical discourse analysts. Since the treatments of these terms are not homogeneous, it was necessary to define them here in order to be used for the analysis of empirical data in later chapters.

The current study shares the insights of CDA, particularly, the specific tradition developed by Fairclough (1995, 2001, 2003, 2013a). CDA scholars study the linguistic structures within a discursive formation. Most CDA scholars accept that an analysis is based on an issue, rather than on a mechanical analysis of some discourse/ language-data in isolation. Hence, a critical analysis relies on “a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 2).

It is within this wider understanding of textual formation where the interest of CDA scholars lies. The concept of discursive formation as it is defined earlier is a construct in which different social agents produce an account of a phenomenon in different ways. It

could be conceptualized as a data bank which keeps account of a topic by differently positioned agents in a society. Following Bourdieu (1930-2002), social scientist began to acknowledge the view that due to their different habituses, subject positions and tastes individuals in a society construct their takes on a specific topic in different ways. While, an Althusser-inspired ‘symptomatic reading’ (1971) of a text required for an analyst to include the individual subject’s social class position in order to explain the articulation of a topic, Laclau (with Mouffe) in the early 1980s questioned the privileged category of social class in their theory of articulation. Laclau and Mouffe developed their framework of socio-political antagonisms by referring to the Gramscian category of hegemony, and Foucault’s discourse, among others (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

Borrowing insights from various trends in social sciences CDA analyst like Fairclough developed a framework in which various Marxist concepts (e.g., dialectics, subject position, and overdetermination) coalesced. Fairclough suggested that Marx himself was a critical discourse analyst (Fairclough, 2013a). Other prominent CDA scholars, for instance, van Dijk and Wodak did not express their commitment to Marx albeit their frequent use of ideology-critique. Van Dijk developed a model which he dubbed as socio-cognitive, while Wodak, who borrowed heavily from Frankfurt School Critical theorists, emphasised the value of ‘instrumental reasoning’ to define her model of CDA which she labels as discourse-historical (Wodak, 2001). To show a difference in conceptualizing history, Fairclough named his model, dialectical-relational (2009).

Despite their differences, all these three schools of CDA scholars share a common interest, which is, the discursive construction of a phenomenon. As they study the linguistic structures within a discursive formation, the linguistic structures receive secondary attention. The primary attention is given to the construction of the research problem as a social issue (van Dijk, 2003). Critical discourse analysts study what is affecting a particular polity at a specific historical-temporal context. Here is the relevance of a dialectical and historical materialist interpretation – that is, how different variables of linguistic (i.e., discourse units which are written, spoken and other similar semiotic forms including pictures and the positioning of objects within a physical space) and non-linguistic (e.g., agency, power and identity and so on) natures co-construct a social phenomenon.

In other words, CDA takes a larger view on language by focusing on how language, or rather, discourse, constructs a specific worldview in order to dominate, perpetuate and continue inequalities within a society. Another crucial assumption adopted by most CDA

scholars is that certain social and politically motivated individuals, due to their specific subject positions, agency and participatory roles, may background, foreground and impede claims about an issue in specific ways and so on.

Discourse analysis, as social analysis, thus, needs an interdisciplinary framework. Wodak uses the term interdisciplinary, while for van Dijk CDA is multidisciplinary, and lastly for Fairclough, it is transdisciplinary. All three of them would claim that there are differences between inter-, trans-, and multidisciplinary approaches. However, the current study adopts the view that the differences would be inconsequential when a researcher adopts the approach that the key idea here is to collaborate across different branches of social sciences in order to explain a specific social issue which is constructed discursively. The current study uses the term interdisciplinary to suggest that conceptual constructs and findings from sociological (e.g., field, habitus, symbolic power) and politico-historical (e.g., historical materialism, dialectics, social imaginary) studies can be used to explain the discursiveformation of MOI policy debates in Malaysia.

The interdisciplinary approach is adopted based on the hypothesis that a solely sociological or historical view per se may not recognize the linguistic issues while a typical linguistic analysis may overlook various macro issues like agency, subject position, social practices, and political ideologies and so on. Therefore, a method following the logics of “conceptual pragmatism” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2001) is believed to be able to explain a socially-sited discursive issue in a comprehensive manner in contrast to other methods.

Critical discourse analysis also sets its goal in advance, which is, to expose inequalities, dominance, power relations and various forms of ideological mystifications that may exist in a society (Van Dijk, 1993; Fairclough, 1992a, 2013a; Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The rationale for such a research agenda is explained by Wodak through the concept of ‘instrumental reasoning.’ Instrumental reason aims at finding the means to reach an already chosen goal. In classical structuralist-Marxist terms, this view can be put as that “to pose and resolve our theoretical problem ultimately means to express theoretically the ‘solution’ existing in the practical state” (Althusser, 2005, p. 165).

A discourse analytical study focusing on policy debates, as the current study is, aims at explaining discursively constructed socio-political antagonisms. Such a study aims at interpreting articulations in a specific historical-temporal context. The research questions posed in Chapter One show that the issue here is to explain not only the structural

properties of the discursive formations, but also the conditions of possibility of such articulations within the various sites of MOI policy debates. The a priori position is that there are antagonisms in a society, hence, the necessity for explaining those antagonisms with an emancipatory goal, since CDA is essentially emancipatory in nature (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). According to Wodak and Meyer, CDA scholars

want to produce and convey critical knowledge that enables human beings to emancipate themselves from forms of domination through self-reflection. So they are aimed at producing ‘enlightenment and emancipation’ (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 7).

Following the methodological goals of CDA, discourse and its articulations (discussed above in detail) in the real world are the key concepts in this study. A dialectic approach to discourse underlines that discourses do not develop in vacuum. Like the air that surrounds us but escapes our vision, social practices too are not always obvious right away. A discourse analysis proper with the inclusion of a ‘social analysis’ (van Dijk, 1993) can help to make the “hidden” (Fairclough, 2013a) obvious.

In other words, language is not used just arbitrarily, the language users are aware of its specific usages and its effectiveness. What is put in a discourse has real consequences and transformative power (see the section on contextualization above). It is not in the sense that discourse is end-all and be-all product but it is more like a semiosis, a moment in other practices within a social world (Fairclough, 2013a). It is possible that language is fundamental in the understanding of how our reality is, but at the same time, language underdetermines the social complexity for which we need to seek help from other disciplines like history and sociology for example. It is in this way that discourse analysis as social analysis is predominantly plural, methodologically, and that it is necessary to adopt an interdisciplinary approach. Or, as Fairclough deemed, CDA “recognized that its place is within transdisciplinary critical social research, and has sought to collaborate with a number of social theories” (Fairclough, 2013b, p. 178).

According to Fairclough social analysis combines ‘normative’ and ‘explanatory’ critiques. It is normative in the sense that the critique does not aim at describing the moral values of existing realities. It is rather aimed at evaluating the social conditions of the existing realities, that is, whether one can survive the conditions. It is explanatory in the sense that

how and why the conditions are effects of the infrastructure which operate within the contemporary neoliberal capitalist economy.

To develop a framework for policy discourse analysis Fairclough refers to critical policy studies and political discourse analysis. Such an analytical framework can borrow from different poststructuralist or political theories. But his argument is also that CDA differs from a thoroughly poststructuralist discourse theoretical framework by the inclusion of language analysis. That is, an “analysis of ‘texts’ in a comprehensive sense within discourse analysis” (2013b, p. 177). For Fairclough,

CDA is a theory of and methodology for analysis of discourse understood as an element or ‘moment’ of the political, political-economic and more generally social which is dialectically related to other elements/moments (p. 178).

CDA oscillates between a focus on structures (especially the more concrete level of structuring of social practices) and a focus on strategies. For CDA analysts, a central concern is with shifting relations between genres, between discourses, between styles and between genres, discourses and styles (Fairclough, 2013b, p. 180). CDA is unlike abstract discourse theory, in which discourse and society are not two entities but treated as one entity, i.e., discourse. Fairclough opines that these two entities need to be kept separate in order to offer a detailed analysis of how discourse is unfolded in a specific society.

Chapters One and Two in this thesis introduced the nature of political contestations and the social actors involved in such contestations within the Malaysian polity. Different agents due to their specific political convictions created a context for discursive formations on specific topics (the analyses of which are provided in chapters Six, Seven and Eight). Their articulations were also mediated by their ethnic and cultural identities. The current chapter develops the conceptual framework for a discourse analysis, which is neither too rigid, nor too fluid. On the one hand, concepts like discourse, discursive formation and articulation are central to the current study. While on the other, the ‘conditions of possibility’ of various discourses too are deemed crucial to explain the socio-political antagonisms expressed through the MOI policy debates in Malaysia.

4.5 Conclusions

It is through their language-use that the social subjects constitute reality. But when a rigorous language analysis is suggested to be the sole method, the researcher can be

accused of ignoring a critique of ideology (van Dijk, 2006) to explain the construction of a phenomenon under investigation. In recent years due to the proliferation of various technical linguistic tools (e.g., combining a functional grammarian analysis with corpus linguistic tools), discourse analysts were able to study discourses in their micro constructs. While these novel technical resources can certainly benefit an analysis many CDA scholars still confine their works to a limited data in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the agency, power-relation and ideologies involved within the discursive assertions. For instance, one may avoid an over-hasty conclusion that the repetition of a certain verb or nominalization, if it occurs ‘consistently’ across a data set, equals to a specific ways of using power by a particular agent (Jones, 2007).

Focuses can rather be on that social and political events change our vocabulary, and linguistic ambiguities and rhetorical innovations facilitate the advancement of new political strategies and projects (Torfing, 2005, p. 5). The specificity of the political context may shift our attention to what Heidegger conceptualized as the dichotomies of ontic versus ontological dimensions of a debate to challenge a transcendental identity (Laclau, 2006; Žižek, 1989, 2004, 2006a; Glynos & Howarth, 2007). Those figures who represent administration, political parties and social institutions may claim certain transcendental position with a thread of a discourse. But following Heidegger, their claims can only be defined in mere ontic contextual terms open to further constructions.

Media’s articulation of political *facts* on the other hand can be viewed as constructions by following certain logics of “fantasmatic relations” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). By using specific metaphoric and metonymic processes media construct these relations by foregrounding certain “sublime” signifiers which “nevertheless depends on fantasy in order to constitute itself” (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, p. 145). When the authority that controls a media changes its position about a national policy within a country, the media is expected to shift its coverage of the policy by selective portrayals to facilitate the debate. The reason being, media works as a unit (Fairclough, 1989, p. 39). The same homogeneous shifting of position may be adopted by the political parties as well. Members of the parliament representing a political party may hardly question the position of the party on national issues in most developing countries.

To conclude, when a specific political position is articulated, either within a media or on a parliament-floor, the position is constructed upon forming a ‘chain of equivalence’ (Laclau, 2005). The chains within a political alliance can be established with those groups

which may hold entirely a radical stand on certain ideological assumptions ontologically, but can establish a common ground on one or two issues. The basic criterion for political coalition government is not that each group has faith in the same political objectives. They can create a symbolic unity temporarily. The reason being, there is no transcendental subject in political contestations, in a Laclauian sense. It is assumed that an explanation of the antagonisms in its distinct constituent moments may help explicate not only certain policy debates in a society but may also provide insights into the formation of identities in the society.

Chapter Five

Data and methods of data analysis

5.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the data and the methods of analysis used in this. The data was obtained from the parliamentary Hansard and selected newspapers and online news portals. The methods of analysis are based on the theoretical traditions discussed in the previous chapter. The study situates itself within the field of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001, 2003, 2013) and discourse theory of Laclau (1975, 1985, 1990, 1996, 2005) and Laclau and Mouffe (1985).

Given that the current study is a PhD thesis, there is a word-limit attached to it. The researcher could also not use multiple sources of data in bulk form due to the nature of the analysis, i.e., discourse-analytic. However, in order to show the heterogeneous nature of that data, the researcher collected examples from a variety of sources, i.e. parliament Hansard and mainstream and non-mainstream media reports on the production of policy debates in Malaysia. Before introducing the data, the next section refers to the institutional sites, i.e., the parliament and media-scape in Malaysia in which these discursive constructions were made. I then look at the sources of my textual data. And, finally, in Section 5.3, I discuss my analytic methodology.

5.1 The Parliament in Malaysia

The Federal Constitutional Monarchy of Malaysia applies state and federation laws in order to execute its legal discourses. Federal laws, known as acts are passed in the parliament and are enacted in the whole country. State laws, on the other hand, passed in the state legislative assemblies, are outside the purview of the parliament. The focus of this study is the dynamic mechanisms involved in the construction of the federal laws within the confines of the national parliament – and on how this is reformulated in Hansard and in the media.

The parliament is an outcome of the national elections that the country holds in every five years in which registered voters aged 21 years and above vote to elect the members of the

parliament (MP). The political party or the Coalition that enjoys a simple majority is asked by the Sultan to form a government. The Prime Minister selects his cabinet members from the elected MPs. The cabinet members are responsible for formulating government policies and drafting bills for the federation. When a drafted bill goes to the parliament, the MPs would debate on it and decide accordingly whether or not the bill can be sent for the Senate's approval, and finally, the Sultan's (officially known as *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*) approval is needed to transform the bill into an act.

The Malaysian parliamentary and governance systems are modelled after Westminster System, under which the British colonial legislative discourse has been assumed local features. This has been done by combining "the traditional Malay feudal system of *kerajaan* (sultanate system) in which the sultan and *istana* (palace) had the ultimate power to make final decisions over and above his *pembesar* (the cabinet members)" (Milner, 1995, 2012; Aziz, 2013, p. 51). The traditional political royal Malay society has been translated in the present day into the position of the Prime Minister, PM's Office and the parliament. In a way, the Malaysian parliament appears to be a unique of "localised" rendition of Westminster system that complimented "local political cultures, norms and values with the British parliamentary and political system legacy (Aziz, 2013, p. 52).

In Malaysian rendition of constitutional monarchy, the sharing of power between the office of the Sultan and that of the Prime Minister's is often blurred. The *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, according to the Constitution, acts upon the Prime Minister's advice, however, the Parliament cannot execute certain procedures without his approval (Article 55, the Federal Constitution). In the above sense, the Malaysian parliament includes features of 'liberal' and 'illiberal' democracies, in which "the executive has the tendency to exert significant influence over the legislature in policy-making" (Lijphart, 1999, 2008, in Aziz, 2013, p. 12). A study of Malaysian parliament shows that the features of "deliberative democracy" can be applied to "an illiberal democracy that has adopted a Westminster model" (Aziz, p. 12).

The policy-making process in the country is largely top-down and authoritarian in which the powerful political actors believe to shape the ideas of the citizens by keeping minor opportunities to contest government policies (Alagappa, 2004; Barr, 2004; Gomez & Jomo, 1999; Heryanto & Mandal, 2003; Milne & Mauzy, 1999; Rodan, 2004; Wain, 2009; Welsh, 1996). Aziz (2013) feels that in the policy-making procedures the Cabinet members

and the executives have “ultimate power in designing, controlling and filtering decision-making” in the Malaysian parliament (p. 62).

The parliament in Malaysia is divided into five parliamentary sessions each year. All the members from both the majority party and the opposition after being elected take an oath. The Order Paper, which in Westminster system is a document that lists the business of the day in the sitting is distributed to the MPs on the day prior to the sitting begins. On the day of the sitting the House participates in oral question-and-answer time during the first hour of the sitting when the MPs get the opportunity to pose questions to the Ministers, their deputies or to the parliamentary secretary. The MPs are required to post their questions at least 14 working days prior to the sitting.

Like most parliamentary democracies, the Malaysian MPs are allowed to debate on a topic without any fear of being charged at the court of law. The policy of parliamentary immunity takes effect from the moment an MP is sworn in, and it only applies when that member has the floor in the parliament. In countries like Malaysia where the political leaders often self-regulate their discourse in various public spheres in fear of not being tried under the Internal Security Act (ISA), the parliamentary floor appears to be the only place to carry out ideological contestations intensely. As such, it also appears to be the ideal place to use “adversarial discourse,” which is a dominant form of framing a discussion within parliamentary discourse (Ilie, 2004). Another way of defining the adversarial discourse is by looking at how the MPs in the parliament “utilise citizens’ concerns based on everyday talks in different locations to influence or challenge the top down policy-making approach of the executive” and how this might “eventually alter the government’s decision-making to reflect the citizens’ wishes, wills and needs” (Aziz, 2013).

5.1.1 Members of the parliament

This section details the background of the members of the Malaysian parliament during the 10th session (1999-2003) when the MOI policy studied here was debated. In the ethnically divided Malaysian parliament, members are Malays, Chinese, and Indians, chosen to represent their ethnically lined political parties from the Peninsular Malaysia. They are represented by UMNO (Malays), MIC (Indians), MCA (Chinese), Pas (Muslims-Malay majority) DAP (Chinese-majority), Keadilan (Malay-majority), and Gerakan

(Chinese-majority). The political parties from East Malaysia comprising the states of Sabah and Sarawak are mostly political allies of mainland political parties from the ruling coalition and the opposition.

For a detailed background of these political parties, refer to Chapter One, section 1.2.4. A list of MPs in the 10th parliament has been shown in the Table below.

Table 5.1: Members of the Malaysian Parliament, 10th Parliament (1999-2003)

Political party	Seat
Ruling coalition (n=147)	
UMNO	71
MCA	29
MIC	07
Gerakan	06
Sarawak Party	28
Sabah Party	06
Total	147
Opposition (n=45)	
Pas	27
DAP	10
KeAdilan	05
PBS	03
Total	45
Independent	01
Total (Ruling coalition, Opposition and Independent)	193

From her interviews with the MPs, Aziz (2013) found that there are various ways how these MPs exchange information between the voters and themselves on the formation of public policies “that would impact negatively or positively upon the citizens” (p. 110). The MPs use party gatherings, frequent visits to their constituencies and upon having dialogues with the voters “ensure” that “they understood the impacts and circumstances of

government policies” (Aziz, 2013, p. 111). These MPs return to the parliament with the input from their specific constituencies. The findings from a recent study on the roles of the MPs in Malaysia show that Malaysian MPs in general “believed they represented citizens generally and their constituents specifically” (Loh & Surin, 2011, p. 6).

The MPs from the government wing can further be divided into (1) front benchers, and (2) backbenchers. The front benchers are those executives, cabinet members and parliamentary secretaries. The backbenchers on the other hand are those who do not have executive responsibilities in the parliament. Within the Westminster system, policy-making mechanism can be top-down since the cabinet members and the executives hold maximum power. In this system the Prime Ministers can “successfully” execute their “policy-agenda” either “by force of leadership” or by “political argument” as long as the cabinets “carry the parliamentary party and the parliamentary party” can count on “carrying parliament” (Mulgan, 2002, p. 76).

The top-down mechanism is counter-balanced when within a Westminster system similar minded MPs, “flock together” (Dewan & Spirling, 2011, p. 338). In Malaysia, backbenchers club comprises only those from the government. According to Aziz (2013), a weak backbencher club and less MPs from the opposition in the parliament made the Malaysian Westminster system least dynamic until the elections of 2008 when the situation changed with more participation from the opposition affecting “check and balance” in the execution of deliberative practices. Since 2008, the opposition MPs in the Malaysian parliament have become “the backbone for policy advocacy to channel citizens’ dissatisfaction or disapproval of government policy” (Aziz, 2013, p. 13).

The MPs in the data have been defined by their political affiliation, that is, by the political parties and whether they represent the government or the opposition. For instance, an MP from ruling UMNO is labelled as MPGUMNO (1), (2)...; an MP from MCA as MPGMCA (1), (2)...; and an MP from MIC as MPGMIC (1), (2)... These political parties are allies of the government coalition. On the other hand, an opposition MP from Pas is labelled as MPOPAS (1), (2)...; an MP from DAP as MPODAP (1), (2) and an MP from KeAdilan as MPOKD (1), (2). The Sabahan and Sarawakian MPs from East Malaysia have not been represented in this thesis.

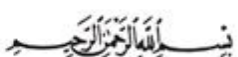
5.1.2 The Parliamentary Hansard

Parliamentary debates mainly take the form of spoken discourse produced by members of the parliament during a parliamentary session. The Hansard is an edited version of the spoken debates published as written documents. The data for this study was obtained from the nationally archived Hansard data available at <http://www.parlimen.gov.my/>.

The Hansard contains the Head of the State's (in Malay, Yang di-Pertuan Agong) speech, bills and acts tabled in the parliament including the verbatim content of the debates which is constructed through the format of questions and answers. The content is published in original language, i.e., Malay, the national language of Malaysia. As verbatim reports the contents reflect the dynamic process of policy formations as the MPs display their "raw emotion and feeling" (Aziz 2013, p. 7). Albeit the Hansard is an edited copy of the raw discourse, the verbatim transcripts still offer insights into the discourse strategies used by the legislator when they "debate and advocate for citizens' interests and concerns" by reflecting their "degree of engagement" and "stands on public policy from inside the parliament prior to decision-making" (p. 7). The records also show how the opposition MPs constructed their "resistance" against the executive agendas. In this way, the MPs act as mediators between the citizens and the executives as a policy is formulated.

Parlimen Malaysia: Peraturan-peraturan Majlis Mesyuarat Dewan Rakyat (tr. Malaysian Parliament: Standing Orders of the House) anthologizes the rules of conduct in the parliament. The book begins with a text of *doa* (tr. Supplication, prayer). At the end of the text, it is written that 'This text of prayer to be read in the House (tr. *Teks Doa ini hendaklah dibaca dalam Dewan*).

Table 5.2: 'Prayer' text from the Standing Orders of the Malaysian Parliament

<p style="text-align: center;">DOA</p>  <p>Segala puji bagi Allah dibuka Majlis Dewan Rakyat, dengan menyebut nama Allah, Yang Maha Pemurah, Yang Maha Pengasih, kepadaNya terpulang segala puji-pujian, kepada Rasul-RasulNya selawat salam kehormatan, kepada sekalian orang yang taatkan Allah.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRAYER</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>In the name of God</i></p> <p>Praise be to God as we open the House of Representatives, in the name of God the Most Gracious , Most Merciful, it is to Him all the praise goes, and to His Prophets to whom we greet, peace be upon you with due respect, to all those, who obey God.</p>
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The rest of the book about the standing orders explains various rules and regulation to be followed in the parliament. Here is an example from the first page of the book. The texts are available in both Malay and in English on the Malaysian national parliament website. One aspect of the text is especially worth-looking at, which is, the hierarchy that exists among the different participants during the parliamentary session.

Table 5.3: ‘Day’s activities’ text from the Standing Orders of the Malaysian Parliament

<p>PERATURAN-PERATURAN MESYUARAT</p> <p>Majlis</p> <p>DEWAN RAKYAT MALAYSIA</p> <p>URUSAN MESYUARAT</p>	<p>STANDING ORDERS</p> <p>of the</p> <p>DEWAN RAKYAT of MALAYSIA</p> <p>PUBLIC BUSINESS</p>
<p>1. Pada hari mula-mula diadakan mesyuarat Majlis selepas Pilihan raya dan setelah ahli-ahli berkumpul pada waktu dan di tempat yang ditetapkan dan setelah ahli-ahli duduk di kerusi masing-masing menurut syarat-syarat Peraturan Mesyuarat 2, maka Setiausaha hendaklah membacakan Pemasyhuran Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong memanggil mesyuarat dan kemudian daripada itu urusan-urusan yang hendak dijalankan pada hari itu termasuklah—</p> <p>(a) Memilih Tuan Yang di-Pertua;</p> <p>(b) Tuan Yang di-Pertua mengangkat sumpah mengikut seperti yang dibentangkan dalam Jadual Keenam dalam Perlembagaan;</p> <p>(c) Ahli-ahli Mesyuarat mengangkat sumpah mengikut seperti yang dibentangkan dalam Jadual Keenam dalam Perlembagaan;</p> <p>(d) Memilih Timbalan-timbalan Yang di-Pertua; dan</p> <p>(e) Usul memerintah Ketua Polis Negara memberi kemudahan lalu-lalang kepada ahli-ahli Dewan, dan setelah selesai urusan-urusan ini, maka Majlis akan ditangguhkan kepada apa-apa tarikh dan waktu yang ditetapkan oleh Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong bagi memasyhurkan sebab-sebabnya Baginda bertitah memanggil Parlimen.</p>	<p>On the first day of the meeting of the House after a general election, members having assembled at the time and place duly appointed and being seated in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 2, the Secretary shall read the Proclamation of the <i>Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong</i> (tr. His Majesty the Sultan and the Head of the State) by which the meeting was summoned, and thereafter the Order of Business on such day shall include—</p> <p>(a) the election of the Honourable Speaker;</p> <p>(b) the taking and subscribing by the Honourable Speaker of the Oath in the form set out in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution;</p> <p>(c) the taking and subscribing by all members present of the Oath in the form set in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution;</p> <p>(d) Election of the Deputies of the Speaker; and</p> <p>(e) Motion directing the Inspector-General of Police to provide free passage to Members of Parliament, and on the conclusion of such business the House shall stand adjourned to the date and time fixed by His Majesty the Sultan and the Head of the State for the declaration of the causes of summoning a Parliament.</p>

To note, Malaysia as a constitutional monarchy has retained the esteemed status of the Sultan, the Head of the State, unlike most constitutional monarchies in the contemporary world (see Chapter Two section 2.2 for further discussion on the symbiotic relation between the Malays, the Sultan and the Malaysian citizens in general).

About the publications of the comments and speeches made by the MPs in the parliament, the article 10 (1-4) of the SO states that

10.(1) An official report of all speeches made in the House and in Committee of the whole House shall be prepared under the supervision of the Secretary.

(2) The Speaker may direct, and a copy thereof shall be sent to each member as soon as practicable after the conclusion of each meeting

(3) A copy of the record of a member's speech shall be sent to him before it is published. If the member does not return the copy to the Secretary within seven days from the date upon which it was despatched, the speech shall be published without correction.

(4) If a member disputes the correctness of the record of any speech or seeks to make any material change in the record, the Speaker shall rule thereon and shall direct publication of the speech in accordance with his ruling which shall be communicated to the member concerned and shall be final.

Since it is obvious that the discourses produced in the parliament goes through rigorous editing, it may erase some of the crucial aspects of the discourse. But does not a more rigorous editing take place in the newspapers? There are many gatekeepers in a media house who too ensure the ideology of the house is reproduced as the employees work in unison within a common platform (Fairclough, 2001). Even in the micro-management of 'discourse representation' (Fairclough, 1992a) of a social issue, the reporter of a newspaper "select" the part of an event for its newsworthy-ness. Dividing a news-event between its anterior (i.e., the material event unfolded in the real world) and representation, Slembrouk (1992) argued that

Unlike its spoken anterior utterance, the written quotation will also consist of a sequence of printed words on a page with written unit segmentation and punctuation marks (not spoken words, with intonation contours marking speech act value, information focus, etc.) (Slembrouk, 1992, p. 103).

It is also possible that “half-pronounced word has not been included in a quotation” a quotation may start or end “half-way through the anterior utterance, and so on” which may turn an analyst’s attention to “the reporting context and examine the complex ways in which it draws on the culturally available forms of discourse processing and representation” (Slembrouk, 1992, p. 103). Slembrouk’s fears have been manifested, institutionally, within the rules and regulations dictated by the Malaysian parliamentary Standing Orders. However, as empirical data to evidence the policy debates within Malaysian parliament, the Hansard as a significant source of information demands academic attention (Aziz, 2013).

The particular session that has been selected as the parliamentary data for this study is the period when the debates on a specific MOI policy have been staged. Towards the end of 2002 the then Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamad launched a campaign for an MOI policy to teach at least two subjects in English in Malaysian national schools, both in primary and in secondary schools. The Policy was tabled as a bill to be discussed in the parliament. As with any bills, Malaysian parliament dictates that cabinets are responsible for drafting the bill. The MOI policy was discussed first during the second sitting (17 June – 27 June 2002) of the fourth session (2002) of the 10th Parliament (199-2003). The policy was drafted as a bill during a cabinet meeting in July 2002. It was debated later during the third sitting of the fourth session (September – November 2002) of the 10th Parliament (1999-2003).

The second sitting had 08 entries in the copies of Hansard archived at the national parliament website. The third sitting had 38 entries: 15 entries from September, 19 entries from October and only 05 entries from the month of November, 2002. In the month of September the MOI policy was discussed to a certain extent while in October and November the issue was discussed only occasionally. Since the parliamentary data was used to study the nature of perspectivization and legitimation of the policy prior to its implementation, the data selected, focused more on the days when the policy was debated at length. Besides, the MPs discussed other bills and policies in the parliament besides the MOI policy. Hence the data was downsized by focusing on key words crucial for the discussions on the policy. Within the Hansard (archived by the portal as PDF files) terms searched for were, *PPSMI* (the name of the policy in Malay), *sains* (tr. science), and *matematiks* (mathematics).

5.1.2.1 Language in the Hansard and the translation of texts

The Malaysian parliament uses the national language, Malay, as the medium of communication. In this thesis, the specific segments in which the MPs discussed the MOI debates have been translated into English. Specific segments meaning the utterances made when the members of the parliaments reflected on *PPSMI*, *Sains* and *Matematik* within the body of the Hansard. The focus of analysis was the source language in which the debates have been originally constructed. The target language, i.e., English may not capture the subtleties involved in the source language.

Malay is an Austronesian language which is used in Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore. The national language of Indonesia, namely Bahasa Indonesia, has also originated from the same Johor-Riau dialect of Malay. Due to its Hindu and Buddhist historical connections for many centuries in the old Malaya, the language has borrowed a considerable number of Sanskrit words. From the 13th Century onwards the country however has been Islamized, enabling the language to borrow heavily from Persian and Arabic.

The present researcher lived in Malaysia for about twelve years (2000-2012), first as a postgraduate student and later as an academic. His first PhD dissertation focused on the construction of Malay youth identity. He has carried out a number of studies in the country focusing on the Malays which required him to learn the language. The analysis of Hansard data is based on Malay, not English. The examples analysed in the thesis were checked with native speakers. That is, texts chosen for analysis were sent for verification purposes. The number of words sent for verification was 2100 (5% approx.) of the total words used as data for this study. A certificate has also been obtained from a native Malay speaker who is also proficient in English (see Appendix 1 for the copy of certificate for texts verified). When the English translation appeared unidiomatic, it appeared so, because, the researcher was more faithful to the original utterance, be it Malay or English.

The researcher of this study is also familiar with most of the Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian terms used in Malaysian contexts due to his exposure to Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist cultures from his country of origin, which is, Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, Arabic is taught in schools while Urdu and Farsi are also available on demand.

The identity of the researcher is crucial in comprehending the discourse data as s/he can approach an issue from the perspective of what Fairclough (2013) defined as “members’ resources.” Certain Arabic lexical items like *Tamadun*, meaning civilization, had been used

across colonial regimes of British Malaya and India in order to build solidarity among segments of Muslim population. This idea has been put succinctly by Voloshinov that

We must rigorously define to what extent a given language community differentiates the social reception of speech to be reported and to what extent its expressiveness, its lexical coloration, and so forth, are felt to be distinct and socially important values (Voloshinov, 1973, p.119).

5.2 The Media in Malaysia

Malaysian media has often been divided into ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ media (George 2007). In this thesis they are defined as ‘mainstream’ and ‘non-mainstream’ due to the rationale that terms like ‘alternative’ may suggest a ‘radical’ departure from the mainstream media while in reality they may not be ideologically that radical (For a detailed discussion on the history and political economy of media in Malaysia refer to Chapter One, Section 1.2.6 of this thesis). The following section introduces the newspapers and online portals from which the empirical data for this study has been obtained.

The number of reports, opinion pieces and letters to the editors published on the MOI issues in Malaysia since the debate began in 2002 is enormous. Different media outlets started publishing articles since early 2002. Later, although the policy was renounced in 2009, the discussion of the issue in the media-scape did not end (with latest entries in early 2016). To manage such an enormous amount of data without the aid of corpus linguistic tools is difficult, if not impossible to handle. The rationale for not selecting corpus linguistic tools is that the current study focuses on the construction of MOI policy at a specific historical juncture by using the tools of discourse analysis. The current study is a study of antagonism in a Laclauian sense. In the selection of media data, hence, more priority was given to a period when multiple voices aimed at framing antagonisms via MOI policies, i.e., 2002 and 2009 (the policy was passed on 19 July 2002 and was renounced on 10 July 2009). The data for this study was limited to two months (i.e., June-July in 2002 and 2009).

Malaysia entered into a new political era in 2008 as the ruling ethno-nationalist political party with its coalition partners under the platform of Barisan, had lost its two-third majority in the country’s general election. It was a status that the coalition enjoyed since the country’s independence in 1957 (first national elections held in 1959). The political

landscape of Malaysia changed as the other Malay-based and pro-Chinese political parties were able to ‘threaten’ the sublime position of *Barisan*. It is in this political environment that the 6-year old MOI policy was retracted in 2009. The new Prime Minister Najib Razak assumed his office in April 2009. The Deputy Prime Minister and also the Education Minister of the country Muhyiddin Yassin chose this political atmosphere to scrap the policy.

Newspaper articles (i.e., opinion editorials and letters to the editor) from *The New Straits Times* were collected from the National Archives Malaysia, and also from the head office of the newspaper where they have archived copies as well. The collection of data from *The Star* was carried out in the head office of the newspaper. To collect the news data from either the newspaper head office or the National Archives required no prior permission as they are open to public visits. The data from *Utusan Malaysia* was collected by using their online archives. In addition to these sources, online databases, i.e., Factiva and ProQuest ANZ Newsstand were used to search news items by using selected terms (i.e., Mahathir Mohamad, PPSMI, Manek Urai and Anak Bukit by-elections).

The data from *Malaysiakini*, the online news portal, was collected in 2013 when the archives were open for a few days during the national elections (see ‘Malaysiakini goes free from tomorrow for GE13’ April 16, 2013 at <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/226919>). The other news portals i.e., *Malaysian Insider* (<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/>) and *Malaysia Today* (<http://www.malaysia-today.net/>) do not need a subscription, and as such anyone can visit the websites free of charge.

5.2.1 Mainstream newspapers

The mainstream newspapers selected were *The New Straits Times* (NST), *The Star*, *The Edge Financial Daily*, *Utusan Malaysia* and the national news agency *Bernama*. The genres chosen were opinion editorials (each 1,200 words approx.), letters to the editor (each 250 words approx.) and news reports (each 300 words approx.). The data has been tagged as NSTnr01, NSToped01 and NSTletted01 for the news-report, opinion editorials and letters to the editor of the *New Straits Times*. For the *Star* newspaper as, STARoped01, STARletted01, and finally for *Utusan Malaysia* as UTUSANnr01, UTUSANoped01, UTUSANletted01. In the tagging the name of the newspaper appears first, followed by the

genre (i.e., news-report, opinion editorials or letters). The *Utusan* published most of its reports on MOI policy under the category of *Rencana* (tr. Feature article). The authors of feature articles add a personal style in contrast to hard news like in news reports or the reports published by the national news agency, *Bernama*. *Bernama* publishes news reports mainly, thus the data was tagged as BNAMA01, BNAMA02 and so on.

In addition to identify the data according to their genre, the date of publication was also mentioned to distinguish the data published in 2002 from 2009. A news report from the Star for example was reported as, STARnr01-090702. Table 5.4 describes the data.

Table 5.4: Data from mainstream newspapers

<i>The New Straits Times</i>			
Opinion editorials	Letters to the editor	News Report	Total
10	10	20	40
<i>The Star</i>			
10	10	20	40
<i>Malay Mail</i>			
10	10	20	40
<i>Utusan Malaysia</i>			
10	10	20	40
<i>Bernama</i>			
0	0	30	30
40	40	110	190

In the selection of the newspaper entries the researcher chose multiple methods of collection, i.e., visiting the newspaper archives where they keep hard copies of the news, browsing the computer database in the newspaper headquarters, Malaysian national archives and online archives of the newspapers. The key word chosen to search for data within archives was PPSMI (*Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris*, tr. *the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English*). The

other term used was eTeMS (English for Teaching Mathematics and Science). However the Malay acronym PPSMI was found to be a more popular name than eTeMS for the policy used by both Malay and English newspapers.

5.2.2 Non-mainstream news providers

The online portal *Malaysiakini* publishes news contents in four languages, i.e., Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English. ON MOI issues, the news portal had published similar contents in all four languages. For the current study only contents available in English was selected as data. The other news portal *Malaysian Insider* publish articles in both Malay and English. The English news contents were used as data for the study. Table 4.4 describes the data used in this study.

Both *Malaysiakini* and the *Insider* publish news-reports from the mainstream newspapers. They also frequently publish opinion editorials from those newspapers. Thus, it was necessary to exclude those articles to omit duplicates. Also to note that both the mainstreams and the non-mainstreams publish news from common platforms like *Bernama* (the national news agency, Malaysia) or Associated Press (AP) and so on depending on their news value for their target audience. Some of the popular non-mainstream news portals in Malaysia may show their biases straightforward, e.g., *Harakah Daily* at <http://www.harakahdaily.net> and *Aliran* at aliran.com (George 2007). These portals aim at providing an alternative take on various events in Malaysia in contrast to the mainstream newspapers. Portals like *Malaysiakini* (<http://www.malaysiakini.com/>) and *Malaysian Insider* (<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/>) however serve a more wide-ranging readership by focusing on causes beyond the ideals of a specific political party, accordingly, these portals have been dubbed as fighting for “progressive causes” (George 2007, p. 899; Steele 2009).

Table 5.5: Data from non-mainstream newspapers

<i>Malaysiakini</i>			
Opinion editorials	Letters to the editor	News reports	Total items
10	10	20	40
<i>Malaysian Insider</i>			
10	10	20	40
<i>Malaysia Today</i>			
10	10	20	40
30	30	60	120

The selected data was tagged as KINloped01, KINlletted01 and KINlnr01 to cover opinion editorials, letters to the editor and news reports of *Malaysiakini*; for *Malaysian Insider* as INSIDEoped01, INSIDEletted01 and INSIDEnr01, and finally for Malaysia Today as TODAYoped01, TODAYletted01 and TODAYnr01.

5.3 Data analysis

The analytical tools used here follow the conceptual framework of Norman Fairclough, which he has developed over the years, and which reflects his critical stand on the ‘late-capitalist’ societies. The previous chapter discussed the most important of those concepts (e.g., dialectics, historical materialism, and critique of economic determinism), which Fairclough explained in his numerous theoretical and empirical writings (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b, 2001, 2003, 2013a). Next, insights from Fairclough’s CDA are incorporated into a Laclau-inspired model of ‘articulation’ (Laclau, 1990, 1996, 2005; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). In that model, two discourse strategies, i.e., perspectivization (Wodak, 2001) and legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2008) have been considered crucial. The idea of articulation has been further explained through the concepts of framing (Scollon, 1997a, 1998, 2008), en/re-contextualization (Blommaert, 2005), as well as intertextuality and interdiscursivity (see Chapter Four for definitions of the concepts).

The construction of text is a complex act. The following diagram explains how individuals in a society construct a text by articulating it as part of a specific discourse. Such

individuals construct their texts as members of a specific society at a specific temporal point in time. The producer of the text frames and en/re-contextualizes it by weaving layers of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. The producer of the text makes all these efforts in order to perspectivize and legitimize arguments or presuppositions that are materialized in the text.

Table: 5.6 Construction of a Text: A model for data analysis

Articulation				
Framing, En/Re-Contextualization, Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity				
Perspectivization devices				
Deictics	Linguistic factuality	Voice	Modalities	Metaphors
Legitimation devices				
Authority	Morality	Institutional	Rewarding	

Some of the items in the above table may sound crossing their definitional boundaries. For instance, we defined ‘voice’ in this thesis as an item manifested by direct and indirect speeches. It is imperative to note that only certain voices are traced within a written or spoken text, i.e., only those voices are deemed to be accepted or are claimed to be legitimized. Thus, voicing can be an effective tool both to perspectivize and to legitimize a text. Bakhtin’s ideas about ‘speaking through somebody else’s voices’ can be found to be present in an argument within a semi-feudal political culture (Alatas, 1970, Samuel et al., 2014) that practices an ‘illiberal’ democracy of which Malaysia for instance is a prime example (Nazli, 2013).

So within a text what is main focus of analysis is the “language-in-use” (Blommaert, 2005). Such language is used by individuals who carry specific identity within a specific context. However, it is unlikely that all the members in the parliament do perspectivize and legitimize an argument within a text in a similar way. There will always be individual differences in articulations. However, in institutional settings, like in parliament or in media, texts within a community (e.g., members from a specific political party or media platform) are expected to be constructed somewhat homogeneously. This is the reason why

it is possible to state that ‘this is the stand of political party A in contrast to that of B,’ for instance. Due to generic divides texts can be constructed differently as the agents who construct these texts are constrained largely by the accepted ways of constructing a text (refer to the concept of order of discourse in Chapter Four, section 4.2.6).

Chapter Three of the thesis discussed all the concepts mentioned in the above diagram. Hence in the following section an example of analysis has been shown. Chapter Three has not however discussed the concept of legitimation in detail. Before providing the example of an analysis, the following section explains the concept of legitimation which the current study borrowed from van Leewuen (2008).

For van Leewuen discourse can be legitimized by referring to authority, morality, institution and by promising rewards. Firstly, the reference to authority can include the people who are in the position to authorize certain activities due to their status and role in the society. There are professional experts who can demand respect and offer advices in their professional domains. These authority-positions can be deduced from some individual being deemed as a role model in a society. Besides personal authority, van Leewuen also refers to authority based on rules and regulations, for instance, “The rules state...”; “The law says ...” These positions are based on an “established tradition, practice custom or habit within a speech-community, and finally of conformity that the participants in the discourse event accepts the authority of the superior” (van Leewuen, 2008, p. 109).

Secondly, references to morality are constructed based upon moral values in contrast to authority mentioned above. One example is, how George W. Bush “legitimizes aggressive policies by pronouncing his enemies an ‘axis of evil’” (p. 110). Such act of morality-discourse can also be achieved on the “basis of our common-sense cultural knowledge” (p. 110). This is precisely the point at which, van Leewuen argues, “The usefulness of linguistic discourse analysis stops” and “Historical discourse research has to take over” (p. 110).

Van Leeuwen refers to a study he conducted (with Wodak, 1999) to examine the Viennese magistrates’ strategies of legitimizing the refusal of applications from immigrant workers when they wanted to be reunited with their families. The application were rejected by citing “public hygiene conditions” that the existing dwellings of immigrant workers cannot fulfil such conditions (p. 108). The dwellings do not ensure “sufficient space” for a child to move around by enabling them having “sensible protection of the life environment” that is

“beneficial to the educational development of the child” (p. 108). This can be cited as an example of what Foucault defined as the discourse of governmentality within the discursive construction of immigrant children’s image in a host country by referring to the discourses of public housing projects and obligatory physical education in schools. These discourses were initially new to many but currently have been acknowledged as common sense constructions within the Viennese legal discourses.

Thirdly, the institutional references are grounded in the values of institution. That is, what is deemed legitimate from the perspective of an institution. Lexically, van Leewuen suggested, they can be achieved by using evaluative terms enacted via adjectives like normal, healthy, cool, natural and so on to legitimize for instance ideal school environment for children. Another way to legitimize can be enacted by employing abstract phrases. Citing examples from academic institutions, van Leewuen suggests that in schools authority may say “get along with other” or “cooperate” legitimized through the discourse of “sociability,” instead of saying “playing in the playground.” This is how a text can be legitimized by foregrounding the socially institutionalized qualities of cooperation, engagement, and commitment.

The fourth type of legitimation can be achieved through the mechanism of mythopoesis. This is an act of legitimation by telling narratives or stories which can be framed as moral or cautionary tales. In other terms, it is that rewarding discourse that tells a listener or a reader what reward awaits as individuals conduct certain acts within a specific context.

It is apparent that a text can be legitimized by referring to an authority, who may exert their power based on moral and institutional values, simultaneously. In order to legitimize individuals may use the strategies of evaluation, abstraction and comparison (these can be further divided into positive and negative). The dilemma of moral authority is that they can be asserted by individuals’ beliefs in a certain ideology which can appeal only to a specific group of people. Measures taken by a coalition government for instance depends on abilities to accommodate the needs of a wider population, by doing which they may sidestep from their narrow political ideology. In this case they rationalize their actions to different groups by referring to common goal, higher truth and so on. The act of legitimation in this sense is a political act and is subjected to the needs of a context.

5.3.1 An example of the analysis using the parliamentary Hansard

A text can be articulated as part of moral discourse. A typical approach taken by the government and opposition MPs was to frame their arguments in terms of moral values and the registers they suggest. Such discourse is not entirely rooted in religious moralities. The discourse of ethnicity too often enters within the same discourse segment. This interdiscursivity cannot be explained as an accidental choice, but is rather part of a strategy to achieve certain ideological goals through the discourse of MOI debates.

Below is an example from a text produced by an MP from the Islamic Pas. In the example, a Pas leader frames MOI policy by foregrounding an Islamic term, i.e., *akhlak* (tr. character development). However, the register thus constructed is not grounded in thoroughly theological terms. His discourse can however be viewed as an example of what Fairclough defined as “colonization of one discourse domain by another” (1993, p. 40). The MP says,

[Text 1]/ *Marang/Pas-Opposition: Di mana Kementerian Pendidikan hendaklah menumpukan kepada pembangunan manusia. Bukan sahaja daripada segi ilmunya, termasuk akhlak daripada segi moral. Ini perlu diberi penekanan yang bersungguh-sungguh sebagai contoh ialah untuk mengilmukan bahasa ibunda, bahasa Melayu, bahasa kebangsaan, bahasa Cina, bahasa Tamil, yang juga digunakan oleh rakyat negeri ini. Ertinya untuk mengilmukan bahasa ini.*

Tr.: Where the Ministry of Education should focus is [on] human development. [But] not only in terms of knowledge, this should include *akhlak* [an Arabic loan word in Malay meaning character development] grounded in morality. It should be strongly emphasized that examples of that kind of knowledge for the purpose of studying come from native languages: from Malay, the national language, [but also] Chinese, Tamil which too are used by the people of this country. It means we have to study these languages.

The MP began his statement with a Wh-cleft (“*Di mana...*” tr. “Where...”) which can be read as an example of nominalization acting as a subject of the verb in a declarative sentence (*Di mana Kementerian Pendidikan hendaklah menumpukan*, tr. Where the Ministry of Education should focus is [on]...). He appears to suggest where the Ministry of Education should focus on. Next, he identifies the specific area which needs attention, i.e., “human development” (*pembangunan manusia*). To develop his arguments, the MP

created an environment of urgency, and of necessity by using lexical items like “*perlu*” (tr. it is necessary) and “*bersungguh-sungguh*” (tr. strongly). *Perlu* expresses deontic modality and by qualifying the verb “emphasis” emphasis) with “*bersungguh-sungguh*” (tr. strongly) the expression has been intensified further: “*Ini perlu diberi penekanan yang bersungguh-sungguh*” (tr. it should be strongly emphasized that).

His choice of syntactic structures, i.e., nominalization to foreground what is needed, use of modalities like “*hendaklah*,” “*perlu*” and “*bersungguh-sungguh*” and also the use of linguistic factuality (Reid 1991) to make his claims about the practice of mother tongues among different ethnic groups in the country sound factual (by excluding hedging devices), helped him to reach the conclusive remark that “It means we have to study these languages” (tr. *Ertinya untuk mengilmukan bahasa ini*). Factual utterances are found to have “law-like” structures (Glynos & Howarth, 2007). That is, utterances are constructed in deterministic terms by making them almost impossible to oppose, when produced by powerful socio-political figures.

The MP contextualized his argument within the national education goals which is that the Ministry of Education focuses on human development. Since he represented an Islam-based political party, his goal was to find a term similar to human ‘development’ within his political-theological domain. ‘Human development’ appears to be a neutral term bordering on secular pedagogical ideals. For the Islamist MP such ideals can be put to use once they are ‘chastised’ by his political movement. Accordingly, he introduced the concept of *akhlak*, which is an Arabic loanword in Malay. For any typical Malay, *akhlak* is a common word meaning ‘character-development’ but for most non-Malays it could be seen as a technical term, or a jargon suggestive of the Islamic way of life. Hence, the use of it in the national parliament to frame a policy discourse may appear questionable. The MP’s attempt to ‘entextualize’ (Blommaert, 2005) it, that is, use it within an interdiscursive text of religion and pedagogy complicates the debates. His attempts however helped him to perspectivize the policy debates for his constituency, ethnic group (i.e., Malays) and religious cluster (i.e., Islam) mediated by the general principles of his political party (i.e., PAS).

The word *akhlak* has an Islamic connotation. Therefore, the MP’s use of it can be explained by his desire to tap into the “members’ resources” (Fairclough, 2013) within a speech community comprising the Malays and the Muslims of non-Malay origin. The MP shares the “lifeworld” (Habermas, 1985) or “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1991) with his main

addressees. He however is not unaware of the fact that his political party namely PAS is a strong ally of Keadilan, a party which had many non-Muslim supporters. Thus he needed to be inclusive in his definition of ‘human development’ in order to establish that Pas albeit an Islam-based political party, is not based on exclusionary practices. The MP refers to Tamil and Mandarin languages at the end to be able to tap into the meaning of *akhlak*. His reference to other vernacular languages could be explained as an example of recontextualization in order to perspectivize the issue for a wider audience, i.e., to include the other opposition MPs’ worldviews beyond the Islamist Pas, within the coalition.

It is not unexpected that an MP who represents an Islamist party should begin his argument by using Islamic terminologies. By framing policy issues in Islamic terms the MP could show what “frame conflicts” (Prego-Vazquez, 2007) an Islamist party has in terms of its “knowledge schemas” (Van Dijk, 1998) with other Malays, particularly those who represent the UMNO-backed government. The Pas-led MP in his construction of the debate brings forth the dilemma of Malay identity, such that there are those Malays for whom Islamic teaching is relatively more important in contrast to others for whom the mere learning of secular knowledge is enough. The belief that the Pas-Malays and the UMNO-Malays have different ethical, moral and political objectives can be found recurrently within the MOI policy debates as the MPs attempt to offer an *ideal* definition of the Malays.

The Pas-led MP forwarded a mother tongue argument that the use of a student’s mother tongue will make it easier for them to comprehend the national goal of education while developing their moral character too. The MP has not diverted from his morality-based argument although it is framed in mother-tongue argument. His claim was that it is none other than each student’s mother tongue (i.e., Malay, Chinese or Tamil) or the national language (i.e., Malay), which may ensure a morally upright learning and teaching environment. The ambiguous nature of his argument by pushing a text to be part of several discourses makes this an example of ideological construction. In ideological constructions discourses may appear ambiguous. According to Fairclough any such expressions “should be treated with caution” (2006, p. 65) implying the need for investigating the possibility of a “hidden” (Fairclough, 2013) meaning behind the text.

Besides, ideology being a fluid construct, with its inherently interdiscursive nature, it may interpellate very diverse readers. For the current MP, the proposed MOI policy’s call for learning of science and mathematics in English language is designed to keep pace with the

contemporary world in order to ensure mere successes in the worldly life. But this is not the education policy which his political party would like to pursue. It is in this context that his arguments for mother tongue (i.e., Malay, Chinese or Tamil) or the national language (i.e., Malay) can be read. The MP wanted a diverse audience as the ultimate object of every political discourse is to create subjects via discourse and/ or signifiers along the lines of similarity and difference within a contested space (Laclau, 2005).

Reading intertextually within a Malaysian political context, the MP was able to situate his text within the discursive formation of education envisioned by the political party, Pas. The MP is coherent within his ideological terrain. The party's takes on national education and medium of instruction, posted in their website, are:

- To forward a truly integrated system of education so as to prepare a technologically and scientifically sound human resource entrenched in religion, morality and ethics.
- To deliver a well-thought and effective system of religious studies
- To offer free education at the primary level for all.
- To encourage and expand on mother-tongue education.
- To maintain Bahasa Melayu as the national language with the English Language as the second language.
- To encourage an educational system that brings success both here and the Hereafter.

(Collected from the Party website at www.pas.org)

The MP's contextualization of party-discourse on the parliament floor shows that for him and the party the purpose of education is to attain moral perfection the way it is prescribed within Islam. The question appears that is it a discourse within education, pedagogy, mother-tongue argument, party-politics or solely theological?

The non-Malays, mainly the Chinese, supported the use of Mandarin as part of their mother-tongue argument (Note: despite there are many Chinese dialect groups in Malaysia, Mandarin is chosen as the MOI for Chinese educational institutions). The other Malay-dominated political party in the opposition alliance, i.e., Keadilan, challenged the policy from a nationalist standpoint (see the examples in Chapter Five). By adopting such a stand, the Keadilan MPs could construct both a Malay-centric and an all-inclusive argument, the

reason being that for the Malays the national language and the mother tongue would be the same language (i.e., Malay language).

To make it more complicated, since Malaysia has Chinese and Tamil language medium schools, the Pas leader's argument for the students to retain their ethnic identity by being able to receive academic instructions in their respective mother-tongues is not controversial. Also to note here is the fact that the Pas MP had not abandoned his original line of argument on moral education. He added further points through mother-tongue education to revisit his initial point and perhaps to legitimise his departure point consecutively. In a country comprising three main ethnic communities, i.e., the Malays, the Tamils and the Chinese, these languages should be the vehicles for learning moral education. The models of multiculturalism applauded in many other countries but adopted a single-stream school policy at the end had have been criticized by the MP. His ideological stand was implemented by introducing a fear of the intrusion of the foreigner, of their culture, their language and moral values. He believes if a foreign language, i.e., English, becomes the vehicle of knowledge, the future generations would be morally degraded and also feel alienated.

If parliamentary discourse is inherently adversarial in nature, as Illie (2004) contended, the key point is how was he able to challenge the government policy while he began with neutral moral terms (i.e., human development). He recontextualized his argument within a theological discourse. He was 'forced' to do this due to his membership of an Islamic political party. This entextualization allowed the MP to provide a contrasting discursive frame within which to defeat the arguments of the government MPs. When contrasted with the government MPs' (see Chapter Six) lines of argument, the issues raised by the MPs from the Islamic Pas, framed in moral terms, can be explained as a strategy designed to fill the empty space of the signifier, namely Malaysian education.

Laclau suggests that any "sublime" signifier (e.g., Malays, Islam, and education in this thesis), in the name of which an argument can be constructed, is inherently an empty signifier (Torfing, 2003). UMNO and PAS leaders during their "discursive struggle" (Rear & Jones, 2013) over Malaysian MOI policies attempted to define these signifiers from their specific political commitments. UMNO is an ethnicity-based political party while PAS is religion-based. For both the parties, ethnicity, religion and education centre, largely, on the same group of people, i.e., the Malays. Thus, they felt the needs to define these identity labels. Laclau's point is not that these signifiers have been kept undefined; he rather

suggests that these signifiers are open to be contested to make politics exist as discursive struggles.

Education being a space of contestation in countries like Malaysia, the empty signifier is routinely emptied out to be filled in with different contents which would fit the ideological goals of a specific political party in the parliament. In a political setting the contestations take place to achieve immediate political goals (Laclau, 2005). Such an analytical position challenges the explanation of the debates as effects of different members' "knowledge schemas" as we have suggested above through van Dijk (1998).

In discourse theoretical terms, more specifically, taking a Laclauian position, the perspectivizations made by MPs in the parliament are purely matters of political discourse or pragmatic decisions instead of effects of their own sincere beliefs. Therefore, instead of aiming at establishing a mono-directional relation between their beliefs and the discursive formations at play, as van Dijk (1998) under his socio-cognitive framework had advocated, their arguments can be viewed as the results of some situated pragmatic choices aiming to achieve immediate goals by forming a symbolic unity (Laclau, 2005).

Looking at the legitimizing tools used in his framing of the issue, the MP is relying on the use of "common sense" or what Fairclough referred to as the "background knowledge" (2013a) shared by the community that Pas is fighting for an Islamic country. In terms of the four types of legitimation tools suggested by van Leeuwen: authority, morality, institutional and rewarding (see section 4.3.2, Chapter Four), the MP is using all of them simultaneously. Legitimation may sound extra-linguistic in the sense that the authority comes from the agency, i.e., who the individual is and what his/ her institutional position is and so on. These information may not be stated explicitly within the unit of text that we analyse. Hence, in order to explain how the PAS-led MP legitimized his claims, we need to go beyond what is manifested in the text. The Pas-led MP here is an Islamic scholar and at the time of debate was holding the post of the President of the Party. He was also the leader of the opposition in the parliament during 2002-2004 when the MOI debate was staged.

5.4 Conclusions

Working within the framework of critical discourse analysis, the current chapter discusses strategies of perspectivization and legitimation in their discrete linguistic

moments enacted through the choices of modalities, metaphor, referencing, and the implied construction of factuality. In the articulation of the discursive facts and reality, language users contextualized, recontextualized and entextualized their arguments as they speak through other people's "voices" (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986), linguistically enacted through the devices of direct and indirect speech. To explain discursive constructions, it is also necessary to comprehend how different genres or texts-types like a letter to the editor, an opinion column or editorial, a staff report in a newspaper or the debates on a parliamentary floor, would succumb to different presuppositions due to their different generic structures.

Chapter Six

Contesting MOI Policy in the Parliament: Pro-Malay discourses

6.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses discourse data from the Malaysian parliamentary Hansard produced by the members of the Malay-based political parties. The ruling UMNO, and PAS and Keadilan from the opposition, are Malay-based parties. Malays as *bumiputera* (tr. sons of the soil) hold a prestigious position in Malaysia, a position which they are supposed to share with other indigenous communities in the country, i.e., those from East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak and Orang Asli population throughout Malaysia. The MOI policy debates in the country can be read as a contestation between the Malay *bumiputera* and the non-*bumiputera* (i.e., the Chinese and the Indians), as reflected in the competing pressures for Malay, Mandarin and Tamil based school system (refer to section 1.2.2, Chapter One).

The current chapter analyses the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses exploited by the Malay politicians from the government and the opposition. The next chapter will comment on the Chinese position on the MOI policy. The Malays are the majority population (61%) in the country while the Chinese are 23%. It is crucial to note that the political parties in Malaysia largely reflect the population sizes of the different communities.

The data for this chapter was available online at www.parlimen.gov.my. The analysis focuses on the discursive construction of the medium of instruction (MOI) policy within the second (17 – 27 June 2002) and third sessions (09 September – 12 November 2002) of the fourth sitting of the 10th Parliament (1999-2003). Based on the data from the Hansard, the specific question posed and answered in this chapter is: *How do Malay parliamentarians discursively construct the issues and arguments contained in MOI debates?*

The sub questions include:

- a) How do the individual MPs construct a text within a discourse of identity (i.e., ethnic, local and global) and pedagogy (i.e., education in general and MOI in particular) to perspectivize and legitimize their arguments?

- b) What is the role of mechanisms like intertextuality and interdiscursivity in holding the arguments together and in giving them a persuasive force?

National parliament can be defined as a specific site of contestation in which a discourse community, namely, the Members of a Parliament (MPs), engage in discussing and debating national issues. The members may also reflect on regional and global issues which may have local relevance. National parliaments, whether in Latvia or Lithuania, Mauritius or Malaysia, are expected to deal with issues pertaining to local concerns unlike the regional parliaments, e.g., European Union parliament, where the MPs discuss regional issues, mainly. The members, as a community, speak a language that is “primarily conditioned by their belonging to parliament” (Ilie, 2010, p. 333). In addition, the members may consider certain political lines in order to accomplish their ‘party-dictated’ political responsibilities. In short, the discourses produced in the parliament are primarily of political nature.

As the opposition members of the parliament question the positions or the stands taken by the government, the pro-government MPs and ministers respond to the queries raised by the opposition (see section 5.1 in Chapter Four for a detailed discussion on Malaysian parliament system). All the members from both the majority party and the opposition after being elected are allowed to speak on a topic under discussion without any fear of legal consequences. In countries like Malaysia the political leaders often ‘self-regulate’ their discourse in various public spheres due to the existence of various draconian laws e.g., Internal Security Act (ISA). However, the parliamentary floor appears to be a safer place to express “raw emotion” (Aziz 2013) within “adversarial discourses” (Ilie, 2004).

6.1 The context of the debate and the positions of the Malay MPs on MOI policy

Focusing on a specific historical moment (late-2002) and a specific type of discourse (that of policy formation) will enable us to reflect on the key question in this thesis, which is, whether or not MOI policy could be seen as a ‘symptom’ (in psychoanalytic terms, i.e., as a repressed desire) of Malaysian nationhood. We will explore how the MOI policy debate in Malaysia in its most recent form, i.e. in 2002 was carried out. The then Prime Minister of the country, Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003), proposed a new policy (*Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris*, tr., The Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English) that would require

the teaching and learning of mathematics and science through the medium of English language. The policy was launched in 2003 and continued for six years, that is, till 2009. Prior to the reversal of the policy in 2009, the issue was not discussed much in the Parliament. Hence, the focus of this thesis is on the parliamentary discourse produced prior to the implementation of the proposed MOI policy. The current chapter discusses the stands of the Malay ethnicity-based political parties. The next chapter focuses on the Chinese-based political parties. The Indian schools accepted the position of the government on the policy without debate (Besar & Jali, 2010); hence the Indian position has not been discussed.

The Malay MPs in the parliament, spread across the ruling coalition and the opposition, framed MOI policy through a number of different discourses. Evidenced through examples the following sections will show that the opposition MPs, who denounced the policy, generally framed the issue within discourses of ethical-moral, ethnic, cultural, and pedagogical concerns. On the contrary, the ruling coalition used typical neo-liberal arguments by framing the debate within the discourse of 'English as cultural capital'. Aspects of the construction of the debate which were kept in focus throughout the analysis were: how discourses (of identity or pedagogy) were perspectivized and legitimized through the mechanisms of intertextuality and interdiscursivity.

6.1.1 Discourses of morality, mother-tongue education and teaching-learning environment

The members of the opposition framed their arguments within a discourse of morality. Morality however was approached differently by different political parties based on their target audience, and whether these belonged to the different ethnic communities that comprised their constituencies. For instance, the members of PAS, the Islamic political party, used Islamic terminologies to moralize the MOI policies. Section 4.3.1 in the previous chapter showed how by foregrounding an Islamic term, namely "*akhlak*" (tr. character development), an MP from the opposition PAS could perspectivise his arguments on the policy for a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual Malaysia. His target audience is Islam-oriented. Hence, a national issue in his political vocabularies could only be perspectivized and legitimized through the specific religious ideology.

However, a religion-based morality discourse was not the only rhetorical choice made by the opposition MPs. Religion-based discourses often led into an ethnic or mother-tongue

argument. It is evidenced when the PAS member (MPOPAS01) referred to vernacular languages as follows: "...Malay, the national language, Chinese, Tamil which too are used by the people of this country. It means we have to study these languages" (*bahasa ibunda, bahasa Melayu, bahasa kebangsaan, bahasa Cina, bahasa Tamil, yang juga digunakan oleh rakyat negeri ini. Ertinya untuk mengilmukan bahasa ini*).

The PAS-led MP (MPOPAS01) paved the way for further articulations in the parliament along the lines of intertextuality. In the next example the same MP states that

[Text 6.01] *untuk memberi ilmu kepada pelajar-pelajar di peringkat awal mestilah dengan bahasa-bahasa yang mudah, bahasa yang mudah, bahasa ibunda mereka sendiri supaya mereka tahu sains, matematik, tahu apply pelajaran ini. Masalah hendak belajar bahasa lain, itu memberi penekanan kepada subjek bahasa itu sendiri.*

Tr.: to provide knowledge to the students in the early stages, it must be done through a simple language, [and] the language which is the simplest is their mother tongue, so that they understand science [and] mathematics, [and] can apply the lessons learnt. It's troublesome to learn another language; the emphasis [then] is on the subject of language itself.

Here the MP continues the argument framed by himself in religious terms first. His discourse enters into a mother-tongue argument. The MP underscores the factor of an easy-to-learn teaching and learning environment. The perspectivization comes from the understanding that children learn faster in their mother-tongue. This may well have pedagogical value, but what is more crucial here is that such arguments help the MP to situate himself along the chains of "equivalence" (Laclau, 2005) within a political coalition. The discourse is perspectivized in terms of a mother-tongue argument and is thus legitimized by institutional support from Malay and Chinese NGOs in Malaysia like that of Gapena and Dong Jiao Zhong (see section 1.2.5 on the issue of civil society, NGOs and activism in Malaysia).

The argument is strengthened further when the MPOPAS01 states that

[Text 6.02] *Masalah tidak cukup guru, cara pelajaran Bahasa; kita perlu tahu berbagai-bagai bahasa, bukan sahaja bahasa Inggeris, bahasa Jerman, Jepun, bahasa Perancis, supaya kita dapat mengumpulkan ilmu-ilmu daripada negara lain dan diterjemahkan ke dalam bahasa kita.*

Tr.: The problem is that we don't have enough teachers, methods for language learning; we need to know a variety of languages, not just English, but also German, Japanese, French, so that we can gather knowledge from other countries and translate it into our language.

Albeit raising various infrastructural issues, e.g., lack of teachers and language-learning methods in order to disseminate knowledge in English, the MP subtly downplays the so-called global value of English by putting the language on the same level as other Asian and European languages.

In example 6:01 the opposition MP (MPOPAS01) framed his argument in the manner of asking *what should or must be done* by using the deontic modality of '*mestilah*' (tr. must). In addition, the use of -lah with the modal verb "mesti" indicates further emphasis in Malay (Goddard, 1994). His conversational technique comprises advance labelling expressions or "conceptual shells" (Gill, 1994) like *you know where the problem is*, which he develops in Text 6:02 into: "*Masalah tidak ada cukup guru*" (tr. The problem is we don't have enough teachers). Next, he listed a series of items to describe other infrastructural shortcomings. His line of thought was later echoed by another MP (MPOPAS02) from the same political party within the opposition. According to him,

[Text 6.03]...*murid-murid adalah aset negara pada masa hadapan... Mereka dihantar ke sekolah sesudah mereka boleh menguasai bahasanya di peringkat yang agak baik... Bahasa Kebangsaan kita ialah Bahasa Malaysia dan asasnya adalah Bahasa Melayu. Jika perlu, mereka juga diajar bahasa lain daripada bahasa yang dijadikan lambang tadi. Bahasa yang bukan menjadi lambang kepada taraf kedaulatan negara atau bahasa yang bukan menjadi bahasa ibunda bagi sesuatu kaum di sebut bahasa kedua atau ketiga. Tetapi bahasa kedua atau ketiga yang diajar kepada mereka itu, bukanlah mata pelajaran asas.*

Tr.: ...the students are the future assets of the nation ... They are sent to schools once they have mastered the language at a relatively decent level ... Our national language is Bahasa Malaysia and originally, Bahasa Malay. If it is necessary, they can also be taught a language other than that language as a symbol of tradition. A language which is not a symbol of sovereignty or a language which is not a mother tongue of any of the communities, is their second or third language. But a second

or third language which is taught to them, cannot be [a means to teach] the basic subjects.

The above example shows that Text 6:03, comprising a few separate utterances, involved a number of concepts not all of which were cited in Table 5.5 in Chapter Five. Taking 6:03 as an example of discursive articulation, i.e., a text that has been constructed by means of certain discursive mechanisms, a fuller version of Table 5.5 can be introduced as Table 6.1 below:

Table 6.1: Analysis of a Malay-dominated opposition MP's discourse strategies

Articulation: Malaysian students are national assets to build the future of the country. The students should be taught in Malay, the national language. A second or third language can be taught since Malaysia has a few official language due to the presence of various ethnic-language communities, but for teaching basic subjects (like Mathematics and Science) it cannot be done through a second or third language.				
Framing: There are a few frames here, which are: students are national assets, mother tongues (i.e., different ethnic languages three with official status) are important but less significant than the national language (i.e., Malay), and the pedagogic claim that the teaching of basic subjects should not be carried out in other languages than mother-tongues.				
Intertextuality: Constitutional references were made to foreground the status of different languages in the country. References were made to national education goals to reflect on existing and future language policies in the country ideal for the needs of its multi-ethnic population				
Interdiscursivity: The discourses of language politics and mother tongue education were mingled.				
Perspectivization devices				
Deictics	Linguistic factuality Statements in relation to the students, status of Malay and other vernacular languages made without modal verbs of probability	Voice NA	Modalities “Jika perlu...” (tr. If it is necessary...)	Metaphors Students defined as “future assets” (<i>aset negara pada masa hadapan</i>)
Legitimation devices				
Authority Malaysian Constitution (Article 152, clauses 1-3 on the status of national language and the other languages in the country)	Morality NA	Institutional Pedagogical value of teaching through mother-tongue education	Rewarding The promised status of students as “future asset” will be achievable when the suggested teaching-learning model takes place	

To understand the utterance, “*Our national language is Bahasa Malaysia and originally, Bahasa Melayu*” and the subsequent utterances, we need to refer to the country’s constitution. Article 152 of the Malaysian constitution states that the national language is the Malay language but on the status of other languages it states that (a) “no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other language.” In the article “official purpose means any purpose of the Government, whether Federal or State, and includes any purpose of a public authority” (Federal Constitution Malaysia). The country’s education system allows two types of national schools: national (Malay medium) and national-types (Mandarin and Tamil medium) for the primary level which however turns into one medium (i.e., Malay) at the secondary level.

Neighbouring Singapore has four official languages, i.e., Malay, Mandarin, Tamil and English. But the Malaysian political landscape makes sure that Malay hegemony is retained (Mauzy 1985). Malay nationalists like the MP in the above example have used slogans like “*Bahasa jiwa bangsa*” (tr. language is the soul of the nation) since the rise of Malay nationalism in the 1930s. Nagata (1980, p. 409) claims that this slogan has later been transformed into “*Bahasa dan agama*” (tr. Language and religion) by the late 1970s. In other words, both slogans are still available in today’s rendition of Malay nationalism, the first preferred by the language nationalists while the latter used by Malay political Islamists. However, it is difficult to draw a clear line between a language nationalist and a political leader from a pro-Malay Islamic organization. The Malay MP could remind the floor that the status of the national language is above other languages spoken by the different ethnic groups in the country. While, by using words like “*kedaulatan*” (sovereignty), the MP could establish the trinity of monarchy, Malays and Malay language in relation to the status of English language in the country. English is neither a language of sovereignty nor of tradition with respect to any of its citizens.

An opposition MP from Keadilan (MPOKD01) when establishing an argument for mathematics and science to be taught in Malay, stated, “we are also required to take an approach to increase the skills in Malay language” (*kita juga perlu mengambil pendekatan untuk meningkatkan keupayaan bahasa Melayu itu sendiri*). In his view, “if science and mathematics are not taught in Malay, the language will be a rigid language [*bahasa kaku*], a language that has no future” (*bahasa yang tidak mempunyai masa hadapan*). His argument is framed in apocalyptic terms with the suggestions that specific measures should

be taken and, if not, disastrous effects may follow. In order to emphasize his stand through use of a modal verb, this MP uses the word “*perlu*” meaning “it is required to” in this context.

Referring to Text 6.03, attributable to the opposition PAS, the framing of the issue began with what Laclau calls a “sublime signifier,” e.g., concepts like *people*, *God*, *nation* and so on, which can act as vehicles for all sorts of ideological content. In the above example, the sublime signifier was ‘students.’ It is also obvious that the ‘students’ become the main point of reference for whom or on whose behalf the MPs could debate the policy. This ‘We speak in the name of the students’ line of argument has been bolstered adjectivally at the outset when the students have been qualified as “*aset negara pada masa hadapan*” (tr. future asset of the nation). While the students are defined as “assets,” the languages used in the country are defined in terms of “symbol of tradition” (*bahasa yang dijadikan lambang tadi*). The strategy of legitimation used by the MP by invoking sublime signifiers of ‘students’ and the ‘national language’ reaches here to a metaphysical level, elevating physical objects into spiritual entities that will inevitably be interpreted ideologically.

The MOI argument made by government MPs (see below) was that in order to develop a skilled science-oriented international workforce, the MOI should be English. This argument has been reduced to a language learning problem in the opposition MP’s discourse. Possibly, it is on this shifting of argument and on this deliberate act of reframing by the means of which parliamentary discourses become effective as examples of adversarial discourses. The MP, not merely redefined the content of the empty signifier, he also shifted the argument from one field (i.e., global demands to pursue mathematics and science in English) to another (i.e., language-learning issues). Once that particular characteristic or aspect of the debate has been identified and foregrounded, it served the MP as the prioritized hegemonic content of the empty signifier of MOI. In hegemonic contestations participants identify certain elements in the debate and further their arguments by constantly referring to those elements. By backgrounding the issue of global demands of English the opposition MP attempted to fill the signifier with exclusively language-learning issues to perspectivize an argument in order to oppose the policy.

The opposition MP from Pas (MPOPAS02) later approaches the issue by framing language as an integral part of everyone’s life and one which aids the socialization process, and as such a student’s mother tongue should be prioritized. Furthermore, the place of Malay

language, as the language of sovereignty, should also be upheld, he suggested. In his words,

[Text 6.04] *murid-murid ...dihantar ke sekolah pada peringkat awal bagi menerima pendidikan formal dan menjalani proses kemasyarakatan atau proses sosialisasi, mempelajari budaya dan belajar berfikir serta belajar mengenai alam sekelilingnya....Di sekolah mereka diajar mengenai suatu konsep melalui bahasa yang dijadikan lambang kepada taraf kedaulatan negara iaitu Bahasa Kebangsaan.*

Tr.: the students are... sent to school at an early stage to receive formal education and to learn how to cope with communities or the process of socialization; to learn about the culture and study how to think and learn about the environment... In school they learn about a concept through a language which is the symbol of national sovereignty [and] that [one] is national language.

Van Leewuen (2008), in his examples from the domain of schooling, showed that how school authorities use the discourse of “sociability” (see section 4.3 on legitimation) to legitimize certain acts. Here the MP refers to school as a microcosm for society and for the country as the children get the opportunity to socialize by learning each other’s cultures through language.

The claim that school-children learn about any concept through the medium of a language which is both the “symbol of national sovereignty”(lambang kepada taraf kedaulatan negara) and “national language” (Bahasa Kebangsaan), could also be constructed by a nationalist UMNO-led MP. The concept of *kedaulatan* (tr. sovereignty) is also closely linked to the idea of monarchy, which is one of the key aspects of Malay nationalist identity, and thus often surfaces in Malay politics as a legitimization tool (Singh, 1995). This is an example of how a nationalist discourse can be re-contextualized by an Islamic MP as long as it serves an immediate political goal, i.e., contesting the MOI policy. Along his nationalist line the MP makes a crucial point for a multilingual Malaysia. His point was that a language which “is not a symbol of national sovereignty” (*bukan menjadi lambang kepada taraf kedaulatan negara*) or “is not their mother tongue” (*bukan menjadi bahasa ibunda*), is necessarily a second or third language. Following this, the MP asked, why is it necessary to teach foundational subjects like mathematics and science in those foreign languages by stretching the existing resources?

MPs in the parliament often recounted historical events to perspectivize and also to legitimize their discourses. Here is an example from a Keadilan-led MP (MPOKD02) who recounted a detailed journey about the birth of Malay language. The MP gave a lesson in history to his fellow MPs: *Bahasa Melayu lahir bersama kelahiran bangsa Melayu* (tr. the Malay language was born with the birth of the Malay race). He used ample space from his allocated time in the parliament to tell fellow MPs about the birth of the Malay language and its evolution over the last few centuries. One may ask the question, why was it necessary to recount the history of the language when it is expected to be known to every citizen of the country including the members of the parliament as informed members of the society?

MPOKD02 drew the historical background to describe how the Malay language became the key means to spread Islam (*ia menjadi alat penyebaran agama Islam*), another key feature of Malay identity. He also reminded the audience that the Malay language was the main vehicle of tradition in the 13th Century when Malay civilization was in its zenith (*imej bahasa ini ke mercu yang amat tinggi*)? He recalled that even when the European colonizers occupied much of the Malay land, the foreign authorities could not stop “the influence” of the language of the Malay people. In his long narrative the MP finally reached the specific historical period in colonial Malaya, which was British Malaya after WWII. He claimed that it is around this time when the language “began to face the biggest threat” (*mula menghadapi suatu keadaan terancam*). In literal translations the Malay phrase can be read as: “...began to face a situation of biggest threat or danger.” The adjective “*ancam*” denotes “threat,” but when it is used with prefix “*ter-*” it indicates an example of threat to a superlative degree. The MP carried on by stating that the British wanted to pervade “every aspect of Malayan life” (*semua aspek hidup kehidupan rakyat di negara ini*). The whole mechanism of administration was influenced by their language ideology. The colonial policy adopted accordingly had serious implications on the British Malaysians. In his own words, MPOKD02 states that

[Text 6.05] *Nilai baru itu diperkukuhkan pula dengan dasar menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa penghantar dalam sistem persekolahan dan melalui kelulusan yang diperolehi, boleh menjadi asas mendapatkan pangkat dan kedudukan yang tinggi.*

Tr.: The new values are strengthened on the basis of using English as the medium of instruction in the school system and, with approval obtained, [English] became the basis to get high rank and position.

The MP signalled a consequence by stating “As a result” (*Akibatnya*). He continued, “the Malay language was dropped and it became just a medium of instruction at the lowest level of schooling and [it became] a language to maintain relations among the communities at that level” (*bahasa Melayu pula merosot dan ia cuma menjadi bahasa penghantar di peringkat persekolahan yang paling rendah dan bahasa perhubungan golongan bawahan*). In the midst of this assertion one can find the clues about the creation of social classes in Malaya through the language ideology adopted by a certain regime (Seng, 1975). The idea that language ideology, language governance and its maintenance could create class divisions has been discussed in applied linguistics in recent times (e.g., Block, 2013).

The colonial regime directed administrative measures resulted in creating a new identity within the Malay community, which the MP defined as “*Inggeris hitam*” (Black English). Black English are those people, which ultimately, in his view “became the agent of the colonial effort to develop the new life that they brought into the society” (tr. *menjadi ejen kepada usaha penjajah untuk memperkembangkan nilai hidup baru yang dibawa mereka ke dalam masyarakat*). This ‘black skin white mask’ syndrome, to use an expression from Frantz Fanon (1967), went on for few years until the country’s independence in 1957, when an article was inserted in the constitution mentioning that “from now on the national language is Malay” (*kini Malaysia yang menyebut bahawa Bahasa Kebangsaan negara ini adalah bahasa Melayu*). The constitutional measures MPOKD02 referred to were,

[Text 6.06] ...*Melayu menjadi bahasa rasmi negara, bahasa pentadbiran, bahasa perhubungan umum dan bahasa penghantar serta bahasa ilmiah di sekolah-sekolah dan institusi-institusi pengajian tinggi.*

Tr.: ...Malay became the country's official language, the language of administration, language and medium of public communication and scientific language in schools and institutions of higher learning.

After Malay received the status of the country’s national language, the institute of Dewan Bahasa, the country’s national language academy was established. The MP recounted how the establishment of the national language academy contributed in the

developed of the Malay language “efficiently,” resulting in the improvement of spelling, producing monolingual and bilingual dictionaries, and more crucially in introducing “more than 800,000 technical terms.” MPOKD02 cited the role of the Malay-rights NGO Gapena in this regard, which in the MP’s view had been working “to fortify the status of Malay language similar to other advanced languages in the world” (*NGO seperti GAPENA dan lain-lain lagi yang berhasrat untuk memartabatkan bahasa Melayu setara dengan bahasa-bahasa maju yang lain di dunia ini*). Here lies the justification for recounting the past, that is, the MP wanted to establish solidarity within a “chain of equivalence” (Laclau, 2005) by connecting different socio-political actors to support their version of MOI policy, which is based on the premise that Malay is a competent language to pursue science.

The same MP continued by stating that Malay is a language in which one does not do only some “formal multiplication.” The language can be used effectively in all the fields of science including engineering, medicine, space science, and so on, he claimed. Once he had established his premise in relation to the strength of the language supported by various institutions, he went further to claim that the Malay language “in near future will become the language for communication within the countries of South East Asia” (*ia akan menjadi bahasa komunikasi ASEAN dalam masa terdekat*). He concluded that “the vocabulary of the Malay language has now reached a very high level of progress that its ability cannot be underestimated in competing with the developed languages in the world” (*tr. kata bahasa Melayu kini telah mencapai tahap kemajuan yang sangat tinggi yang tidak boleh dipertikaikan keupayaannya untuk bersaing dengan bahasa-bahasa maju di dunia ini*). Upon providing such a promising picture of the Malay language, the MP asked: why do we need the “English language for [the purpose of] advancement [or progress]” (*bahasa Inggeris untuk maju*)? His claims are established on infrastructural terms as he listed a number of institutions and administrative centres that continue to support the spread of the Malay language. The references to these institutions also enabled him to imply that he has a legitimate claim based on evidence.

Another MP (MPOKD03) provided further support for the use of the national language as a medium to pursue scientific knowledge. This MP from Keadilan shared the success stories of the country’s national university which began teaching medicine in Malay as early as in 1973 and later the teaching of engineering courses in the 1980s. In his words,

[Text 6.07] *Ini membuktikan bahawa tanggapan yang dibuat oleh pemimpin-pemimpin Kerajaan Barisan Nasional adalah suatu perkara yang meleset, yang bagi saya sungguh tidak bermaruah dalam bahasa sendiri.*

Tr.: This is proof that the assumptions made by the leaders of the Barisan Nasional Government are a matter which is questionable, which to me [means] that they absolutely have no respect for their own language.

However, the claim that the ruling coalition Barisan leaders don't have "respect" (*bermaruah*) for "their own language" (*Bahasa sendiri*) has been denied later by a pro-government MP from UMNO who was also a medical student from the same University that was mentioned by the opposition MP. This UMNO-led MP (MPGUMNO01) critiqued the 'myth' of medicine being taught entirely in Malay. By putting himself into the narrative, in the form of anecdotal evidence, the pro-government MP attempted to establish his account as part of his lived experience: "The honourable member was not a medical student. I was a student from the 3rd batch of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia" (*Yang berhomat bukan pernah jadi penuntut perubatan. Saya adalah kumpulan ketiga daripada pelajar-pelajar Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*). He re-framed the use of national language, namely Malay, and of English within the learning-teaching context of medical science in the 1970s; he touched on the difficulties that he faced as a student. As a medical student he had to read books in English while the lectures were conducted in Malay. In his words,

[Text 6.08] *Bagaimana mahasiswa-mahasiswi Fakulti Perubatan pada masa itu struggle, ... struggle, kita struggle untuk belajar bahasa Inggeris kerana di sekolah menengah, sekolah rendah kita tidak menguasai bahasa Inggeris.*

Apabila kami masuk universiti, saya sebagai seorang pelajar Fakulti Perubatan Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia masa itu struggle, begitu sukar untuk membaca buku-buku, istilah-istilah perubatan yang ada dalam bahasa Inggeris berbanding dengan penuntut-penuntut yang telah fasih berbahasa Inggeris daripada aliran Inggeris pada masa itu, sebab itulah kita mesti menguasai bahasa Inggeris.

Tr.: How the students of the Faculty of Medicine at that time struggled... struggled, we struggled to learn English because in high school, [and] in primary school we did not master the use of the English language.

When we entered the university, I, like many other students in the Faculty of Medicine of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia during that time, struggled; it was tough to read those books, those medical terms, in English, for us in comparison to those students who were fluent in English, [those] who came from the English stream during that time. This is the reason why we must master the [use of] the English language.

The MP's repeated use of the English word *struggle* (*kita struggle*) is an example of emphasis by using repetition. The current policy in the pro-policy MPs' arguments is an attempt to put history into a more palatable order. Similar to him, another pro-government MP (MPGUMNO02) argued that their support for English medium education is not because they "ignore" the national language (*kita bukan membelakangkan bahasa Melayu*, tr., we do not ignore the Malay language). He told listeners, "do not ever assume that we oppose the use of the English language" (*janganlah sekali-kali menganggap bahawa kita menentang penggunaan bahasa Inggeris*). His argument was echoed and elaborated further by another pro-policy MP (MPGUMNO03):

[Text 6.09] *Kita menghormati sasterawan kita, orang-orang ahli bahasa, pandangan-pandangan mereka. Itu sebahagian daripada manusia dan kita tidak menolak. Jikalau kita pun pandai bahasa Inggeris, kita juga boleh jadi ahli sasterawan Melayu. Ahli sasterawan yang berbahasa Inggeris adalah lebih baik daripada sasterawan Melayu yang tidak boleh langsung berbahasa lain cuma bahasa Melayu sahaja.*

Tr.: We honour our writers, linguists, and their views. That's part of being human and we do not deny that. If we are good at English, we can also become expert writers of Malay literature. Expert writers who speak English are better than Malay language writers who cannot speak other languages, [but] only speak the Malay language.

While the ruling government MP and his fellow party members claimed that they harboured deep respect for the Malay language, they also iterated that they felt the need to support the use of English based on a rationale adopted collectively. This was done, MPGUMNO03 claimed, in order to transform the country into a successful nation:

[Text 6.10] *sasterawan negara juga harus memahami impian pemimpin cara tuju hala kepimpinan negara. Cara negara ini dipimpin. Pemimpin membawa negara ini ke arah mana*

Tr.: the country's literary scholars must also understand the dreams of the country regarding how the leadership gives direction. Where this country is heading to. Where the leaders are leading the country to.

The MPs of the various parties continue to produce argument and counter-argument couched in the various discourses of nationhood, linguistic pride and also within the urge for a pragmatic need to choose English due to its role in the contemporary world. A member of the opposition from the Islamic Pas (MPOPAS03) claimed,

[Text 6.11] *Kita tidak menentang bahawa bahasa Inggeris merupakan bahasa globalisasi, bahasa liberalisasi, kita tidak menentang, yang kita tentang ialah penggunaan bahasa Inggeris dalam mata pelajaran Sains dan Matematik. Ini sahaja kita minta pertimbangan yang serius oleh pihak kerajaan hari ini. Silakan Besut.*

Tr.: We do not oppose that English is the language of globalization, liberalization language, [this] we are not opposed to, what we don't want is the use of English in [the teaching of] Science and Mathematics. This alone we ask for serious consideration by the government today.

The essence of the general argument constructed by the opposition is that they do not deny the aims of globalization and as such the country's aspiration to reach the goal of integration in a global marketplace. They however are unwilling to compromise on the position of the mother tongue and/or national language. The battles to win the contested space of Malay hegemony fought by both the opposition and the pro-government Malay nationalists follow the logics of recontextualization mediated by their respective party stands on the issue of MOI policy.

MPs frequently conversationalize their statements, as if they are engaged in private meetings with their party members. One may ask why these MPs use such a personalized tone in a public sphere, that is, an institutional setting like the national parliament. The MPs also frame their arguments aided by 'stocks of interactional knowledge,' a concept not realized in rigid conversation analysis terms (see Drew & Heritage, 1992; Drew &

Sorjonen, 1996; Heritage, 1997), but more in a general sense. This is a concept similar to what Fairclough defined as “members’ resources” (Fairclough, 2013).

A postcolonial subject can be accused of playing Crusoe’s Friday or as one of the opposition MPs (MPOKD02) put it, English educated Malays reducing themselves into “*Inggeris hitam*” (tr. black English). The pro-government MP responded to such accusations by using rhetorical questions, for instance, “Have I, someone who can speak English, forgotten that I am Malay?” (tr. *Apakah saya yang boleh sekarang ini boleh bercakap bahasa Inggeris lupa saya adalah orang Melayu?*). And also: “Let’s ask average Malay people, to those who are fluent in English, have they forgotten that they are Malays?” (tr. *Cuba kita tanya rata-rata orang Melayu yang pandai berbahasa Inggeris apakah mereka lupa mereka orang Melayu?*). The expected answer here is: “No, they have not forgotten their roots albeit their use of English.” This understanding ran within the party of UMNO which is originally framed by the President of the party at the time of the debate, namely Mahathir. At the OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) Summit in 2003 Mahathir made the point that

We need guns and rockets, bombs and warplanes, tanks and warships for our defence. But because we are discouraged from learning of science and mathematics as giving us no merit for the afterlife, today we have no capacity to produce our own weapons for our defence. We have to buy our weapons from our detractors and enemies (Mahathir Mohamad speech presented at OIC Summit on 16 October, 2003 at <http://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2003/10/16/threat-from-within-says-dr-m> retrieved on 16 January 2013).

Mahathir’s note is complex in terms of its interdiscursive characteristics and intertextual references covering world politics and the fate of the Muslims in general. The political party UMNO has been defined by the party members as a custodian of the Malays and Islam, which is progressive Islam (Mauzy & Milne, 1983), in contrast to the Islam of the political party Pas which, they claim, aims at implementing Islamic Law in the country. In his OIC speech Mahathir also stated that

The early Muslims produced great mathematicians and scientists, scholars, physicians and astronomers etc. and they excelled in all the fields of knowledge of their times, besides studying and practising their own religion of Islam. As a result the Muslims were able to develop and extract wealth from their lands and through

their world trade, able to strengthen their defences, protect their people and give them the Islamic way of life, *Addin*, as prescribed by Islam (Mahathir Mohamad, Speech presented at OIC Summit on 16 October, 2003).

Mahathir's arguments made at the opening of the OIC Summit had been echoed by his party members to define the needs of the contemporary Malay society. On the eve of the OIC Summit, Mahathir gave an interview to *The Star*, the national English daily, in which he responded to the question: "Would you say that the promotion of science could be part of the contribution to the leadership of the OIC by Malaysia?" Mahathir said:

Well, I think to the extent that we can do for science. As a doctor, well of course, I'm also a scientist. As a doctor, I find that my knowledge of science, my knowledge of medicine, has in fact strengthened my faith in my religion and my faith in God (<http://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/letters/2003/10/16/threat-from-within-says-dr-m/> retrieved on 16 January 2013).

Malaysia under the leadership of Mahathir established the image of a progressive Muslim country (Hamayotsu, 2002), an image which for the Malays, who are either the members or the sympathisers of UMNO, Pas and KeAdilan may appeal strongly. It is within this framework that the pro-government MPs framed their arguments as members of a global village who support scientific progresses brought in by English language.

A ruling UMNO MP (MPGUMNO05) suggested that it is the contemporary reality which is forcing "us" to master English. English is the "*language, which is necessary for the advancement of technology today*" (*bahasa yang perlu untuk kemajuan teknologi hari ini*). The MP defined English in terms of opportunity: "*I am for the opportunity, what do you say?*" (tr. *saya bagi peluang, apa hendak cakap?*). The mode of interpellation in the above utterance can be seen as an example of persuasive language: a language which includes the narrator's self-experience to make the demands more appealing.

It is obvious that the UMNO-led MP's arguments about not being able to succeed unless English is adopted as the medium of instruction has been demolished by the opposition MP earlier. Members from both parties are using a Malay-nationalist discourse. But in their alternative interpretation of past incidents and the needs of the Malays they re-appropriated and re-contextualized each other's arguments. This is an example of how different "elements" (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) of Malay identity are displayed within each political camp's ultimate goal of colonizing MOI policy debates in Malaysia. The use of

recontextualization is in line with Linell's (1998) take on a speaker's liberty to use contextual resources. That is, the members of a discourse community for whose consumption this particular debate is orchestrated would comprehend the alternative contextualization without much difficulty (Linell, 1998).

An opposition member (MPOKD06) in his attempt to reconstruct the past used the statements produced by the party leader himself, i.e., Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister and the proponent of the current policy. Mahathir once launched a slogan that stated: "Love Our Language" (*Cintailah Bahasa Kita*) in 1987. MPOKD06 quoted the PM,

[Text 6.12] *Kecintaan terhadap bahasa Malaysia sebagai Bahasa Kebangsaan adalah suatu asas kecintaan terhadap negara yang perlu dipupuk dan diperkembangkan dengan amalan. Tanpa mengamalkannya sukar kita hendak meyakinkan diri kita dan orang lain bahawa kita mencintai Bahasa Kebangsaan kita.*

Tr.: Love of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language is a basic love of country that should be nurtured and developed with practice. Without practicing, it is hard, we want to convince ourselves and others that we love our national language.

In the above extract, the act of ventriloquising the PM by the opposition member illustrates Bakhtin's notion of 'speaking through somebody else's voice' to perspectivize and to legitimize a claim, which, if done without such support, might sound weaker (Samuel et al., 2014). First, it helps to perspectivize the MP's current stand on MOI policy, i.e., to uphold the value of national language. The PM has the institutional authority to uphold the Malay language as the president of the largest Malay nationalist party UMNO. On the other hand, the opposition member can use the PM and the UMNO President's lack of sincerity on the cause of Malay language nationalism. As such, the MPOKD06's reference to the PM can be read as a caution not to take UMNO seriously as the supreme custodian of the Malay interests. The implied meaning is that other Malay-based political parties can serve the Malays better.

The opposition member continued with his attacks on the shift of language ideology proclaimed, not only by the PM, but also by other MPs from the Malay nationalist political party of UMNO. He lamented that within UMNO, there are some individuals who think that without being proficient in English the Malays cannot progress (*Selagi mana rakyat*

Malaysia khususnya orang Melayu dan bumiputera tidak menguasai bahasa Inggeris, mereka tidak akan maju; tr., As long as Malaysians especially the Malays and the bumiputera [natives] are not proficient in English, they cannot progress). The UMNO leaders, the opposition MP claims, can also be accused of disseminating the idea that when the Malays are able to learn English they would not “feel inferior” to those who know the language. By learning the language the Malays can be more “open-minded” (*minda mereka akan lebih terbuka*). The use of the prefix “*ter-*” to denote a superlative degree of the word “*buka*” meaning “open”, suggests a kind of intensity, which is increased by the preceding word, “*lebih*” meaning “more.” Following Chung’s (2010) study on the dynamic use of *ter-* in Malay, “*terbuka*” in this context can also be explained as a sudden realization to open up immensely (mediated by the use of English as a medium of instruction). The opposition-led MP (MPOKD06) expressed his amazement at the sight of UMNO leaders’ ways of thinking to indicate that by only learning English, someone can feel superior and more open-minded. In his words,

[Text 6.13] *Bayangkan ada pemimpin Melayu yang menganggap bahawa untuk membuka minda Melayu atau untuk menghilangkan psikologi rendah diri orang Melayu dan bumiputera yang lain, mesti pandai dan fasih berkomunikasi dalam bahasa Inggeris.*

Adakah ini bermakna bahawa orang Melayu dan bumiputera yang lain yang hanya mengetahui bahasa Melayu, mindanya mesti tertutup dan selalu berasa rendah diri. Adakah pelajar-pelajar bukan Melayu dan bukan bumiputera semuanya fasih dalam bahasa Inggeris dan perbualan antara sesama mereka setiap hari berlaku dalam bahasa Inggeris tidak dalam bahasa ibunda mereka sendiri. Dan adakah kaum bukan Melayu, bukan bumiputera yang berbual dalam bahasa ibunda mereka sendiri itu, sama berasa rendah diri dan minda mereka juga tertutup seperti pelajar Melayu?

Tr.: Imagine, there are Malay leaders who think that in order to open their minds orto eliminate their psychological inferiorities, the Malays and other indigenous groups must be proficient and fluent in communicating in English.

Does this mean that the Malays and other *bumiputera* [indigenous population] who only speak the Malay language, their minds must be closed, and [should] always feel inferior for themselves? Are students of non-Malay and non-indigenous origin,

those who are fluent in English speak among themselves every day in English and not in their native languages? And are there non-Malay communities, who are not bumiputera [and who] while they chat in their native language, feel inferior and find their minds also closed, such as those of the Malay students?

The use of lexical items like “*Bayangkan*” (tr. imagine) allows the opposition member to suggest he is addressing an audience in order to tell a story about how unimaginable it could be if some Malays would start imagining or believing in that way. The MP here has “informalized” (Fairclough, 1993) the technical pedagogical and language-learning issues in his speech, while not using jargon. Most of his utterances were carried out in everyday terms and punctuated with story-telling formulae like, “think” or “imagine,” and frequent use of rhetorical questions.

In order to legitimize their nationalist stand the opposition used the Bakhtinian discourse strategy of ‘speaking through somebody else’s voice’ (Samuel et al., 2014) in a consistent manner. Here is an example from another MP from the opposition (Pas), who brought an isolated example of a professor giving his lectures in the Malay language who was originally from the Lancaster University in the UK. The professor was a faculty member in the Department of Physics at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. To note briefly, there are many foreign national faculties in Malaysian universities as the country aims at internationalizing its academia (Tham, 2010). The MP stated,

[Text 6.14] *seorang profesor daripada Lancaster University London datang ke Malaysia dan bekerja di Universiti Malaya dalam Fakulti Sains dan beliau sanggup belajar dalam Bahasa Melayu dan memberi kuliah Fizik in Malay, dalam bahasa Melayu. Jadi dia pun hairan, apabila ada keputusan hendak balik kepada bahasa Inggeris, dia pun hairan, dia pun pening kepala.*

Tr.: a professor from Lancaster University London has come to Malaysia and is working at the University of Malaya in the Faculty of Science and he is willing to learn Malay and lecture on Physics in Malay, the Malay language. So he too was surprised when [he heard that] there was a decision to go back to English, he too was surprised, he too felt dizzy [*pening kepala*].

The appeal to this source is a clear invocation of a British authority. In the above example the expression “he too was surprised” (*dia pun hairan*) was repeated. The second time when stated, the MP added the phrase “*pening kepala*” (tr. feel dizzy): “*dia pun*

pening kepala” (tr. he too felt dizzy). The Bakhtinian concept of voice can be further elaborated by what Goffman defined as animating others. Goffman (1974, 1981) argued that the production of a discourse could be divided across three communicative roles at least, i.e.: author, animator, and principal. In the above text the principal is the professor from the Lancaster University who believes in a certain worldview and as such expressed himself in that way. Moreover, the view of the professor has been authored by himself. The professor might express this view to someone, i.e., a member in the parliament. In that case such an individual echoed the Professor’s views. The MP in question would be the animator. The MP might thus in effect speak on behalf of the professor and also many other intellectuals (whose names are mentioned in Text 6.15 below). Here is an example from another Pas-led MP who used such discourse device to state his point:

[Text 6.15] *Tuan Yang di-Pertua, mereka yang mengkritik ataupun menentang penggunaan bahasa Inggeris, dalam mata pelajaran Matematik dan Sains adalah mereka yang terdiri daripada kakitangan akademik, sudah tentu cakap-cakap mereka ini melalui kajian dan pengalaman mereka, contohnya Profesor DiRaja Ungku Aziz, Profesor Ainudin Wahid, Naib Canselor, Profesor Nik Safiah Karim, seorang ahli pendidikan Universiti Malaya, Profesor Koh Kye Kim, Profesor Zainal Abidin Wahid, Profesor Shahril Abu Bakar.*

Tr.: Mr. Speaker, those who criticize or oppose the use of the English language in Mathematics and Science are those that consist of academic staff, of course they talk like this through study and experience, for example, Royal Professor Ungku Aziz, Professor Ainudin Wahid, Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nik Safiah Karim, a member of the University of Malaya education, Professor Koh Kye Kim, Professor Zainal Abidin Wahid, Shahril Professor Abu Bakar.

In the above extract the criticism of the MOI policy is legitimized via some proper nouns, i.e., the personal names of some of the intellectuals in the country whose views are widely accepted by Malaysian citizens. This strategy is also listed by van Leewuen (2008) to explain how certain authorities become citable due to their status in the society. For van Leewuen, this is legitimation by authority. The use of epistemic modality in “*sudah tentu*” (tr. of course, certainly) is aimed at activating the ‘common sense knowledge’ of the listeners to the effect that intellectuals of that stature would know better what is good for the nation. At the same time, the MP nullifies the possibility of those intellectuals referred to being politically motivated. The presupposition about the issue being political, in the

narrow party-politics sense, is aimed at future debaters on the issue who could claim that the opposition is trying to politicize the issue (cf. UMNO MPs' arguments on politicization of MOI below). The Pas MP claims that

[Text 6.16] *Jadi, sudah tentu mereka yang bercakap ini bukan berkepentingan politik mana-mana parti, mereka bercakap di atas nilai akademik, nilai budaya, nilai perpaduan dan juga untuk masa depan Malaysia itu sendiri.*

Tr.: So, of course the ones who are speaking about this issue do not have political interests of any party, their talk is based on the academic [and] cultural values, the unity and also the future of Malaysia solely.

Once the MP has established the proposition that these individuals are renowned academics and intellectuals with ample knowledge of the current debate, he could further argue that based on their expert but apolitical views the proposed policy should not be implemented. The reference to these intellectuals within the context of discourse about Malaysia can be deemed as a strong argument due to their highly respected position. The MP continued,

[Text 6.17] *Apakah kerajaan tidak mahu menghormati pandangan-pandangan profesor-profesor yang berjasa dan berjaya dalam bidang pendidikan ini, dengan hanya mendengar pandangan-pandangan seorang manusia sahaja iaitu Perdana Menteri, tanpa menghormati pandangan-pandangan akademik, tak mengapalah tak hormati pandangan kami, mungkin kami ada bias, ... tetapi kalau para profesor ini, yang memberi pandangan dalam tulisan, dalam interview mereka mengatakan ianya bahaya, tak betul, tak kena di sudut kemajuan, takkan kita tidak boleh terima pandangan mereka yang terlibat dalam pendidikan dan kecenderungan politik mereka pun kita tahu bukanlah memihak kepada pembangkang.*

Tr.: Why does the government not want to respect the views of those professors who contributed and succeeded within the [current] field of education, [why] only hear the views of a person that is the Prime Minister, [who is] without any respect for the views of academics. It is alright to not to respect our views, we may have biases..... But when these professors, who give their views through writing, by giving interviews, said that it was dangerous, not right, not right in terms of advancement, should we not accept the views of those involved in education

[when] by their political tendencies we already know that [what they state] is not in favour of the opposition.

The opposition MP pitted the country's 'celebrated' intellectuals against the authority of the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. He questioned the intellectual authority of a politically elected person, i.e., the PM, and his right to be accepted as an authority to implement a new MOI policy. It is evident in the data that pro-government MPs too invoked the names of experts or mentioned studies to support their claims. Invoking expert-names appears to be thus an effective strategy to establish arguments (Fairclough, 1993). In the parliament the types of names mentioned are expected to be acceptable across political faiths; their expertise must be acknowledged unanimously and only then an attempt to introducing a new policy could be interpreted as being 'simply' politically motivated. The claim that arguments could be politically motivated instead of being rooted in reality has also been asserted by government MPs and established through several examples.

Apart from invoking specific established names, the MPs made reference to the sublime status of the Malay language, history and culture to perspectivize and legitimize their causes. The Malay opposition parties claimed that their support for the national language should not be interpreted as an attempt to ignore the global call for English. The opposition are aware of the reality of the contemporary world. According to MPOKD06

[Text 6.18] *sekali lagi saya ingin menarik perhatian Ahli-ahli Dewan yang mulia ini agar tidak menyalah anggap bahawa ucapan saya ini menyanggah kepentingan bahasa Inggeris, mempelajari bahasa asing selain daripada bahasa ibunda adalah sangat perlu*

Tr.: once again I would like to draw the attention of Members of this House to avoid any misunderstanding about my speech that it is made not to deny the benefit of the English language; it is very necessary to learn a foreign language other than one's mother tongue.

To oppose the policy the opposition MPs typically used the discourse of anti-colonialism, a discourse which various strands of Malay nationalists have used historically (Nagata 1980). In the following example an opposition MP blamed the British colonizers for the misery of the Malays and their language. The MP believed that

[Text 6.19] *Jikalau dahulu orang Inggeris yang mencegah bahasa Melayu daripada menjadi alat pendidikan bangsa Melayu dalam bidang ilmu yang tinggi, terutama dalam bidang sains, hari ini, nampaknya yang menjadi penghalang ke arah itu ialah sesetengah kalangan daripada pemimpin UMNO sendiri, mereka mahu supaya bahasa Inggeris didaulatkan semula atas alasan bahasa Inggerislah satu-satunya alat untuk meninggikan prestasi pelajar Melayu dalam bidang pendidikan.*

Tr.: In the past when it was the British who prevented the Malay language to become a tool for the purpose of education for Malays in the field of higher studies, primarily, in the field of science; today it seems the ones who are going to be the obstacle on the way are from the UMNO leaders themselves, they want to be the patrons of English because the English language is the only means to enhance the performance of Malay students in the field of education.

The MP articulated his position along the lines of struggle against colonizers prior to the country's independence. He constructed and valorized a past which might interpellate an audience who share similar sentiment politically, i.e., a Malay nationalist sentiment. The opposition also used this discourse moment to criticize those UMNO leaders who they claim replaced the colonizers after the country's independence and is still in power for more than a half a century. Similar to the British colonizers who wanted to thwart the advance of the Malays, the UMNO leaders too are framed as committing the same 'mistake.'

Both the pro-government and opposition Malay leaders in the parliament fought to define and re-define the needs of the Malays continuously and thus struggled to establish themselves as sole representatives of a national or an ethnic cause. In the discourse of the opposition, the UMNO leaders have deviated from the cause of the struggle for the Malays. They, upon assuming the character of "*Inggris hitam*", have stopped themselves from articulating the political will of the Malays. UMNO, in the opposition MPs' views, had never fought for the Malays. In other words, the opposition MPs indicated that the party had been colonized by the ones who were not 'organic intellectuals,' to use Gramsci's term. Resultantly, they were unable to realize the aspirations of the Malay people. In the words of MPOKD03,

[Text 6.20] *Ini sebenarnya masalah satu golongan orang-orang Melayu yang menguasai politik negara ini yang sebenarnya sudah mula tercabut dari akar umbi, teras, budaya dan agama negara mereka. Sebab itu mereka menggunakan bahasa lain yang asing daripada mereka dan seolah-olah inilah satu penyelesaian kepada masalah negara tersebut.*

Tr.: The real problem is that a group of Malays who dominate the country's politics had actually started to come off the ground, detached from the culture and religion of their country. That is the reason why they use foreign languages other than their own, as if this is the solution to the problems of the country.

The speaker's strategy here is to define the problem as a 'detachment' from culture and religion and then to reconstrue this as a linguistic problem. This is a scenario which an opposition MP defined as a "great tragedy for our country right now" (*tragedi besar kepada negara kita sekarang ini*), noting that this situation is "unlucky for us" (*malang bagi kita*). Within UMNO, in the opposition leader's views, they are the ones who "control the instruments of political and government agencies" (*menguasai instrumen politik dan agensi-agensi kerajaan*). He believed (*saya percaya*, tr. I believe) that even in UMNO those people who proposed the current policy are a "minority" (*golongan minoriti*) and also that not all the component parties within the ruling coalition supported (*bersetuju*) the policy, because it is not only science and mathematics as such. Within science there are subjects like biology, physics, and chemistry and so on, the MP mentions. The presupposition here is that when all these subjects are taught in English the Malay language would be downgraded as inferior if not made irrelevant altogether. When it is proven infrastructurally that the Malay language institutions are able to support a Malay-language medium of instruction, then a pro-English MOI policy might in fact be "detrimental" to the future of Malaysian society.

In the above discussion it is evident that Malay members of the parliament – divided across nationalist and Islamic lines – constructed Malay-ness at the centre of the Malaysian politics. The discursive constructions ended in translating the members' party lines on the issue of MOI debates in the parliament.

6.1.2 Discourses of ethnic and local/national identity in a globalized world

In the above section examples have been cited from both the government and the opposition members to explain how they perspectivize and legitimize their arguments by framing, contextualizing and putting mechanisms of intertextuality and interdiscursivity into practice. Based on insights obtained from the analyses above, the current section focuses on the dynamic interaction between attempts to frame MOI debates by referring to past and attempts to foreground the contemporary needs, while also giving more examples.

Past events, e.g., the colonial struggle and traditional Malay-Muslim civilization, were cited as part of a common past by both pro-government and opposition members, targeting the contemporary audience. The specific articulations constructed by exploiting alternative terms showed that different epistemological stances about a single event resulted in different types of assertions. Their stories about past however were firmly rooted in the current MOI debates within the country. The apparently ‘neutral’ event of globalization in the contemporary era was used as an objective term to inflect different historical eras. The opposition MPs attempted to criticise the phenomenon of cultural globalization because it is enacted via the English language, which the MPs defined as a foreign entity. On the other hand, the government MPs references to globalization foregrounded a specific type of globalization, i.e., economic globalization. Here is an example presented by MPGUMNO08, an MP from the ruling UMNO,

[Text 6.21]*Kita akan berhadapan dengan proses globalisasi dalam sepuluh tahun, di mana segala dinding dalam negara kita akan runtuh, dan ia menjadi satu pasaran – dunia ini menjadi satu pasaran. Pada masa itu kita akan tahu sama ada kita mempunyai kapasiti atau tidak untuk bersaing.*

Tr.: We will be faced with the process of globalization in the next ten years, it is when all the walls within our country will collapse, and it will become a market place– the world is going to be one market. That is the time when we will come to know whether or not we have the capacity to compete.

The MP’s claim that “We” (*Kita*) will face the process of globalization within ten years has been constructed without much details. That is, nowhere in his speech has he explained what he meant precisely by this *proses globalisasi* that is about to happen in the next ten years. The metaphor of “dinding” (tr. walls) in the phrase “*segala dinding dalam negara kita*” (tr. all the walls within our country) is difficult to follow. He perhaps referred

to the differences within the country among the ethnic groups, and between the nations within the region and the world. Despite his lack of explanation about his premises, he continues speaking in an apocalyptic voice to create an atmosphere of urgency and of hurrying to adopt ‘proper’ measures. By making a series of generalizations, the MP, reached his final argument, which is, that English is the main vehicle to ensure success. Again in his words,

[Text 6.22] *Dalam dunia ini orang berkomunikasi sains dan teknologi dalam bahasa Inggeris, bukan dalam bahasa Melayu, bahasa India, bahasa Cina, bahasa Jepun, tetapi dalam bahasa Inggeris. Jadi kalau kita melahirkan student kita yang cukup competent dari segi terminology sains – hendak guna di mana? ... Kita mesti lihat kepada realiti dunia.*

Tr.: In this world people communicate about science and technology in English, not in Malay, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, but in English. So if we train our students to be competent enough in scientific terminology – where can they use it? ... We must look at the reality of the world.

The pro-government Malay nationalist MP constructed his claims by using the technique of ‘linguistic factuality’ (Reid 1991; Khan & Subramaniam, 2011). The factuality of situations or events in English can be constructed through the uses of bare, unqualified assertions using copula verbs (e.g., is, are, was and were); emphatic verbs (e.g., *do, does*), and tenses (e.g., *eat-s, did, wanted*). Khan and Subramaniam (2011) showed that languages which do not use copula verbs can also create a grammatical sense of factuality.

In the case of Malay language, which is a zero copula language (Ansaldi 2009), that is, a language which does not use verbs meaning ‘to be’ to state that an occurrence is factual or certain the state of factuality is understood from the context. This grammatical feature is similar to Bangla which does not use copula verbs either, but may still denote factuality (Khan & Subramaniam, 2011). In Malay, lexical items like *tentu* are used to denote certainty or *mungkin* for possibility, but *tentu* and *mungkin* can be explained as examples of modality, i.e., the similar mechanism how modality is expressed in English (with adverbs like surely, truly, certainly and so on). The construction of factuality in Malay is neither depended on tense-markers, which is one way how it is carried out in English, i.e., by adding an “-s” or “-0” to a verb to indicate present tense (e.g., he go-es in contrast to they go-0) and by adding “-ed” to the verb to indicate past tense. In order to denote past tense

the verbs are usually followed by “*telah*,” lexically (e.g., “*mereka telah memperkenalkan*” tr. “they introduced” in example 6:32).

In the above text (6.22) factuality is constructed by means of a declarative statement, i.e., “*Dalam dunia ini orang berkomunikasi sains dan teknologi dalam bahasa Inggris*” (tr., In this world people communicate about science and technology in English). The verb “*berkomunikasi*” (tr. communicated) does not carry a tense or person marker but can still create a sense of factuality.

The use of factual utterances followed by a conditional sentence (i.e., *if – so where*), allowed the speaker to change the hegemonic contents of the debates to another direction, that is, to prioritize economic globalization. Simultaneously, the speaker re-defined the content of what the Malays need *at the moment*. The content of his argument was in contrast to most of the opposition MPs’ position who favoured a pro-mother tongue argument. The key framing concepts used by this pro-government MP at 6.21 were similar to other pro-policy MPs who spoke about globalization, reality, making a rational choice, anti-sentimental position, and criticism of ‘emotionalism.’ These terms served as ‘quilting points’ or ‘moments’ of Laclau (2005) to articulate a coherent argument for the selection of English as a medium of instruction which they suggested would benefit the Malays.

The hypothesis that discourse and society are dialectically related (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2000) and that they co-construct each other, have been exemplified in the articulations cited in the above texts. The Malay nationalist MP’s claims about making English the MOI would appear ‘coherent’ along with his party’s wider objective (i.e., UMNO’s ‘Vision 2020’ goal in order to be a developed country by 2020). Taking a wider premise the government MPs were able to sequence their ideas to construct coherent discourse frames of competency, reality in the modern world, globalization, and of the opposition being sentimental about mother-tongue. Discourse interspersed with an apocalyptic register of warning and recommending is occasionally evidenced within the articulation of opposition-led MPs. For instance, MPOKD01’s fear cited above that Malay might turn into a “rigid language” (*Bahasa kaku*) if the language is not used to teach mathematics and sciences.

To show further connections between discourse and society, in the pro-government MPs’ discourses one may trace the contemporary neoliberal arguments to celebrate certain aspects of our society, for instance, economic globalization. Such articulations are based

on the idea that history is a progressive development. Hence the economic globalization that we experience today is an inevitable historical development. Such articulations are made by ignoring the contestations (or conflict within the sphere of 'relations of production,' if we explain the scenario by using typical Marxist terms) among various forces within a society.

MPGUMNO08 suggested that the west realized this inevitable reality centuries ago while Muslim scholars could not. Once the premises had been constructed on the failures of Muslim leadership, the MP began to add details by re-evaluating a common past to perspectivize and to legitimize the MOI policy in front of a group of people who could relate to such historicization. Claims like these have not only the persuasive force to interpellate potential members into believing in specific ideologies, but claims like these also have immediate consequences on the directions for policy making decisions. The UMNO-led MP argues that

[Text 6.23] *Saya hendak beri tahu kepada Tuan Yang di-Pertua, pada abad ke 17, apabila berlaku Revolusi Industri, manusia sudah bijak untuk membina mesin dan factory. Satu bulan manusia menghasilkan sekurang-kurangnya dari satu factory, satu juta baju. Sebelum itu dunia berteraskan kepada tukang kerja secara tangan di cottage industry di rumah-rumah. Peniaga mengeluarkan baju setakat yang dia boleh jahit, setinggi-tingginya 10 helai sebulan. Jadi ini merubah struktur dunia kepada menggunakan mesin dan factory.*

Tr.: I would like to inform Mr. Speaker that around the 17th Century, when the Industrial Revolution began, people were wise to build machines and factories. A worker could produce almost one million shirts in a month in one factory. Previously, production was based on artisan work when people used their hands in [the sphere of] cottage industry, built at homes. Traders could sew shirts as many as 10 pieces per month. When they started using machines and factories it changed the structure of the world.

The reference to the industrial revolution has been further elaborated when the MP included an ethnic dimension by inserting the legitimizing signifier of the Malays (see Text 6:24). On the surface, his arguments were framed for the consumption of his fellow members in the parliament and for policy-making purposes. Beyond the MPs in the parliament the discourse will be consumed by tens of thousands of his party-members, and

also the population of his constituency, who are his potential vote-bank, comprising mainly Malay Muslims.

How a particular line of argument contributes in the shaping of a hegemonic construction is explained by Žižek as follows: “each universal ideological notion is always hegemonized by some particular content which colours its very universality and accounts for its efficiency” (1997, p. 28). Here the MP’s instrumental goal to establish the MOI policy has been constructed by using the particular sublime reference to the Malay community. In different words, the following extract (Text 6:24) epitomizes a crucial ideological aspect of national politics in Malaysia, i.e. that a typical Malay leader needs always to champion the Malay cause. This is an act which is repeatedly traced within the Malay political discourses in the parliament. The possible reasons for such articulations of UMNO leaders could be that they wanted to garner support from not only their own political party, but also from those Malays who support the Islamist Pas and the Parti Keadilan. Laclau’s (2006) question: *Why Constructing a People Is the Main Task of Radical Politics* can be equally relevant for any politics, not just radical politics. The MPGUMNO08 said:

[Text 6.24] *Yang malangnya saya lihat, saya banyak membaca – pada masa itu manusia kena membuat keputusan, dunia Western terus melibatkan seluruh bangsanya di dalam proses pembangunan ekonomi berteraskan kepada revolusi industri, manakala dunia Eastern mengeluarkan diri, terutama di kalangan pemimpin-pemimpin Islam – dia kata ekonomi ini haram. Selama 300 tahun umat Islam tidak terlibat dalam proses ekonomi, dan sekarang ini bila kita hendak terlibat, kita sudah jauh ketinggalan. Dan pada saya perkara ini berlaku. Jadi bila kita berhadapan dengan proses globalisasi ini, kita mesti melihat segala avenue, keseluruhan dari segi berbagai-bagai jurusan, barulah kita membuat keputusan – sama ada kita hendak Sains dan Matematik dalam bahasa Melayu atau tidak, itu mesti berteraskan kepada realiti, bukan berteraskan kepada sentimen parti semata-mata. Jadi, saya berharap graduan kita mesti mempunyai competency di dalam bidang sains dan teknologi.*

Tr.: How sadly, I see [as] I [happen to] read a lot – [at] the time when people had to make a decision, the Western world chose to involve the whole nation in the process of economic development centring on industrial revolution, while the Eastern world chose to get excluded from it, especially the Muslim leaders – they

said that this economic system is *haram* (illegal). For 300 years the Muslims were not involved in the economic process, and today when we want to get involved, we already are far behind. And for me the process has begun. So when we are dealing with the current process of globalization, we must explore each avenue of it, its various dimensions, so that we can make a decision – it's the same with whether or not we want Sciences and Mathematics in Malay, [the decision] must be based on reality, not based on party-sentiment alone. Because, I hope that our graduates must have competence in the field of science and technology.

The use of personal pronouns like “I” and “myself” by this MP will help the Malay community to hear: ‘I as a Malay see or read...’ This type of interpellation is a common feature within any ideological discourse. The MP employed a conversational and story-like structure of description putting his self into the narrative (*Yang malangnya saya lihat, saya banyak membaca...*, tr., How sadly, I see [as] I [happen to] read a lot...). The strategy allowed him to apply a sentimental aspect to the content of his speech about the historical past. In his attempts he provided a detailed description of the scientific developments following the industrial revolution in the western hemisphere with a reference to contemporary Malaysia. His narrative could be a matter of verification in the eyes of an historian, but looking at it from a discourse analytical perspective, one may ask: *Why was this narrative allowed to be recounted in the national parliament?* Is parliament a suitable place to have a detailed discussion of the historical past?

In his detailed story, the MP claimed that what happened to the Muslims in the 17th Century after their rejection of science can happen again if Malays at present reject the proposed MOI policy that guarantees scientific developments. He implied that scientific developments and globalization should be read as coterminous. The triad constructed in the MP's narrative by linking scientific developments, economic globalization and a pro-English MOI policy has thus consequences in the hegemonic contestation of the policy, shaping it in a specific way (see Heller 2010, Piller & Cho 2013 on the English language and neoliberal agenda).

In order to find what Fairclough (2013) identified as “hidden” in discourse, for instance the ideological underpinnings in historical narratives, the strategy of reading between the lines, i.e., examining what has been foregrounded but also what has been omitted and backgrounded in a text, needs to be implemented. We hear similar concerns in Bourdieu's (1988) analysis of Heidegger's discourse on the historical past. In Heidegger's

philosophical narrative what was exposed, Bourdieu deems, was the German philosopher's political ontology – when the texts were read following the method of a “skewed reading.” What Bourdieu dubs as a skewed reading is similar to what Althusser defines as a method of symptomatic reading and could be read as similar to what Fairclough defined as ‘hidden’ in discourse. A critical discourse analyst would attempt to explain what is hidden behind the manifest discourse. Accordingly, a reading of the UMNO MP's (MPGUMNO08) discourse above shows that the specific ‘story’ or the historical narrative that he layered within the field of his parliamentary discourse, was part of a larger ideological aim of his arguments on the policy. Here, interdiscursivity played a crucial role by combining multiple discourses. That is, the references made to history, pedagogy and the political goals of his party may appear to be a legitimizing tool to further his argument on the proposed MOI policy.

To make his story relevant the MP went back and forth into the alleys of history. From the past he came to the contemporary global market and linked his journey to Malaysia and to that of why the new policy should be adopted. To note, the Malay-Muslim political discourses within UMNO, particularly those of Mahathir Mohamad, referred quite often to the glorious past of the Muslims with particular reference to the Islamic Renaissance during the Abbasid Caliphate (Haque & Khan 2004). This could be seen as an example of intertextuality, but also of interdiscursivity. It is intertextual in as much as the MP referred to other texts which have been read or heard by his target audience, i.e., texts dealing with the colonial and Islamic pasts. On the other hand, it is interdiscursive as he brought in pedagogy, economy, and historical past and ethnic discourses in one seamless discursive construction. The then Prime Minister in many of his speeches also referred to such glorious pasts in order to legitimize the teaching of science and mathematics in English as a manifestation of his and his party's global outlook. In his 2004 national budget speech, made on 12 September 2003 in English, Mahathir stated,

To be able to voice our views effectively at international fora, we must be proficient in the English language. In the past, Malaysian officials have often been tasked to chair committees and lead in the drafting of communiques at international meetings, as we were proficient in English. To enable the nation to become a global player in the international arena, we must master the English language. In this regard, we have embarked on the teaching of science and mathematics in English. These are subjects of importance in this era of information technology. As

our society progresses, our language will also be enriched. No one will be interested to learn the language of the poor and backward people

(<http://www.treasury.gov.my/pdf/budget/speech/bs04.pdf> retrieved 01.January 2013).

Like in most articulations, it appears that intertextual and interdiscursive strategies were crucial in the MOI policy debates. What will legitimize a pro-English policy to a complex mix of populations is nothing else but the discourse of employability, which has immediate effects on everyone in a middle-income range economy like that of Malaysia. An employability-discourse allowed the same MP (MPGUMNO08) to leave his Malay-Muslim identity and ‘play’ the leader of the whole country. In his words,

[Text 6.25] *di sini saya lihat, tahun ini sahaja, sekarang ini ada lebih kurang 20,000 graduan kita yang tidak bekerja, manakala di India, di mana saya nyatakan sebelum ini, 600,000 graduan India dibawa ke Amerika Syarikat...*

Tr.: here I see it, this year alone, there are now approximately 20,000 graduates we have who are not working, while in India, which I mentioned earlier, 600,000 Indian graduates were brought to the United States...

The government MP provided his statistics without using any hedging devices to describe the situation. His description of the employment rate for the current year and recruitment policies elsewhere are described in terms of linguistic factuality. His use of emphatic “*sahaja*” (tr. only) in *tahun ini sahaja* (tr. this year only) would help him to grab the attention of the audience followed by his report on the success rates of other countries: *kerana tahap pemikiran dan kemampuan mereka sampai ke peringkat world class manakala kita tidak* (tr. because of their levels of thinking and their ability to reach the world-class standard which is something we do not have). The way forward, according to this MP is, to increase the rate of graduate mobility which can be done through increasing students’ ability to work in cosmopolitan workplaces. He felt,

[Text 6.26]...*mempunyai kualiti di mana mereka boleh bekerja di banyak negara. Bermakna mereka mempunyai standard yang setara dengan keperluan dunia –di mana pun mereka boleh bekerja, terutama dalam dunia globalisasi nanti akan ada mobiliti pekerja – pekerja kita mungkin bekerja di London sebagaimana tempat orang lain bekerja di sini, kita mesti ada mobiliti tersebut.*

Tr.: ...a quality has to be achieved by which they can work in [as] many countries [as possible]. Which means that they will have to have a standard which is

equivalent to the needs [set] by the world - they could work wherever, especially in a globalized world there will be labour mobility – some of our graduate employees may work in London while other people may work here, we must have to have the mobility.

[Text 6.27]...*dunia moden ini berteraskan kepada budaya pemikiran rasional. Graduan kita mesti berfikir secara rasional. Dalam membuat keputusan mesti mempunyai fakta yang cukup, membuat analisa kepada fakta itu dan kemudiannya membuat keputusan, bukan berteraskan kepada emotionalism. Kalau berteraskan kepada emotionalism, kita hanya akan membawa negara kepada tahap kehancuran.*

Tr.: ...the modern world is based on a culture of rational thinking. Our graduates must think rationally. In making the decision they must have access to sufficient facts, [be able to] make an analysis of the facts and then make a decision, [which is] not based on emotion. If based on emotion, we will only take the country to the level of destruction.

The MP's call for getting global was done centring on the needs of a specific group of people, namely the Malays, who once missed the opportunity in the 17th Century. The MP framed the proposed policy as the only possible option to rectify the mistakes from the past while the contrasting views were described by him as 'irrational' or based simply on emotional sensitivities ("emotionalism" is the word used by the MP) . This can be seen as an exemplification of what van Dijk meant when he said: 'we have Truth while they have Ideology' (van Dijk, 1993). Similar to the claim that the opposition was having recourse to emotive expressions to sensationalize the debates, another government MP (MPGUMNO12) suggested that the opposition was "trying to prevent" (*cuba menghalang*) any progressive steps being taken by the government. The opposition did so by "maintaining" the existing practices in the society (*dengan mempertahankan perkara*) in order to win the hearts of the people. In the MP's views, their "actions were wrong" (*ini pekerjaan yang mungkar*). It was the current government that realized the "essence of the struggle for national independence in its entirety," (tr. *perjuangan kemerdekaan itu secara keseluruhan*) so that Malaysia, which is currently a developing country, can be transformed into a developed Malaysia (*dia akan menjadi negara maju*, tr. this can be a developed country). Another government MP (MPGUMNO12) furthered this idea by using different terminologies. Framing his views in conditional terms, by inserting "if" (*kalau*), the MP

claimed that: “If we love our country, responsibilities fall on all of us. Whichever side we are on, we all would be considered answerable [to the nation]” (tr. *Kalau kita cintakan negara kita, tugas itu kita pikul semua. Kita yang memikul tanggungjawab ini semua*). While the MP framed the argument in terms meant for the whole nation, his follow-up arguments were meant only for the Malays.

[Text 6.28] ... *kita struggle, tetapi berapa ramaikah bumiputera yang ingin struggle, yang ingin bersusah-payah, yang begitu berusaha bersungguh-sungguh. Cuba kita lihat tenaga profesional hari ini – dari kalangan doktor, akauntan, jurutera, berapa orangkah bumiputera? Bukan kerana kita bodoh, tetapi kerana kita kurang penguasaan bahasa dan kita kurang mendapat ilmu.*

Tr.: ... we struggle, but how many *bumiputeras* are there who want to struggle, who want the hassles, [want to] work very hard? Let's look at today's professionals - the doctors, the accountants, the engineers, how many of them are *bumiputera*? Not because we are unintelligent, but because we lack the mastery of language and we receive lesser knowledge.

In the above text the government MP (MPGUMNO12) began his argument by referring to the whole nation but his talk of “struggle,” foregrounded arguments meant for a specific group of people, i.e., the Malays. The construction of utterances by hegemonizing a certain feature (here the cause of the Malays) to legitimize the larger political process (i.e., the policy formation for the whole nation) thus appears to be a common practice among government MPs. The non-Malays have been defined as more successful, measured by their enrolment rates for studying abroad. Here the MP backgrounded the controversial topic about ethnic quota system for public universities (Selvaratnam, 1988; Sing & Mukherjee, 1993). The affluent non-Malays who can afford their children to study abroad may obviously do so which has little to do with those students’ ability to communicate proficiently in English.

Manipulation of statistical evidence about the condition of a community reaches its ideological pinnacle when the term *bumiputera* (tr. sons of the soil, i.e., natives) is *abused*. While *bumiputera* includes all the indigenous groups in the country (see section 1.2.1), in his reference to the achievements of “the *bumiputera*” (tr. natives), the MP isolated “*kita bangsa Melayu*” (we the Malays),

[Text 6.29] Tr.: *di luar negara kita ada lebih daripada 90,000 pelajar bukan bumiputera; kita bangsa Melayu cuma lebih kurang 5,000).*

Tr.: outside our country there are more than 90,000 non-bumiputera students; [while] we the Malays are only about 5,000.

The contemporary reality, as constructed by the UMNO MPs above, is depicted as a Malay-centric worldview. Their main concerns were how a Malay will cope (or fail to cope) with the challenges of economic globalization. To propagate such concerns is not unlikely for these MPs as they represent a Malay-centric political party, i.e., United Malays National Organisation. The opposition party Islamist Pas also constructed a Malay-centric worldview but they have filled the content of the empty signifier of Malay identity differently. For the Islamist Pas the status of ethnicity is much lower than the religious content of Malay identity. Pas' struggle against the ruling UMNO is framed in religious terms. In Malaysia, since the Malays are Muslims, as with the Jews in Israel, the politics of ethnic and religious identity becomes quite complex. The examples cited in this chapter show that Pas support for the Malay-language policy for teaching science and mathematics was rooted in an Islamic worldview, in contrast to the outwardly nationalist-liberal Islamic worldview forwarded by the UMNO.

To see how the MPs from the Islamic PAS (in contrast to UMNO-led MPs) fight for the core of Malay identity and the nature of the historical past, an example is cited below. In the following extract the PAS MP provides a counter-hegemonic articulation of the discourse produced by the government MPs of Malay origin. MPOPAS10 states,

[Text 6.30]...*kita telah mendengar Yang Berhormat bagi Tambun telah menyebut bahawa pemimpin Islam pada masa lalu menganggap ekonomi adalah satu perkara haram. Beliau juga telah menyebut bahawa dalam dunia globalisasi sekarang pemindahan penggunaan bahasa Inggeris bagi mata pelajaran Sains dan Matematik adalah satu perkara yang perlu. Saya hairan bagaimana Yang Berhormat Tambun boleh sampai kepada konklusi bahawa pemimpin-pemimpin Islam telah mengharamkan kegiatan ekonomi. Jika kita meneliti sejarah kita akan lihat dengan mudahnya bahawa tujuan daripada kedatangan penjajah satunya ialah untuk menawan sumber-sumber ekonomi dan kewangan di negara-negara Asia Tenggara dan dengan itu pelabuhan-pelabuhan, perdagangan yang menjadi asas ekonomi dan kewangan masyarakat serantau pada waktu itu telah dirampas*

ataupun ditawan oleh mereka. Hakikat sejarah ini dengan sendirinya menafikan apa yang disebutkan oleh Tambun tadi

Tr.: ... we have heard the MP from Tambun mention that Muslim leaders in the past considered economy an illegal act [i.e. behaviour]. He also mentioned that, in the current globalized world, to introduce the use of English for Science and Mathematics is something which is necessary. I wonder how the MP of Tambun came to the conclusion that Islamic leaders had proscribed all economic activities. If we look into history, we see easily that the only purpose behind the arrival of the colonists was to capture the sources of economic and financial development in the countries of Southeast Asia and, with the ports, a trade which was the basis of regional economic and financial community at that time was confiscated or seized by them. This historical fact conflicts with the statements made by the MP from Tambun earlier.

The MP began his argument by making an intertextual reference, i.e., by referring to a previous MP's articulation. The excerpt is also an example of how the parliament is inherently a site of contestation – within an “institution of talk” (Illie, 2004) – in which claims following a party-line are contested by members of another party. In the above extract, the Pas MP presupposed an item of ‘common knowledge’ which he possibly felt was equally shared by fellow Malaysians, to the effect that the Europeans came to Malaya to build fortunes and to reap the fruits that had been cultivated by the Malaysians (see Chapter Two). The MP also produced a direct negation of the UMNO MP's claims that the Islamic leaders proscribed economic activities completely. The MP focuses on a Malay term which is a borrowing from Arabic language with Islamic connotation (i.e., ‘*haram*,’ tr. illegal, illegitimate, proscribed). *Haram* is not merely an injunction to abandon. Within an Islamic context, for a Malay-Muslim individual, it can be translated as a prohibition with religious implications. Yet the term is widely used in Malay language contexts (for instance national Malay newspapers reported a recent anti-government demonstration as *haram*: “*Bersih 4.0 pertubuhan haram – Kementerian Dalam Negeri*” tr. “Bersih 4.0 gatherings are illegal/forbidden – The Ministry of Home Affairs”). There we find an example of how the politics of translation can create confusion. When media organisations like Al Jazeera, which is watched widely by many Muslims around the world, reports that “Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has condemned the organisers of demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur calling for his resignation as “*haram*,” during his annual address on the

eve of Independence Day” (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/malaysia-pm-protest-organisers-haram-150830134644732.html> retrieved August 31, 2015), it can be accused of playing deliberately with public sentiment among the Muslim population via the (mis)translation of a term, namely “*haram*.” “Haram” is not merely “illegal,” for Muslims, it has religious connotation, and as such is rooted in the universal law of Islam than in its local rendition by a specific government.

Next, the definition of globalization has been realized differently in opposition MPs’ discourses in contrast to the discourses of pro-government MPs (Text 6.30). While the UMNO-led MPs referred to European globalization, the Pas-led opposition MPs aimed at undermining the European nature of globalization in favour of the Orient. Also, the event of globalization was discursively redefined as ‘colonization’. Both categories of MPs were giving the impression that they were simply stating facts about what had happened in the past as they denied the other’s position. According to the Pas-led MP: “This historical fact was denied in the statements made by the MP from Tambun earlier” (tr. *Hakikat sejarah ini dengan sendirinya menafikan apa yang disebutkan oleh Tambun tadi*).

In 6.30, the opposition MP’s responses to the pro-government MP’s argument on the failure of Muslim leaders at the dawn of industrial revolution is a typical example of recontextualization within an antagonistic discourse. The Pas-led MP dismissed the UMNO-led MP’s claims by establishing a counter fact (*Hakikat sejarah ini*, tr., This historical fact). This attempt at recontextualization supports Žižek’s (2006a) notion of a “parallax view” that claims that the moment we change perspectives the meanings change too. From a discourse analytical perspective what is important here is that facts about history are more like interpretations than facts per se (Jenkins, 2003). Thus, the contestations taking place between the MPs are in fact contestations of articulations produced by two politically antagonistic positions. Whatever historical ‘truths’ (or ‘facts’) were thus produced, these were, in neutral terms, merely perspectives on history, i.e., discursive ‘constructions of’ history, to use Michel Foucault’s terms, not history per se.

Once a member had established her premise based on a specific interpretation of past, she could make further use of it in her successive arguments. The opposition MP (examples 6.31-6.33), focused on the issue of the ‘oppressive state’ and certain repressive state apparatuses, e.g., the internal security act (ISA), instead of approaching the pedagogical issues in relation to the MOI policy. The MP (MPOPAS15) drew attention to the fact that,

[Text 6.31] *Perdana Menteri telah memberikan dua kali amaran kepada mana-mana pihak untuk bertindak di bawah ISA, jika mereka masih membangkitkan penentangan terhadap penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris bagi medium bagi mata pelajaran Matematik dan Sains*

Tr.: the Prime Minister has given the warning twice that he will use ISA [Internal Security Act] against any party if they still raise objections against the use of English as the medium for Mathematics and Science

This ‘threat’ is viewed by the MP as a means to thwart the voices of people. In his words,

[Text 6.32] *Ugutan ini adalah satu yang amat mendukacitakan kerana sepanjang penjajah memerintah kita walaupun mereka telah memperkenalkan penggunaan bahasa Inggeris sebagai medium di sekolah-sekolah yang dikawal oleh mereka.*

Tr.: This threat is very disappointing because even during the colonial rule the colonists introduced the use of English as the medium of instruction in those schools which were controlled by them.

MPOPAS15 continues,

[Text 6.33] *Ugutan yang sama tidak pernah diungkapkan oleh penjajah kita sendiri tetapi pada hari ini selepas kita katakanlah kita telah merdeka, pemimpin-pemimpin kita boleh mengugut anak bangsa yang telah merdeka ini untuk menahan mereka di bawah ISA semata-mata kerana kita tidak mahu menggunakan teras bahasa Inggeris sebagai medium pengajaran di sekolah-sekolah di negara kita.*

Tr.: A threat like the present one was never made by our colonial invaders, but today when we say that we are independent, our leaders can threaten an independent nation to try its people under ISA simply because we do not want to use English as the medium of instruction to teach core subjects in the schools of our country.

Instead of exploring the pros and cons of the pedagogical implications of the policy, the MP continued to attack the government for its repressive aspects while keeping his initial take on colonial history. The discussion of MOI policy itself became, in the MP’s discourse, a peripheral concern. The policy appears to serve the purpose of an

excuse to oppose the current government, an administration which, in his views, was worse than the colonial government. MPOPAS15 concludes,

[Text 6.34] *Inilah yang kita katakan kehilangan space of freedom, betapa sempitnya space of freedom yang telah dialami oleh negara kita dan ini ada kaitannya dengan kedudukan masyarakat kita untuk melahirkan generasi pemikiran kritis.*

Tr.: This is when we say that we lost the space of freedom, how small the space of freedom in our country is and it has something to do with the ability of our society for producing a generation of critical thinking.

Previously we have seen that the UMNO-led MP was lamenting the quality of education and that he also connected it with the issue of employability (see Texts 6.25 and 6.26). In the PAS-led MP's discourse the "*pemikiran kritis*" (tr. critical thinking) issue had been isolated rightly, but not with the similar framing that was given in the UMNO member's argument focusing on a science-based pro-English curriculum. "Critical thinking" according to opposition-led MPs can be achieved when the government allows "freedom of speech" to debate about various issues in the country. According to the PAS-MP (MPOPAS15),

[Text 6.35] *Kemampuan pemikiran kritis bukan datang secara otomatis dengan penggunaan bahasa Inggris, ia datang bersama dengan keadaan-keadaan sosial yang wujud bukan sahaja dalam sistem pendidikan bahkan juga dalam perjalanan negara kita.*

Tr.: The ability of critical thinking does not arise automatically with the use of English language, it comes along with social conditions which exist not only due to the system of education but also the paces we take within the journey of our country.

The thrust of the argument in the above extract is – no more centring on the MOI policy's central concerns as articulated by government MPs. A shifting of argument allowed the PAS MP to stay within his initial arguments which were to frame the issue as an identity discourse in terms of the colonial past and to link the argument to a repressive government, i.e. the one in office at the present. The lack of "critical thinking" among the students has been transformed by bringing the pedagogic issue into the heart of political contestation.

Each argument made by the ruling coalition thus has been reframed by the opposition MPs. According to the government MPs, the policy was drafted in order to ensure the production of globally competent science graduates who could share knowledge internationally in English. Meanwhile the opposition MPs touched on other issues, like to what extent a generation of English-competent students would actually be “*aset negara pada masa hadapan*” (tr. future assets of the country). And they emphasised that English as a medium of instruction does not of itself ensure the production of critical knowledge and globally competent graduates. The opposition concluded that, in the making of the policy, an overly autocratic approach had been adopted. Even the intra-coalition parties within the ruling government did not support the move, but the ruling Prime Minister insisted that the policy should be implemented.

6.2 Conclusions

This chapter has discussed the nature of parliamentary debates on a particular MOI policy in Malaysia prior to the launching of the policy. The analysis in this chapter is based on discourses produced by the members of the parliament with ethnic Malay background. The analysis shows that different discourses of identity (e.g., ethnic, local and global) and pedagogy (i.e., education in general and MOI in particular) were used in order to perspectivize and legitimize their arguments. In their significantly conversationalized discourses the MPs, through personal narratives or anecdotal evidence cross-referenced their claims by using the techniques of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in order to make their arguments appear relevant to their target audience.

The Malaysian rendition of parliamentary democracy allows MPs to produce discourses without the fear or obstacles which they might face outside the parliament. However, there are still some institutional constraints about how a bill can be discussed. When at times the debates landed in chaotic arguments, the MPs reminded each other to not to produce un-parliamentary or chauvinistic discourses. However, the members being able to speak without the fear of any legal consequences against them could construct their arguments in confrontational terms, taking this freedom to its maximum limit. In this dialectic of constraints and affordances the policy was debated and finalized in due course. In conclusion, the analysis shows that the antagonisms centring on ethnicity, nationhood and cultural identity were constantly relied on to articulate the debates on MOI policy. It is also

possible to claim the reverse, i.e. that MOI policy was an excuse to perform antagonistic discourses within a parliament located in the multi-ethnic polity of Malaysia.

Chapter Seven

Contesting MOI Policy in the Parliament: Pro-Chinese discourses

7.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the articulations of medium of instruction (MOI) debates produced by the members of the ethnic Chinese-based political parties in the parliament. The data for this chapter is available online at www.parlimen.gov.my. The analysis focuses on the debates which were carried out during the second (17-27 June 2002) and third sessions (09 September – 12 November 2002) of the fourth sitting of the 10th Parliament (1999-2003). The proposed policy was implemented in January, 2003 when the school academic year began. Similar to the question posed in the previous chapter, the current chapter asks (and provides some answers to) the question: *How do Chinese parliamentarians discursively construct the issues and arguments contained in MOI debates?*

The sub questions include:

- a. How do the individual MPs construct a text within a discourse of identity (i.e., ethnic, local and global) and pedagogy (i.e., education in general and MOI in particular) to perspectivize and legitimize their arguments?
- b. What is the role of mechanisms like intertextuality and interdiscursivity in holding the arguments together and in giving them a persuasive force?

The discourses produced by the Chinese MPs in the parliament reflected in general an ethnicity-based argument which is similar to the discourses produced by the Malay MPs, as reported in the previous chapter. While the Malay MPs attempted to make use of ethnic sentiments of the Malays to perspectivize and legitimize their particular construction of the policy, the Chinese MPs attempted to make their arguments relevant to the Chinese community. The “multi-ethnic constitution of Malaysian society,” and its “primarily” ethnicity based political parties are the main pillars of its “consociational” form of democracy (Gomez, 2007, p. 5; Sani, 2009).

The consociational form of democracy in Malaysia allows the country to carry out a constant interplay of ethnicity and nation within its socio-political spheres. The invention of the metaphor of *Bangsa Malaysia* (tr. Malaysian nation) in the 1990s can be explained as part of an official discourse to forge a national identity by acknowledging the dominant Malay hegemonic position by other ethnic communities in the country (see Chapter One of the current thesis for further discussion on various ethnicity and nationality based metaphors in Malaysia). On the other hand, the Chinese, the Indian and other ethnic groups kept on voicing out their demands through individual ethnicity-based political parties.

The ruling coalition ally, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), is explicitly an ethnicity-based political party, like the Malay-based United Malays National Organization (UMNO). The other ruling coalition ally Chinese-based Gerakan declares to be a multi-ethnic party. While, the opposition Democratic Action Party (DAP) often viewed as a “multi-ethnic opposition party” is “actually Chinese-based” (Chee-Beng, 1988, p. 141). In the 10th Malaysian Parliament, from which the data for this study has been collected, all the DAP members (10) had Chinese backgrounds. A similarity can be drawn between the nationalist Keadilan and DAP from the 10th Parliament. Keadilan, which too aspires to be an inclusive party, had five representatives in the parliament solely from Malay backgrounds. The other Malay-based Islamic opposition party, namely PAS, is ideally, not an ethnicity-based political party. It is the religion of Islam that determines the discourses of inclusion and exclusion within the party discourse.

7.1 The context of the debate and the position of the Chinese MPs on MOI policy

The position of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and Gerakan on the proposed MOI policy, were in line with the ruling coalition *Barisan*-led government. The MPs (n=27) from MCA and Gerakan (n=06) did not question the policy, unlike the MPs from the Chinese-based opposition party DAP (n=10). Historically, MCA and Gerakan had always worked closely with the ruling UMNO for the purposes of drafting national policies (Chin, 2006; Heng, 1996; Wang, 1970). However, on the issues of language and education policies, MCA and Gerakan, in line with DAP, also consulted with Chinese rights groups like Dong Jiao Zhong (Collins, 2006). It appears that similar to the Malay political parties in the parliament among the Chinese political parties, there too were both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces to argue about the proposed MOI policy.

7.1.1 The position of the ruling coalition parties on MOI policy

MCA and Gerakan background MPs in the parliament did not participate intensely in the debate unlike the DAP MPs who spent ample time to produce a critique of the policy. Both the ruling coalition parties endorsed the government position almost entirely. However, while they did not participate in the debate, they ensured that the policy would be executed in such a way that the Chinese community would be able to succeed under the new conditions. An MP from MCA (MPGMCA03), when his turn came to reflect on the policy, stated that

[Text 7.01] *saya ingin mengambil peluang ini untuk menyokong pihak kerajaan kerana dapat mengadakan program peningkatan bahasa Inggeris kerana ini adalah normal trend.*

Tr.: I would like to take this opportunity to support the government to be able to provide the English language enhancement programs for English as this is a normal trend.

In his discourse, the MP used what Fairclough described as the construction of “common-sense in the service of power” (2001, p. 64). The MP in his framing for the adoption of the policy claimed explicitly that “this is the normal trend” (*kerana ini adalah normal trend*). “Whether we like it or not” (*Mahu tidak mahu*) he claimed, “the reality” (*hakikat*) needs to be greeted by us (“*kita perlu menerima*”). In his view, “every Malaysian citizen must work together with the government bodies” (*seluruh rakyat Malaysia mesti bekerjasama dengan pihak kerajaan*) so that the policy for increasing the level of English in the country is achieved. The steps taken need to be accomplished, since these steps reflect those priorities outlined by “globalisation and liberalisation of our time” (*globalisasi dan liberalisasi pada masa kini*).

The MP in his articulation of the policy constructed “English,” “globalisation” and “liberation” as part of an inevitable “reality” or a “fact” (*hakikat*) of the contemporary era. For Fairclough (2001), when ideas are put explicitly in a text, the interpretation of the words may still depend on listeners’/ readers’ “implicit assumptions” about those ideas. Due to the interplay of ideology and common-sense, different signifiers appear with different meanings to different individuals. The MP’s framing of the policy left a number of “clues” or “traces” about contemporary Malaysia. The MP appeared to suggest that

English initiates us in the process of globalization and liberalization of 'self.' But for another individual globalization might be defined as cultural interference and liberalization as the demise of collective identity, or a threat to a communitarian identity – a frame we encountered in the previous chapter, utilized by Malay background MPs.

By activating their ideological and/ or “subject” positions (Fairclough, 2001) the target audience will make sense of the intended meaning of an articulation. According to Linell (1998), meaning-making in this type of complex situation becomes possible also because of the speakers’/ listeners’ ability to recontextualize or reframe following Goffman. For Linell, recontextualization “involves transformations of meanings and meaning potentials,” which “never” is, “a pure transfer of a fixed meaning” (Linell, 1998, p. 145). Therefore, we find different constructions by different individuals regarding the same topic.

The overall position of MCA can be found in the articulation of another MP who made this observation towards the end of the parliamentary session in June (17-27 June 2002). MPGMCA02 stated that

[Text 7.02] *Kita dua minggu ini telah melihat rakan kita daripada pembangkang mengemukakan idea-idea yang menunjukkan mereka ini tidak yakin tentang peralihan kita daripada bahasa Melayu kepada bahasa Inggeris dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran Matematik dan Sains.*

Tr.: For two weeks now we have seen our friends from the opposition put forward ideas that showed they were not sure about our transition from Malay to English in the teaching and learning of mathematics and science.

For this particular member from MCA, the opposition’s stand has been reduced to a state of anxiety which is typical during a moment of transition. The opposition “are not sure” (“*tidak yakin*”) about how the transition from Malay to English was going to take place. This happened, according to the MPGMCA02, since the opposition did not follow history. He reminded the opposition that a similar transition took place earlier in the country. The MP stated that it was during the 1970s when the nation transformed its education system from English to the national language, i.e., Malay. When the British left in 1957, it was decided that the country would use the existing English language for the next 10 years only (Brown, 2007). Malaysian schools converted gradually from an English to a Malay medium of instruction. And by 1982, the transformation was complete (Guan, 2007). MPGMCA02 stated that

[Text 7.03] *Sebenarnya apabila dalam tahun 70-an kita beralih daripada Inggeris kepada Matematik, kita telah menghantar guru-guru kita yang mengajar Matematik dan Sains dan oleh kerana mereka ini orang yang bijak dan dalam pengajaran Sains dan Matematik istilah-istilah itu tidaklah begitu banyak. Jadi peralihan ini dapat kita buat dengan secara yang halus dan cara yang berkesan.*

Tr.: In fact when in the 1970s we switched from English [to Malay] for mathematics, we sent our teachers who taught mathematics and sciences and since they were the best in teaching of mathematics and science, the terminologies were not much of a problem. So if the current changes take place, we can also make this transition in a smooth and an efficient way.

In contrast to the MCA leadership, the secretary general of the National Union of the Teaching Profession, Siva Subramaniam in an interview with the press mentioned that the policy move “will definitely be a challenge.” Subramaniam emphasized that “It took us more than 10 years to switch from English to Malay. We are now switching back for these two subjects in six months” (Lau, 2002, n.p.).

While DAP MPs in their criticism of the government policies constructed their discourses around the so-called ‘essence’ of Chinese identity by linking them with the discourses of pedagogy, ethnicity and so on (we will find below), the MCA-led MP drew a positive conclusion about the policy by focusing on transition and logistic support. Also, the MPs from MCA situated their discourse within the discourses of economic globalization and liberalization, similar to the members from UMNO in the previous chapter. However, liberalization can also be meant solely for economic globalization in certain discourses.

The reference to liberalization made by the Chinese pro-government MPs (similar to the Malay pro-government MPs) may appear innocent to many as liberalization has been defined as an opportunity for individuals to open their minds to the rest of the world (cf. *minda mereka akan lebih terbuka*, tr. “they will be more open-minded” or “their minds will [suddenly] be more open” an observation made by MPOKD06 in the previous chapter).

One might prefer to read any reference to liberalization cautiously after Harvey (2005), who, in his analysis of neoliberal economy, explained this phenomenon as “the financialization of everything” including “daily life” (Harvey, 2005, p. 33). A longer definition would help to illustrate how such liberalization may affect individuals within a society. According to Harvey (2005), the liberalization project is suited to the “ideological

task” of occupying the “ideals of individual freedom” (p. 42). And such a freedom could be

backed up by a practical strategy that emphasized the liberty of consumer choice, not only with respect to particular products but also with respect to lifestyles, modes of expression, and a wide range of cultural practices (Harvey, 2005, p, 42).

Another crucial dimension of liberalization discourse is that it has become “a mode of discourse” (Harvey, p. 3). In company with ‘economic globalization,’ the reference to ‘opening up,’ ‘liberal way of thinking,’ and ‘speaking English fluently’ may appear to have similar connotation of financialization of daily life.

As an ally of the ruling coalition, MCA perhaps tried their best to find a middle path between the position taken by the government and the spirit of Chinese education framed by the Chinese media and various rights group (e.g., Dong Jiao Zhong) in the country (Pereira, 2002, Moses et al., 2014). Working within such constraints, MCA probably felt it wise to limit their arguments to the discussion of increasing the number of hours for both Mandarin and English in the schools (Lim & Presmeg, 2011) besides talking about logistic and transition of the processes involved.

7.1.2 The discourse of the Chinese opposition: A counter-hegemonic position

The Chinese opposition DAP had taken a stronger position than the government ally MCA. DAP’s arguments, as we will see below, reflected to a large extent on the discourses produced by the Malay-based opposition parties, namely PAS and Keadilan (as detailed in the previous chapter). Similar to the two Malay-based opposition parties, DAP also aimed at establishing their party as a better choice to represent the respective ethnic causes more insightfully than their counterparts in the ruling coalition.

The following sections (7.1.2.1 – 7.1.2.3) of the current chapter will analyse the discourses produced by the Chinese opposition MPs in the parliament. To iterate, the ruling coalition Chinese political party MCA supported the position of the government MPs in the parliament.

7.1.2.1 Discourses of morality, mother-tongue education and teaching-learning environment

The opposition's discussion on the policy began with a DAP-led MP's (MPODAP01) question to the Minister of Education. The MP wanted the Minister to explain or clarify (*menjelaskan*) the rationale behind drafting the policy for teaching mathematics and science in English. This question, posed during the June-session, was one of the first mentioned on the policy by a Chinese opposition MP in the parliament.

The opposition-led MP was referring to national-type Chinese medium schools where Mandarin is the medium of instruction. As a member of Chinese-based political party he was concerned about the fate of the Chinese medium schools, not the Malay-medium schools. Her question however was answered by, not the Minister himself, but, by the Secretary from the Ministry of Education.

The Secretary, who happens to be an MP from the ruling UMNO (in this study he has been identified as Secretary), responded by echoing the general position of Malay nationalist MPs from the ruling UMNO (see Chapter Six). The Secretary responded by saying that the policy was drafted with the aim to “increase the state of knowledge within the fields of mathematics and science,” and “also the level of mastery of English language among the students” (*untuk meningkatkan penguasaan ilmu dalam bidang-bidang ini dan juga penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar*).

The use of “also” (*juga*) in the above utterance need to be studied carefully. The members of the opposition, in general, criticized the position that the proposed policy could handle the two promises simultaneously, i.e., to elevate the standard of English and to ensure retaining quality in teaching the two subjects. Outside the parliament the Chairman of DAP, Lim Kit Siang, was also vocal against the policy. The veteran DAP leader lost his seat in the 10th General Elections but was elected the chairman of the party in 1999. In his blog he reflected on the cabinet decision on the MOI policy since May 2002. He voiced his worries about the government not being able to deliver the two promises made. Lim felt that the policy, when implemented, will lower the current level of achievements in national examinations attended by the students from Chinese schools (Lim, 2009).

Echoing the concerns voiced by the chairman of DAP, the members of the opposition in the parliament kept on criticizing the position of the government. The members criticized the position by citing studies on “mother-tongue” (*bahasa ibunda*) education. In his words, MPODAP02 suggested that the Chinese community's claims about mother-tongue

education was based on “studies and research” (*kajian dan penyelidikan*) which supported the claims that “mother-tongue education is the most effective medium of instruction when it is introduced during the early stages of education” (*bahasa ibunda merupakan bahasa pengantar yang paling berkesan dari peringkat awal*).

Apart from making the promise that the policy will improve the teaching and learning of these school-subjects, the Secretary, also referred to the signifiers of globalization, international trade, and the ethnic signifier, *bumiputera* (i.e., Malays and other indigenous population) to perspectivize and to legitimize his arguments. The Malay-background MP ensured that the proposed policy would benefit everyone, both the *bumiputera* and the non-*bumiputera*. The MP had to state explicitly that “nobody should misunderstand the Ministry of Education in this regard” (*Jangan salah faham Kementerian Pendidikan di sini*) in this regard.

The reference to *bumiputera* in the parliament can be seen as an attempt to distinguish the Malays from the Chinese and the Indians in the country, as the constitution defines the two latter groups as non-*bumiputera* (see sections 1.2.1, Chapter One and 2.3, Chapter Two for more discussions on these ethnic categories). We have seen examples in the previous chapter (Text 6.28 & 6.29) produced by the members from UMNO that a reference to *bumiputera* can be made to dissociate them from non-*bumiputera*. Other *bumiputera*, even the ones with a bigger population, like Ibans and Kadazans from East Malaysia are usually categorized as “others” in the census reports of the country (Holst, 2012, p. 33). Hence, when the Malay background MPs referred to *bumiputera*, they perhaps did this to underline that the Malays have a privileged status ensured by the country’s constitution. This can be an example of synecdoche within figures of speech through which a part is used to suggest the whole; here the Malays inhabit the whole content of *bumiputera*.

Upon listening to the Secretary’s responses to her question on the rationale behind the adoption of the policy, the DAP-led MP felt that her question was not answered properly. The Secretary “did not answer my questions about the studies or research those that were taken into account” (*tetapi tidak menjawab kepada soalan saya berdasarkan kajian ataupun penyediaan apa*), MPODAP01 commented. The accusation that the Secretary did not respond to her question had to be defended by the Secretary. It was necessary for the Secretary to establish his credibility in the House, as he was an authority nominated by the Ministry of Education to respond to the members’ questions from the floor. The Secretary had to shift between his identity of an MP from the ruling UMNO to his role as a state

functionary in this context. The Secretary claimed that the question asked by the MP from the opposition was answered, however “*it is up to the honourable member...whether or not to welcome the answer*” (*Itu terpulanglah kepada Yang Berhormat...terima atau tidak*).

The stand that a question had been asked but was not answered properly has significance within a context which is ideologically driven, i.e., a parliament. “Evasion” has been viewed as a matter of concern in parliamentary discourse (Rasiah, 2010). Government functionaries (like the mouthpiece of the Ministry of Education here), as information providers, are responsible for answering questions from the floor. But they may choose to foreground certain aspect of a question by backgrounding others. The dissatisfaction of the opposition-led member was perhaps caused by the Secretary’s strategy of backgrounding and foregrounding of information. Certain aspects of education, in a broad or general way, were highlighted within the responses produced. But the specific aspects of the MP’s question were not attended to. Hence, MPODAP01 asked a follow-up question about logistic and infrastructural supports. In her words,

[Text 7.04] *adakah kementerian akan menetapkan guru yang akan mengajar Matematik dan Sains dalam bahasa Inggeris juga akan faham bahasa ibunda pelajarannya. Dalam perkataan yang lain gurunya mesti dwi bahasa. Adakah ini menjadi satu ketetapan?*

Tr.: Is the Ministry going to assign teachers [who] will also comprehend the mother tongue of the students while teaching Mathematics and Science in English? In other words, the teacher must be bilingual. Is there going to be a resolution on this issue?

The reference made to bilingualism implies that a teacher posted in a Chinese school is required to be able to work proficiently both in Mandarin and in English (*dwi Bahasa*, tr. two languages). This ability to use both the languages skilfully bolstered by the use of a modal verb, “*mesti*” (must), suggests that unless the teachers are well-versed in the two languages, they should not be allowed by the Ministry to teach in Chinese schools. The use of “*mesti*” serves the ideological purpose of exclusion of non-Chinese speakers ensured by official measures.

The MP when suggested that non-Chinese-speaking teachers should be barred from teaching in Chinese schools, her worries were probably due to the thought whether those teachers can disseminate the content-matters adequately, if the students are unable to understand the medium of instruction in English. It is perhaps the same question that the

chairman of DAP asked on 28th July 2002 in his blog (written in English) by making it more specific,

...can Musa [the Minister of Education]...or the MCA Deputy Education Minister, Datuk Hon Choon Kam guarantee that the high standards of mathematics of Chinese primary school pupils – achieving over 90% passes in UPSR [national exam] – will not plunge to around 75% after the switch of medium of instruction” (Lim, 2009, p. 15).

MPODAP01 also suggested that to understand the contents of science and mathematics is more essential than to understand a foreign language. The proficiency in a foreign language can be achieved in later life once the foundation in their mother-tongue is solid. Also that when the children are taught in their mother-tongue they can master the content better. These arguments by DAP were also found within the moth-tongue position forwarded by the Malay-based opposition MPs in the previous chapter.

To note, since parliament, is a “site of discussion, of debate” and also “site of a struggle over meaning,” discourses produced there are potentially “confrontational” in nature (Bayley, 2004, p. 12). However, when they attempt to avoid the confrontational aspects of a question asked, they can do so by focusing on other issues within the question, so that they can hegemonize the content of the debate. We encounter a constant play of backgrounding and foregrounding as crucial argumentative features within Malaysian parliamentary discourse. The interaction shows, how, by diverting the MP’s framing of accusation to a framing of technology and globalization, the Secretary attempted to legitimize his take on the debate.

In order to counter the Chinese opposition’s ‘fear’ of the absence of quality-education, the Secretary brought in the signifier of technology:

[Text 7.05] *Dalam hal ini, kita mesti faham, sekarang adalah dunia digital, segala-segalanya digital. Sekarang instruction di sekolah, kalau kita lihat dengan pengenalan sekolah bestari dengan pengenalan makmal komputer, saya rasa ini dapat dicapai.*

Tr.: Within this case, we must understand that now we are in a digital world, everything is digitalized. Now instruction in schools, if we see the introduction of smart schools with computer labs introduction, I think this can be achieved.

Next, the Secretary listed a number of countries to claim that they had changed their attitude to English. He began his list by citing the case of China. It is possible that since he is responding to a Chinese background MP, he felt it proper to start with China. The other countries mentioned were Japan, Thailand, and Indonesia in the region. Europe too was mentioned, as a continent. All these countries, he claimed, recently changed their policies to accommodate English. Outside the parliament we hear the Premier Mahathir saying: “Everyone is learning English. I am sure Frenchmen do not like it but they are learning it too” (Lau, 2002, n.p.). Amidst these play of intertextuality and voicing, the opposition MP’s reference to bilingual education in Chinese school appears to have lost its legitimacy. The Secretary circumvented the specific concerns of bilingualism raised by MPODAP01 in relation to Chinese schools. The Secretary continued,

[Text 7.06] *Kita harus terima dan pasti untuk mahu melahirkan generasi abad ke-21. Yang Berhormat saya minta ...ini kepada abad ke-21, kita bukan lagi abad 20, oleh yang demikian kita harus sediakan generasi kita ini, generasi digital ini untuk memahami bukan sahaja bilingual malah kita bercakap trilingual, kita bercakap juga multilingual.*

Tr.: We must accept and be certain about willing to create a generation ready for the 21st Century. The honorable member, I plead...this is the 21st century, we no longer are living in the 20th century, therefore, we must prepare our generation, this digital generation to understand [to] not only [be] bilingual but also trilingual, we need to speak about being multilingual.

By using emotive expressions to interpellate the audience in the discourse of technology, science and discovery, some of the buzzwords of the 21st Century, the Secretary undermined the specific case of being bilingual in the context of a Chinese school. He foregrounded the content of globalization, technologization and digitalization, some of the “planetary vulgates” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2001) of the contemporary world to downplay the specific case of bilingualism defined in the discourse of the member of the opposition. In his discourse it has been reframed as an abstract case of becoming bi- or trilingual within a globalized world. In a discursive context like this the MP from the opposition had to accommodate the Secretary’s line of argument. But MPODAP01 used this opportunity to continue her argument,

[Text 7:07] *Saya juga menyokong bahawa kita perlu meningkatkan penguatkuasaan bahasa Inggeris tetapi saya risau dengan pelaksanaannya kerana dengan mengajar atau menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa pengantar untuk Matematik dan Sains, saya risau kita tidak akan mencapai tujuan kita yang hendak meningkatkan penguatkuasaan bahasa Inggeris dan juga dalam mendapatkan ilmu Sains dan Matematik kerana bahasa Inggeris itu merupakan satu bahasa yang bukan senang dikuasai khasnya kepada pelajar kita yang tidak pernah dikemukakan kepada keadaan ataupun tidak pernah belajar bahasa Inggeris terlebih dahulu.*

Tr.: I also support that we need to improve the enforcement of the English language, but I worry about the implementation of the teaching or the use of English as the language of instruction for Mathematics and Science, I worry that we won't achieve our goal, which is, to improve the enforcement of the English language and also to acquire knowledge in Science and Mathematics, because it is a language that is not easy to master , especially for our students, who, never experienced such teachings neither had they ever studied [much] English, especially, in the past.

In the above example, the member from DAP constructed an argument by re-framing the issue through a reference to the plights of the students. According to the MP, these students had never taken instructions in English. Neither had they studied the language adequately “in the past.” The MP used “*tidak pernah*” (tr. never) to explain the use of English in Malaysia. MPODAP01, presumably, referred to the number of teaching-learning hours allocated for English in schools (see Pandian, 2002, for a discussion on teaching-learning hours for English in Malaysia before the policy, and Gill, 2007, after the implementation of the policy). To empathise with the students the MP used terms like “*bukan senang*” (not so easy) to define English. We have seen in Chapter Six that the Malay-opposition MPs too had made claims that it is necessary to ensure that the students are receiving their instruction through an “easy” language (see Text 6.01 in Chapter Six).

To resist the policy MPODAP01 used both the frames of ‘English is a difficult language’ and ‘the position of English as a global language,’ whenever necessary. The later frame however is ideologically permeated with a position which van Dijk (1993) in his analysis of European parliamentary discourses, defined as, moments of “apparent concession” to counter the position of the political Other. The opposition MP in the following example

constructed a position which can be described as ‘we accept the reality but...’ style of argumentation.

[Text 7.08] *Saya pun faham kita kesuntukan masa kerana kita ingin supaya pelajar-pelajar dapat menguasai bahasa Inggeris dalam persaingan global ini, tetapi kita perlu menjalankan polisi dasar ini dengan baik supaya nanti kita tidak akan mencapai peningkatan penguatkuasaan bahasa Inggeris dan juga penguatkuasaan Matematik dan Sains juga tidak akan tercapai, kedua-duanya nanti tidak akan tercapai. Jadi saya menyeru supaya kerajaan berfikir dengan lebih mendalam dalam perkara ini, tetapi saya sokong dan pihak DAP memang sokong kita perlu mempelajari bahasa Inggeris.*

Tr.: I also understand that we're running out of time because we want to ensure that students can strengthen their knowledge of English language during this era of global competition, but we need to run this national policy better so that later we [fail] to achieve the enforcement of English language and also mathematics and science, both not achieved. So I urge the government to think more deeply regarding this matter, but I support and on the DAP-side everyone supports the [idea] that we'll have to learn English.

To counter the government's discourses on globalization, digitalization and the challenges of the 21st Century made above, another MP from DAP (MPODAP02) argued that

[Text 7.09] *dalam era globalisasi ini satu cabaran yang utama yang dihadapi oleh negara kita ialah sama ada kita boleh mengeluarkan graduates yang berupaya untuk bersaing dan untuk meningkatkan keupayaan graduates kita, kita boleh tinjau daripada prestasi mereka terutama sekali dalam subjek Matematik dan juga Sains.*

Tr.: in this era of globalization one of the major challenges faced by our country is whether we can produce graduates who are able to compete and to improve the ability of our graduates, we can review their performance, especially in mathematics and science related subjects.

MPODAP02 acknowledged the needs for preparing the country to face the challenges of the 21st Century. However, he was doubtful about the government's initiatives to invest financial resources to build infrastructure for implementing the new

policy. To the questions posed by MPODAP01 earlier, on the logistic and infrastructural issues, the Secretary gave a long list of steps taken by the Ministry of Education for implementing the policy. The steps included training of existing and new teachers, buying of equipment and expenses for quality control measures. The country's Prime Minister Mahathir confirmed during his National Budget 2003 speech (delivered on 23 September 2002) that 5 billion Malaysian Ringgit (US\$2 billion approx.) will be spent for a period of 07 years from 2003 to 2008 to implement the policy.

MPODAP02 referred to a report published by the international *Time Magazine* to state that Malaysia has spent most of its GDP on education, but wondered, why the nation still stood behind many countries in the region. In his words,

[Text 7.10] *Kalau kita lihat dari segi peraturan GDP yang dibelanjakan, Malaysia di dalam Asia paling tinggi - 4.5% ...tetapi dalam prestasi higher achievers...kita kalah kepada banyak negara lain seperti dalam subjek Matematik, kita kalah kepada Singapura, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong dan Jepun dan dalam subjek Sains, kita kalah kepada negara Taiwan, Singapura, Jepun, Korea, Hong Kong.*

Tr.: If we see it in terms of spending of GDP, Malaysia [stands] at the highest in Asia with 4.5 % ...but in terms of performance of high achievers...we lost to many countries, in mathematics, we lost for instance to Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and to Japan and in science-based subjects, we lost to Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, Korea, and to Hong Kong.

The MP made the point that since the government was not ready to face the “challenges of globalization” (“*cabaran era globalisasi*”), they had been spending money with no suitable plans. By suggesting that there is a difference between the acquisition of “knowledge” in contrast to learning of mere “facts,” the MP asked the floor to consider a pragmatic path so that the Malaysian graduates can “*respond to a situation dengan cepat*” (tr. respond to a situation swiftly).

In the above example at 7.10, the MP code-switched a few times. It cannot be ascertained straightaway whether his use of English-phrases, which occurred a few times in his speech, was a deliberate act to show his bilingual-ness as the House was debating on it. It is the same MP who also threw an idiom in Chinese to explain the current debate. The Chinese MPs in the parliament are in general tri- or multilinguals, speaking Malay, English and Mandarin or one or two other Chinese dialects.

To conclude this section, the Chinese background MPs in the parliament invented their lines of argument on MOI policy which was a combination of their ethnic sentiment and endogenous pedagogical concerns. The reference made to these sentiments reveals that how a specific MOI policy debate need to invoke certain signifiers in order to establish a solidarity between the community and the political entities (i.e., the MPs) involved in negotiating for their rights within a multilingual and multiethnic polity.

7.1.2.2 Discourse of “inefficiency”: A criticism of the ruling coalition

Within the articulation of the discourses of logistic and infrastructural supports, the government’s inability to handle the issue had already been implied. Some of the accusations were made by referring to the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad’s approaches to handle the policy. The opposition wondered why the government proposed a new policy when Mahathir Mohamad was about to leave his position as a PM, is it due to the reason that the Premier was in a hurry? According to MPODAP03,

[Text 7.11] *Ini bermakna bahawa kita memang perlu ubah dan bukan ubah sahaja tetapi perlu `berubah dengan cepat maka saya berharap bahawa semua rakyat boleh menerima nasihat yang telah dikeluarkan oleh Yang Amat Berhormat Perdana Menteri kita yang telah mengatakan bahawa semua rakyat harus bersedia untuk bersaing terutama sekali kaum bumiputera.*

Tr.: This means that we do need to change and not only change but must change quickly, so I hope that all people can welcome advice issued by the Honorable Prime Minister who has been saying that all people should be ready to compete, especially the *bumiputera* community.

The phrase “*terutama sekali kaum bumiputera*” (especially the *bumiputera* community) is aimed at criticising the Malays. The opposition MP felt that the Prime Minister, as the President of UMNO, fought only for the rights of the *bumiputera* i.e., the Malays, and not for all the communities in the country. The Premier proposed the policy for the betterment of the Malays only. An aspect of discourse relevant to be mentioned here is that not only the MPs from UMNO who used the term *bumiputera* to signify the Malays, the members of the opposition too used the term to define the Malays.

The member MPODAP03, used the register of humour to criticise the policy, as if, the feature of seriousness in the discourse can be deemed as an act of severe criticism. To

suggest that the 22-year rule of Mahathir Mohamad was too long, the member of the opposition stated that Mahathir was “physically and emotionally exhausted” (the MP used the phrase in English). Hence it is “timely” that he resigns. Through a satire about the long-ruling Premiere, the MP stated that

[Text 7.12] *Maka adalah adil kepada beliau kalau kita biar beliau melepaskan jawatannya. Oleh kerana seorang telah sampai ke tahap itu, kita masih memaksa beliau untuk berkhidmat kepada negara adalah tidak adil kepada beliau dan juga tidak adil kepada parti UMNO dan juga kepada negara.*

Tr.: It is unfair to him if we do not let him resign. As one has come to that stage, [and] we still force him to serve the country, it is unfair to him, it is unfair to UMNO and also to the nation.

When a member from the opposition puts what the Prime Minister should be doing that “*It is unfair to him if we do not let him resign*” can be read as a satire. Once stated in a satirical way, the member of the opposition could leave that style of rhetoric away in order to use a more serious note to depict a comparison between the political culture of UMNO and DAP. The MP compares the political culture of DAP with the ones practised within European democracies,

[Text 7.13] *Nasib baik kebudayaan DAP adalah seperti kebudayaan yang wujud di negara Eropah di mana seorang yang telah berundur boleh diterima balik oleh parti kita. Hari ini saya pula menjadi Ahli Parlimen di sebalik DAP. Jadi saya rasa kalau itu betul-betul sebabnya, apa sebabnya pun, kalau dia betul-betul sampai ke tahap itu, it's only fair to him, let him go.*

Tr.: Luckily DAP culture is like culture that exists in the European countries in which a person who has retreated is accepted for a return by our party. Today I will be behind the DAP MPs. So I guess if that's exactly why, no matter what the reason is, if he really gets to that stage, it's only fair to him, let him go.

Once the UMNO supreme leader has been depicted as overstayed in office and served his political position, the political party he leads could also be accused of not practising democracy in its “European” (hence implying standard) tradition. The MP turned his focus next to depict how the political discourse of UMNO was grounded in communitarian beliefs.

[Text 7.14] *satu perkara yang kita harus sedar bahawa apabila kita kata kita hendak mengeluarkan graduates yang berupaya untuk bersaing, kita harus sedar bahawa bukan bersaing di antara – persaingan tidak harus dilihat dari segi persaingan di antara bumiputera dengan bukan bumiputera. Hari ini kita harus bersaing dengan dunia dan saya memang berharap semua ahli politik boleh faham ini dan jangan kita selalu mempolitikkan isu.*

Tr.: one thing we have to realize that when we say we want to produce graduates who are able to compete, we have to realize that the competition should not be seen in terms of competition between *bumiputera* and non-*bumiputera*. Today we have to compete with the world and I really hope that all politicians can understand this and not politicize the issue always.

The politicization and ethnicization of education were credited solely to UMNO while the Chinese rights group Dong Jiao Zhong's arguments had been explained as reflecting the desires of the Chinese community. Chinese rights groups like DJZ and Suqiu often proposed the ruling UMNO to stop distinguishing between *bumiputra* and non-*bumiputra* population including a call to review Malay special rights ensured by the country's constitution (Tan, 2000). The two types (i.e., Malays and non-Malays) of ethnicization of politics can be explained by what van Dijk (1993) defined as the discourse of "they" have ideology and "we" have "truth" (for more discussion on the ethnicization of the policy, see section 7.1.4).

To explain in detail the lack of efficiency practiced by the government, MPODAP03 referred to an email exchange between him and the Minister of Education to frame his arguments. The MP shared the Minister's answer to the email with the House,

[Text 7.15] *kerana Matematik dan Sains adalah bidang ilmu yang sangat dinamik maka pengabaian terhadap kedua-dua subjek tersebut bererti dengan deprive them of the basic education. Handicap them for life dan keadaan ini pasti merugikan negara yang amat bergantung kepada rakyat yang berilmu dan berbakat.*

Tr.: The reason that mathematics and science are very dynamic (*sangat dinamik*) fields of studies, negligence of these two subjects would mean to deprive them [i.e., the school children] of their basic education. To handicap theme for life and this surely will weaken (*merugikan*) the country that depends heavily on the citizen who are knowledgeable and talented.

The member of the opposition used the Minister's words in verbatim to develop his arguments. He queried, "Does this mean that the government has ignored all these years, [and], has deprived the people [from receiving] basic education?" (tr. *adakah ini bermakna bahawa selama ini kerajaan telah mengabaikan, telah deprive the people from the basic education?*). He interpreted the Minister's responses as a manifestation of "till now the government did not create the right policies" (*kerajaan tidak membuat dasar yang betul sehingga telah*) and in his view this was how they "deprived the Malaysians." The DAP-led MP used the voice of the Minister of Education to echo the claim that mathematics and science are two "dynamic" fields of studies. But that is not the sole point the member of the opposition was aiming at constructing. He used the reference to imply that the government has 'failed' its citizens as the decisions taken were done in haste and without much research. In the previous chapter we have seen an MP from the Malay opposition (MPOKD06) to use a similar strategy of voicing the Prime Minister's concerns to claim that the government authorities were unable to keep their promises to ensure the dignity of the national language.

In Text 7.15 the member from the opposition criticized the Minister and the policy by taking a pedagogical line. The MP examined, critically, the studies on bilingualism cited by the Education Minister. MPODAP03 here in the manner of a pedagogy scholar discussed the reliability and validity of those studies in the context of Malaysia. The case studies cited by the Minister, the MP claimed, were carried out in countries like Greece and Mexico, and as such, "not relevant" to Malaysia. The accusations were mounted strong by claiming that the Minister of Education was not only unable to understand the real needs of the country, the research studies cited were also "incorrect" context-wise. By referring to those studies "a wrong impression" (*satu gambaran yang salah*) was established which was that "the only way to excel in mathematics and science is to study the two subjects in English from Standard One" (*satu-satunya cara untuk mencapai kecemerlangan dalam Matematik dan Sains adalah dengan mempelajari kedua-dua mata pelajaran itu dalam bahasa Inggeris dari Darjah Satu*)

Through a series of comments, this particular member from the opposition questioned the credibility of the Minister (and that of the entire Ministry of Education) to be able to propose a new MOI policy in the country. In his words, "if I gave this answer to academics, they would laugh about this [as] it is not a reasonable answer" (tr. *Jadi, saya kata kalau saya memberikan jawapan ini kepada ahli akademik, mereka akan ketawa*

bahawa ini bukan jawapan yang munasabah). The use of evaluative terms reaches its zenith as the MP suggests that the Education Minister's examples were "extremely bad" (*teruk*). *Teruk* in Malay could also be read as "ridiculous," in a context like this.

By referring to the bilingual studies, the MP asked, "how could the government use this theory to convince people, I do not understand" (*bagaimana kerajaan boleh menggunakan teori ini untuk meyakinkan rakyat, saya pun tidak faham*). In his argument, the MP used a string of associative words to imply that the Minister's position was almost 'unacceptable.' Without labelling the Minister, and the government explicitly in derogatory terms, the MP framed it as a question of common-sense knowledge by asking "how could the government use this theory" (*bagaimana kerajaan boleh menggunakan teori ini...*).

According to MPODAP03 the government was working against the will of the *rakyat* (citizens). They went ahead with a new policy without consulting the component political parties in their coalition. Similar type of accusation has been made by a Pas-led MP to claim that the members from UMNO were going ahead alone to implement the proposed MOI policy. The Malay opposition claimed that UMNO could exert such power as they were authorized by the country's 'authoritarian' Prime Minister (see Text 6.31, Chapter Six).

MPODAP03 believed that the government was experiencing difficulties for not being able to implement the new policy and "it is so obvious" (*yang begitu jelas sekali*). For the member of the Chinese opposition, "this is because the component parties of the Barisan Nasional themselves are not willing to provide support" (*kerana komponen-komponen parti daripada Barisan Nasional sendiri yang tidak sanggup memberikan sokongan*). The ruling coalition component parties, were the Indian and the Chinese-based political parties, namely, MIC and MCA.

The political leaders of the ethnic-based ruling alliance in Malaysia have historically fought to preserve and to perpetuate their ethnic identities including the maintenance and perpetuation of the different language stream schools (i.e., Malay, Chinese and Tamil medium schools). On the issue of current MOI policy both MCA and MIC supported the position of the government from the very outset.

It was felt that the Malay and the Chinese political parties aligned differently based on whether they supported the ruling coalition or the opposition in the parliament. They

responded to different chains of “equivalence” and “difference” to build their respective “symbolic” alliances (Laclau, 2005).

This section shows that the Chinese MPs produced a counter-hegemonic discourse to fight the Malay-dominated construction of the policy debates. The MPs foregrounded that Malaysia is a plural country; following this, their educational aspirations must too include Chinese-ness as it is fair for the Malay MPs to emphasize a Malay-ness within the same plural polity. As the opposition produced a criticism of the ruling coalition’s treatment of the MOI policy, they underlined the government’s inability to manage an inclusive language policy within a plural nation. The opposition-led MPs also argued that even the ruling coalition itself was divided on the issue of the implementation of the policy. In the absence of a proper plan, the government, according to the opposition, was exercising their coercive power to seal the deal.

7.1.2.3 On Chinese ethnic identity

A discourse inundated with the sentiment of pre-independence national colonial struggle, framed in ethnicity-based arguments, was absent within the MOI debates constructed by DAP. Such a construction was found to be widespread within the discourses produced by the members of the Malay-based opposition parties. Construction of identity through *Tanah Melayu* (tr. Malay land) or slogans like “*Bahasa jiwa bangsa*” (tr. Language is the soul of the nation) were historically Malay prerogatives in the land of Malaya. The Malayan Chinese could not draw resources from a common struggle against the colonial regime. Another associated problem was the Anglo-Malay warm relationship during the 1940s. Such a relation viewed by the Malays and MCA supporting Chinese as an opportunity to bring an end to the colonial regime, while, the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) asked the Chinese community to begin an arms struggle (Wang, 1970). The Malaysians as well as the British saw the position of MCP “threatened to take [it] all” (Stockwell, 1984, p. 69). The construction of a common past typically traced within the ethnic-nationalist discourses constructed by the Malays (see the phrases produced by MPOKD02 in Chapter Six) has not been echoed in the discourse produced by the Chinese members in the parliament.

Re-visiting the past however is a common practice within political contestations. The Chinese background MPs’ construction of the past was reduced to the references of

Chinese-language schools in the colonial Malaya. Historically, there were three dominant attitudes to the Chinese schools in pre-independent Malaysia. The British saw the Chinese schools as breeding grounds for communism (Comber, 1961). Second, the colonials shared a view with many Malay leaders that these schools stood as an obstacle towards national integration (Ee 1997). The third view was that these schools were merely means for the Malayan Chinese to be groomed for the mainland China and its nationalist governments since the 1920s (Seng, 1975).

To reflect on the discourse of language is the soul of the nation, Chinese opposition member MPODAP01 had stated,

[Text 7.16] *saya lihat kedua-dua pihak parti Melayu kerajaan dan pembangkang pun, begitu hendak mempertahankan bahasa Melayu kerana “bahasa itu jiwa bangsa”. Sama-samalah kita fikir untuk bahasa yang lain, bangsa yang lain. Bangsa yang lain juga hendak mempelajari bahasa mereka juga supaya mereka juga merupakan satu bangsa yang mempunyai jiwa. Apa yang kita hendak, kita perlulah juga memberi kepada orang lain, bangsa yang lain. Jadi, saya harap semua parti, tidak kira pembangkang atau kerajaan, janganlah hanya memikirkan untuk bangsa sendiri sahaja. Apa-apa dasar juga – bahasa Inggeriskah, kuotakah ataupun bahasa yang hendak diguna – apa jenis sekolah, biarlah kita semua berfikir sebagai bangsa Malaysia untuk kebaikan Malaysia ini*

Tr.: I see both the Malay parties, government and opposition, seems willing to maintain the Malay language, because “language is the soul of the nation.” The same here, let us think about a different language, a different nation [ethnic group]. Other nations [ethnic groups] also want to learn their languages so that they can also represent a nation [ethnic group] that has a soul. What we want [for ourselves], we must also give to other people, other nations [ethnic groups]. So, I hope all parties, regardless of the opposition or the government to not only think about their own nation. Whatever policy – be it English language, quota or whichever languages – be it whichever type of school, let us think as a Malaysian nation to make this Malaysia better.

The specific lexical item around which the MP centred her argument was *bangsa*, a term, which in English could be translated as nation, race, and/ or ethnic community. At the level of political contestation the status of *Bangsa Melayu* (Malay nation) in relation to

their language rights (*Bahasa Melayu*) has been privileged over other languages in the country's constitution. Malay is the national language. And there are number of articles in the constitution which privileged the position of the Malays and their ways of life. For instance,

(1.1) The Federation shall be known, in Malay and in English, by the name Malaysia.

(3.1) Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation

(16) the Federal Government may, upon application made by any person of or over the age of twenty-one years who is not a citizen, grant a certificate of naturalization to that person if satisfied

(16.C) that he has an adequate knowledge of the Malay language.

(76) Parliament may make laws with respect to any matter enumerated in the State List.

[However (76.2)] No law shall be made...with respect to any matters of Islamic law or the custom of the Malays

(152.1) The national language shall be the Malay language...

(153.1) It shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong [Sultan] to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article. (Constitution of Malaysia).

The way the constitution ensures the rights of the Malays in specific terms, does not do so for the non-Malays on the issues of language. This is the reason why a member from DAP approached the government to insert a clause in the constitution that Chinese-medium schools in Malaysia will continue (*buat satu ayat bahawa SJKC, SJKT akan kekal selamanya di Malaysia* tr. write one statement [in the constitution] about SJKC, SJKT that they will stay forever in Malaysia).

From the example 7.16 it is not obvious whether the opposition MP wanted Mandarin to be recognized having a similar status to that of Malay. To make the situation further complex, there are many language-groups among the Chinese, e.g., Hakka, Hokkein, Foochaow and

so on. Mandarin, in a strict sense, is not the “soul” of the entire Chinese nation, neither can it be claimed as the “soul” of a Malaysian nation (*Bangsa Malaysia*).

The rationale for the use of Mandarin for Malaysia’s Chinese schools (*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan Cina* [SJK-C]) was that the Chinese community adopted Mandarin as a common medium of instruction despite their belongings to various ethnic groups (e.g., Hakka, Hokkein, Foochaow and so on). These language-groups originated from various parts of China. But the people from these language groups from the very beginning of their Malayan life began to use Mandarin for the purpose of education. The teachers and books used in Malayan Chinese schools came, during pre-independent Malaya, from China (Purcell 1965).

Lopez (2014) claimed that the way Malay is crucial for the formation of the Malay identity, Mandarin plays such a role for the Chinese and Tamil for the Indians. Lopez’s version of unifying force of “language as the soul of the nation” can be criticized as some of the Chinese dialect groups can hardly understand each other. On the other hand, to suggest that Tamil is a unifying force for the Indian communities (e.g., Sikh, Sindhi and Malayalam among others) in Malaysia, can be deemed exaggerated. Tamils, in general, “declared that they would not put their children in Tamil schools in Malaysia” as they consider these schools “are a dead-end professionally and socially” (Gupta, 1997: 505). In fact, when the new MOI policy was mooted in 2002, the ruling coalition ally Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), “has come out in open support of the government’s plan, on the grounds that it might benefit the Indian community” (Ramasamy, 2002, n.p.).

Since the country’s Constitution allows a privileged position for the Malays (refer to section 1.2.3, Chapter One on *Ketuanan Melayu*), the DAP-led MP had to foreground that the issue of MOI policy was not simply about upholding their ethnic interests. The Chinese MPs from the opposition constructed in general a position that their arguments were based, mostly, on pedagogical concerns. However, reading it closely, the pedagogical concerns were found mixed with ethnic interests resulting in interdiscursivity. In MPODAP02’s words,

[Text 7.17] *Walaupun masyarakat Cina yang saya dapat memahami dengan dalam mempunyai asas teori daripada segi pendidikan untuk menentang dasar ini tetapi kita tidak boleh juga mengabaikan hakikat bahawa mereka juga mempunyai ketakutan, bahawa ini akan menghakis ciri-ciri sekolah Cina. Walaupun memang*

ini tidak harus saya setuju menjadikan satu isu dalam akhbar tetapi memang ini satu hakikat.

Tr.: Though the Chinese community, I understand, have a basic theory of education to oppose this policy but we cannot also ignore the fact that they also have a fear, that this [policy] would erode the characteristics of the Chinese schools. Although this does not have to be an issue I would agree in the press but it's a fact.

That the Chinese community has a “basic theory of education” can be read as an attempt to isolate the ethnic Chinese from the other communities in the country. But an assertion like this may challenge the construction of a common MOI policy within a plural nation. A “basic theory of education” by the Chinese community was shown to be threatened by constructing a discourse of “oppression” and “fear” exerted by the political Other (i.e., the ruling coalition led by UMNO). MPODAP02 claimed that the proposed policy was drafted to “erode the characteristics of the Chinese schools” (*menghakis ciri-ciri sekolah Cina*). The reference to the erosion of Chinese characteristics can be read intertextually, made outside the parliament by the Chinese education rights group, namely Dong Jiao Zhong (DJZ). DJZ believed that “the government's plan to promote English is nothing more than a long-term smokescreen to alter the character of Chinese language schools” (Pereira, 2002, n.p).

The Chinese rights group DJZ fought for the Chinese education rights since its inception in the 1950s. DJZ collaborated with the ruling coalition Chinese party MCA for another couple of decades. DJZ “tried to push the Chinese education cause through the ballot box by first endorsing the Malaysian Chinese Association, then Parti Gerakan,” but from the 1980s they began to support individual candidates only whom they found suitable, instead of supporting a political party entirely (Tan, 2000, n.p).

The MP asked, “Why the position on education taken by Dong Jiao Zhong had always been supported by so many Chinese? This indeed has a reason.” (*Mengapa, apakah sebabnya pendirian yang diambil oleh Dong Jiao Zhong dalam soal pendidikan sentiasa disokong oleh begitu ramai orang Cina. Ini memang ada sebabnya*). Here the MP appears to ‘simulate’ in Goffman’s (1981) terms, the position of a rights group leaving his political identity as an elected MP from DAP.

In order to produce a discourse in the same wavelength with DJZ, the member of the opposition stated that

[Text 7.18] *Saya telah pernah mengatakan dalam Dewan ini bahawa saya tidak ingin menuduh bahawa kerajaan berhasrat ingin menutup sekolah Cina tetapi saya telah banyak kali mengatakan bahawa perbuatan kerajaan itu haruslah selaras dengan keinginan atau cogan kata yang telah dilaung-laungkan. Kalau saya telah banyak kali mengatakan bahawa kalau hasrat kerajaan adalah sama dengan hasrat komuniti Cina supaya SJK(C) dikekalkan dalam Malaysia, apakah susahnyanya kalau kerajaan dengan senang sahaja meminda Akta Pendidikan.*

Tr.: I have never said in this House that I want to accuse the government that they intend to shut down Chinese schools but I have many times said that the government must act in accordance with the wishes or motto that has been propagated [by the Constitution?]. If I have many times said that if the government's intention is the same as the Chinese community's intention so that SJK (C) is maintained in Malaysia, what is so hard if the government amend the Education Act.

DAP and the Chinese education rights group DJZ, were not “extremists” (*ekstremis*), claimed MPODAP02. This stance towards the two Chinese background organizations contradicts the claims made by many UMNO leaders including the Prime Minister that they were “chauvinists” (Brown, 2007). According to MPODAP02, the reason why the opposition and the DJZ are vocal about the issues about Chinese schools is that the status of the Chinese schools in Malaysia is yet to be “guaranteed” (*dijamin*).

The member from the opposition recommended that the government should ask themselves “Why couldn’t they convince the people of Dong Jiao Zhong, including, those members from DAP (*Apakah sebabnya, masih tidak boleh meyakinkan orang-orang Dong Jiao Zhong, termasuk juga DAP*)?” In this assertion the position of DAP and that of DJZ on the proposed MOI policy and the state of Chinese school, can be seen as identical. The MP suggested that what the Chinese schools need is an assurance from the government that these schools will continue. In his words, by using an imperative tone, “*buat satu ayat bahawa SJKC, SJKT akan kekal selamanya di Malaysia, habis cerita*” (write one statement [in the constitution] about SJKC, SJKT that they will stay forever in Malaysia, the story is finished). In emphatic terms he stated, “myview is [or what I mean is], do not look at the symptoms, understand the causes and take actions which are correct” (*saya kata, don’t look at the symptom, understand the causes dan ambil tindakan yang betul*).

Next, the MP threw a challenge to the government about the reception of DJZ among the Chinese community within the country.

[Text 7.19] *Apakah sebabnya kalau kita buat satu survey di dalam masyarakat Cina, apakah sebabnya Dong Jiao Zhong walaupun telah dituduh sebagai kumpulan ekstremis, mereka tidak akan dianggap oleh majoriti orang Cina sebagai ekstremis. Tetapi kalau tanya sama ada UMNO Youth, Pemuda UMNO adalah ekstremis, saya rasa keputusan begitu jelas sekali. Orang akan anggap UMNO sebagai satu kumpulan pelampau, mengapa? Dia memang ada sebab, bukan saya yang mempengaruhi mereka.*

Tr.: Why not we conduct a survey among the Chinese community, why Dong Jiao Zhong has even been accused of being an extremist group, they will not be considered extremists by the majority of the Chinese people. But when asked, whether the UMNO Youth is an extremist group or not, I think the results are obvious. One would think UMNO as an extremist group, [but] why? They all have their reasons, I did not affect their reasoning.

The two groups contrasted in the above example are DJZ and UMNO-Youth. DJZ is a rights group while UMNO-Youth is the youth faction of the political party, UMNO. The other Malay organization mentioned by this member was GPMS (*Gabungan Pelajar Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung*, tr., Students' Union Peninsular Malay Students). GPMS, established in 1948 has a long history like DJZ. The GPMS' view on the Chinese schools was that the schools which do not follow the government's verdicts, "should not be given assistance" (*jangan beri bantuan*), the MP said. The DAP MP brought in another voice, which was *Utusan Malaysia*, the leading Malay newspaper in the country. In his view, *Utusan* is "the worst" (*yang paling teruk*). *Utusan* "seems to have immunity, immunity to play with issues" (*Utusan Malaysia seolah-olah mempunyai kekebalan, imuniti untuk memainkan isu*). The MP expressed his frustration by saying that when the government decided to issue a warning they issued it against a Chinese newspaper (*apabila amaran diberi, akhbar Cina yang pertama kena* tr., "but when a warning was given, a Chinese newspaper was chosen first").

Chinese newspapers in 2002 gave DJZ an ample space to form a case for Chinese schools (Samuel, Khan, Ng, & Cheang, 2014). MPODAP03 contrasted the position of DJZ against the (1) youth front of UMNO, (2) a Malay student organization, GPMS and (3) the

UMNO-based Malay daily, *Utusan Malaysia*. The DAP-led MP constructed the claim that different social-political actors, e.g., media and NGO activists engaged with political parties to co-construct the debates on MOI policy in Malaysia. The Chinese background MP appears to claim that when Malay-based discourses could be defined as encroaching into Chinese community's rights of education, DJZ and DAP fought to continue their Chinese way of life. In his words, the MP claimed that "They [DJZ] did not ask anything that could affect the rights of others" (*Mereka [DJZ] tidak minta apa-apa yang boleh menjejaskan hak orang lain*), and he also ensured that he knows "the purpose of their struggle" (*saya tahu tujuan perjuangan mereka*).

To establish that various Malay-based organisations, linked to UMNO, were engaged in "politicising" the issue of education, the DAP-led MP brought in the reference to the Prime Minister, Mahathir. We have seen in the current and in the previous chapter that by voicing ideas produced by authorities or individuals in power, individuals can still make claims to establish their agenda albeit they belong to an antagonistic group. In his words,

[Text 7.20] *Dan saya pun begitu kecewa bahawa walaupun Perdana Menteri kita telah banyak kali menasihatkan supaya kita jangan mempolitikkan isu pendidikan, orang Melayu harus bersedia bersaing, tetapi sikap segelintir pemimpin Pemuda UMNO nampaknya tidak berubah.*

Tr.: And I was so disappointed that even the Prime Minister has many times advised that we do not politicize the issue of education, the Malays should be ready to compete, but some UMNO Youth leaders do not seem to change.

An earlier reference made about the Premier by the same MP that he was "emotionally and physically exhausted" has been reframed in the following example

[Text 7.21] *Mungkin ini adalah salah satu sebab mengapa Perdana Menteri begitu kecewa, sehingga beliau begitu emotionally and physically exhausted, drained out.*

Tr.: Perhaps this is one reason why the Prime Minister was so frustrated, so he was emotionally and physically exhausted, drained out.

Next, the member from the opposition provided a detailed description of a recent demonstration organized by the supporters of UMNO-Youth in front of iconic Chinese Assembly Building in Kuala Lumpur. In order to frame the issue known to the wider society, the MP began with "I read it in the newspaper that..." (*Saya terbaca di dalam surat khabar...*),

[Text 7.22] *...seorang wakil Pemuda UMNO telah mengancam akan, atau telah memberi amaran, sehingga dia berkata bahawa sekiranya Dong Jiao Zhong masih menentang integrasi nasional, Pemuda sedia menentang Dong Jiao Zhong seperti mereka telah menentang Suqiu. Ini nampaknya Pemuda UMNO belum lagi mengambil iktibar daripada apa yang telah berlaku, apabila Pemuda mengadakan demonstrasi di hadapan Chinese Assembly Building.*

Tr.: ...a representative of the UMNO Youth had threatened to, or have warned, so she said that if Dong Jiao Zhong is against national integration, existing youth will be against Dong Jiao Zhong like they had against Suqiu. It appears UMNO Youth does not take heed of what has happened, when the youth held a demonstration in front of the Chinese Assembly Building.

Besides DJZ we encounter another rights group, namely Suqiu in the above example. Suqiu, a platform for 13 organisations, had been defined by Mahathir, the country's Prime Minister as "the communists" while the secretary of the Suqiu group felt that "we are loyal citizens of Malaysia" (Tan, 31 December 2000).

[Text 7.23] *Ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun laporan polis telah dibuat, polis tidak berbuat apa-apa. Satu tahun, saya dapat jawapan Parlimen berkenaan apakah sebabnya polis tidak mengambil tindakan, tetapi ini merupakan satu titik hitam dalam sejarah kita, di mana perkataan-perkataan yang teruk digunakan – ancaman telah dibuat hendak bakar building Suqiu– Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, minta orang balik Tongsan.*

Tr.: This shows that although the police report was made, the police did not do anything. One knows, I have answer from parliamentarians why police did not take action, but this is a black mark in our history, in which the words are badly used - threats were made to burn the Suqiu building- Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, asking people to go back to *Tongsan* (*balik Tongsan*, tr. to go back to China).

In the above example, the member of the opposition attempted to establish the point that in countries like Malaysia various components of government co-construct an issue by using ideological (e.g., media and rights groups) and repressive (e.g., police and administration) state apparatuses (Althusser, 1971). In contrast to the government the DAP's rendition of Chinese community stands as a victim. MPODAP02 felt that the act of opposing the government policy "has nothing to do with igniting the fire of racism" (*ini*

tidak ada kena mengena dengan mencetuskan api perkauman). On the contrary, “the reactions from the Barisan government leadership are going to hit people the worst” (*reaksi pemimpin-pemimpin Barisan Nasional, hentam orang dengan teruk*). The MP added that he wanted to take the issue to the media, but he was stopped by giving “warnings” (*amaran*). The reference to media underscores the idea that the Malaysian government uses this media to further its interests.

The DAP-MP claimed that he was “stopped” by the Education Ministry as the Ministry issued a warning in the name of the “silent majority.” It is not unusual in politics that leaders from both the ruling party and opposition use ‘silent majority,’ as sublime signifiers to establish a claim. For the status quo, it may help them to legitimize in adopting repressive measures to continue a policy. Hence, the opposition-led MP felt that it is the culture of the country to “not to say too much” (*jangan cakap banyak*). Also the conforming culture in the country let citizens frame things positively. “If you talk a lot about good things, they would be happy. [But] if you touch on anything wrong, actions can be taken” (tr. *Kalau cakap banyak yang baik-baik mereka happy lah. Kalau silap nanti kena tindakan*), the MP stated. He added, “If I say anything wrong, there is ISA (Internal Security Act), they would threaten with ISA” (*Kalau cakap salah, ISA, dia ada ugutan ISA*).

The DAP-led MPs in their construction of Chinese-school-based education, constructed other issues (e.g., repressive measures adopted by an authoritarian government, the nature of communitarian politics in the country and so on). They also brought in other discourses apart from pedagogy (e.g., ethnicity, political culture and local-global identities).

To conclude this section on the Chinese opposition’s construction of the MOI debates in Malaysia, we refer to a criticism produced by an MP from the ruling UMNO (MPGUMNO21). The UMNO-led MP claimed that the opposition is merely “politicising” the policy issue. They can be accused of “twisting” the issue for their specific political benefits. The MOI policy issue is a “mask” (tr. *topeng*) to criticize other issues about the Chinese community. The MP from UMNO wished Malaysia to struggle in order to be “truly” Malaysia. This claim however echoes what a DAP-led MP said during her articulation of the policy debates (see Text 7.08, MPODAP03): “*Kita harus kembali kepada perjuangan berentitikan negara Malaysia.*” (tr. We must go back to fight for the spirit of Malaysia).

7.2 Conclusion

Articulation of a position by framing it in a certain way is directed by the needs for perspectivization, which according to Table 5.5 in Chapter Five is constructed textually. To establish their statements as facts and not possibilities, individuals refer to incidents they describe as factual by omitting hedging devices or modalities. For instance how the Chinese community feels about the proposed MOI policy, the MPs represented the views of the community in factual terms. Occasionally, the MPs also quoted others' voices to establish a claim.

In order to legitimize their stand on the policy, the MPs made use of discourses of pedagogy, ethnicity, nationalism and global reality. The MPs quoted each other within the parliament, including those who speak a similar discourse outside the parliament, to construct a complex web of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. To explain the discourse produced by a Chinese opposition member, one needs to take into consideration the complex relationship constructed inside and outside the parliament among DAP, DJZ, Suqiu, the various segments of the Chinese population and the political contestations within the historical reality of plural Malaysia.

The Chinese opposition MPs constructed their counter-hegemonic discourse despite being constrained by a voluminous Malay hegemonic presence within the parliament. The current thesis explains how the socio-political antagonisms during a constrained time and space can be constructed by a community discursively. The findings discussed in this chapter can be compared with articulations constructed during policy initiatives within similar other contexts.

To conclude, the ethnicization of Malaysian politics that began prior to the country's independence continues in the contemporary Malaysia. Much has been written on the detrimental aspects of race-based politics in the country (Brennan, 1982; Weiss, 1999; Embong, 2014; Ting, 2014). Simultaneously, scholars of Malaysian studies have reflected on directions towards possible changes for an integrated Malaysia (Hai & Ming, 2006; Weiss 2009).

Chapter Eight

Media representation of MOI Policy

8.0 Introduction

This chapter comprises the analysis of the media coverage of the medium of instruction (MOI) policy debates in Malaysia. The analysis focuses on the debates conducted in 2002 and in 2009. Historically, the discussion about English language policy began in the 1990s when the ruling coalition, mainly, United Malays National Organization (UMNO) leadership under the helm of Mahathir Mohamad found their political power secured (Lee, 1997). The Private Higher Education Bill (1996) can be viewed as one of the first initiatives made in the 1990s to make a case for English medium schools in Malaysia. Malay nationalist politicians in their construction of developmental discourses framed English as the way to take the country forward. The pro-government newspapers disseminated the views in favour of the status quo, and we will see a reflection of that perspective in the analysis of the data below. However, the opposition-friendly media framed the debates differently.

On the 5th of May, 2002 the Malay nationalist newspaper *Utusan Malaysia* reported Mahathir Mohamad was “*kecewa*” (tr. disappointed) over the country’s high percentage of unemployment, most of the unemployed being ethnic Malays. Mahathir blamed their level of English as the main reason for the state of their adversity. On the same day, the editor-in-chief of the above Malay daily indicated, in his regular column, the possibility of a return to English medium schools (Awang Sulung, 2002). The issue was covered from the next day onward in various national dailies, online news portals and in the country’s education and political blogospheres.

The policy was debated in the parliament in June (see chapters Six and Seven) and was finally decided on in a cabinet meeting on 19th July 2002. The policy continued for 6 years (2003-2009). In 2009, when the policy ended, fierce debate ensued in the media, similar to what happened in 2002. The particular MOI policy that we focused on was popularized by its Malay acronym, namely PPSMI (*Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris*, tr. English for Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics).

In the previous two analytical chapters we have seen how the policy became a pretext for arguing about various aspects of a pluralist polity within a specific “site of engagement” (Scollon, 1997), i.e., the national parliament. This chapter analyses the representation of the debates within the media outlets. While the Malaysian parliamentary system allows immunity by ensuring freedom of speech to the members of the parliament, the country’s media are constrained by various punitive legislative measures (e.g., Printing and Publications Act, 1984). The following sections explore how the media carried out its functions within a “limited” democracy (Case, 1993) to reflect on policy matters within the “plural” polity of Malaysia (Milner, 2003).

The broad research question explored in this chapter is, *How do the Malaysian media construct the MOI policy debates discursively?* The sub-questions are,

- a. How are the individual discourses (e.g., on ethnicity and pedagogy) represented in the discursive formations?
- b. How do specific newspapers perspectivize and legitimize their discourses?
- c. What is the mechanism (i.e., intertextuality and/or interdiscursivity) in these discourses that holds them together within the discursive formation?

In general, the media are expected to represent the reality around us. The Malaysian media are no exception to this. However studies of the political economy of Malaysian media suggest that the government, the various ethnically aligned political parties, and different interest-groups in the country represent the nation by responding to a complex set of constraints and affordances (Anuar, 2007, 2014, 2015; Brown, 2005; Kim, 2001; Moses, 2002; Nain, 2002; Nain & Kim, 2004; Nair, Haque, & Khan, 2008; Netto, 2002; Sani, 2005, 2011; Tapsell, 2013).

By focusing on parliamentary discourses, the previous two chapters aimed to show how the ethnically divided Malaysia condoned by the country’s constitution (Gomez, 2007) functions as a polity. The different ethnic identities have been further reflected in their language-based consumption of media. To cater to the readership of these communities, news is published in Malay (47% readership), English (28% readership), Chinese (24% readership) and in Tamil (0.7% readership)(Yang & Ishak, 2012).

Malaysian news outlets can be divided into mainstream and non-mainstream media. For the current study, samples of media discourse were collected from both those streams. Within the mainstream media, the newspapers selected were three leading English dailies,

namely the *New Straits Times* (NST) backed by United Malays National Organization (UMNO), *The Star* backed by Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the pro-government *Malay Mail*. The Malay language newspaper chosen was the *Utusan Malaysia*, an outlet for the ruling Malay coalition party, UMNO. The national news agency *Bernama* had also been selected. From the non-mainstream media, the opposition friendly *Malaysiakini* and *Malaysian Insider* were chosen. There exists no pro-opposition mainstream newspaper. Besides, while the ruling coalition friendly newspapers (i.e., *The Star*, NST and the *Malay Mail*) are available without constraints, Pas' *Harakah*, DAP's *Rocket* and *Suara Keadilan* are not available on a large scale throughout the country (for a detailed discussion on Malaysian media see section 1.2.5, Chapter One and for the selection of media data see Chapter Five of the thesis).

8.1 Context of the study

Both in 2002 and in 2009, when the policy was proposed and scrapped, the country experienced the political turbulence of by-elections in two of its states, namely Kedah (in 2002) and Kelantan (in 2009). By-elections by nature are fought based on local issues. The political machinery is able to focus on one or two areas in contrast to the wider political reality at issue during the nation-wide general elections. Despite their focus on local issues, political parties may refer to national policies when these policies are perceived to affect the rights of the whole population. Participants in the by-elections position themselves based on chains of “equivalence” and “difference” within the relevant contestation (Laclau, 2005).

The following sections explore how the Malaysian media achieved their objective of “agenda setting” (Sani, 2005) during the by-elections in 2002 and in 2009 by giving platforms to different groups to discuss the country's MOI policy. It is possible that by choosing the time of the by-elections, the national leadership and also the media were able to fuse local, national and global perspectives and to frame the policy discourses accordingly. This resulted in interesting types of interdiscursivity.

In 2002 when Malaysia entered the third year of the 10th Parliament (the elections held in 1999), two by-elections were held. A by-election, when held mid-way in a parliamentary democracy, can be treated as “an indicator of the mid-term fortunes” of both the government and the opposition (Ramanathan & Hamid, 2012, p. 184). On the 23rd of June

2002, the then President of PAS (the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party) and leader of the opposition in the parliament, Fadzil Noor, died. Due to his death, the parliamentary seat at Pendang and the state seat at Anak Bukit, both held by him, had to be put up for fresh elections. The elections were held on 18th July 2002. In the elections, PAS candidate Amiruddin Hamzah beat UMNO's Zakaria Said in the state seat of Anak Bukit, while the parliamentary seat in Pendang was won by the UMNO candidate Othman Abdul who defeated PAS' Sayuti Othman.

Pendang is a major parliamentary seat in the state of Kedah. The total population of Pendang in 2002 was 91,894, among which 84.25% were Malays, 7.9% Chinese, 1.1% Indians and 6.73% were Thai-origin Malaysians; while Anak Bukit, a state seat, also located in Kedah, had 19,399 inhabitants; among which, there were 87.06% Malays, 11.9% Chinese, 1.49% Indians and 0.36% others. The population breakdown shows that these two places were pre-dominantly Malay-populated areas. With a population breakdown like this, how would Malaysian media construct a case for a multiethnic Malaysia in the two constituencies?

8.2 The construction of the policy debates in 2002

Due to the presence of the Printing Presses and Publications act (1984), the Internal Security Act (1960/ 1972) and other draconian legislation, the Malaysian media tend to self-discipline themselves (Sani, 2005). The Publications Act (1984, Act No. 301) states that, at the discretion of the Minister (Home Affairs), a license can be granted to a person to keep for such a "period as may be specified in the license." Act 301 also specifies that the Minister can "revoke or suspend" the licence "for any period he considers desirable" (Printing Presses and Publications Act 301: 3.3). Working within these constraints, the Malaysian media appear to adopt a less 'radical' stance than those we encountered in the parliament. Indeed the media in Malaysia seem to perform the role of an "ideological state apparatus" (see Althusser, 1971; also see section 1.2.5.4, Chapter One, for a review of the legal measures adopted in Malaysia to regulate the media industry).

8.2.1 Discourses within the mainstream media

The national news agency *Bernama* as the mouthpiece of the government can be expected to frame the proposed MOI policy in such a way as to promote the position of the

government. But in order to achieve that goal the news agency has to frame its discourses in a certain way. A report titled “Opposition taken to task for politicizing the use of English” was published on 17th July 2002. This was a day before the elections were held. The report stated that,

[Text 8.01] Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad today took to task the opposition for politicising the use of English in the teaching of Science and Mathematics in schools (BNAMAnr08-170702).

By citing the appropriate authority, i.e., the country’s Education Minister, *Bernama* implied that the Minister has the necessary power to take “to task” any individual who opposes the proposed policy. Next, the Minister was reported to have asked the voters to trust the government on policy matters. The report says, the people in the constituencies “should trust the government.” The use of modal verb “should” can be found to be ambiguous here as the Minister’s voice falls between an urge to earn consent and coercion within his hegemonic discourses (and in its representation by *Bernama*). *Bernama* rephrased the Minister’s utterances to have him state that “the move,” i.e., the proposed policy, “would help to enhance the people’s capability to compete” – especially “when the country had to compete with far more developed countries.” The rephrased section is annexed to a direct quotation in which we hear the Minister’s voice asking the target audience (or reader) to,

[Text 8.02] “Rest assure, the use of English will bring more good than harm. I, as the minister, will ensure this and will take note of people’s concerns in the matter,” he said (BNAMAnr08-170702).

The Minister felt that “the opposition, especially PAS, had used the issue of English to fish for votes.” To assure the voters in the two constituencies, *Bernama* reported as follows:

[Text 8.03] [The Minister] also denied the opposition’s claim that English would replace Malay as the medium of instruction in schools as this was clearly prohibited in the National Education Act. “In fact, under the Act if the national language is not used as the medium of instruction, then it should be taught as a subject,” he said.

[...] “I am confident that the use of English in the two subjects will not cause the national language to be sidelined because it is still used in the teaching of other subjects,” he said (BNAMAnr08-170702).

Bernama gave the Malaysian Education Minister ample space to articulate his pro-policy arguments (see texts 8.01-8.03) in contrast to the coverage of the arguments by the opposition. The use of direct and indirect quotations to represent the Minister’s views has put the policy-attempts in positive light. On the other hand, in its representations of the opposition, *Bernama* appears to help the target readership to accept a view that the opposition’s criticism of the policy during the election campaign was ‘incorrect,’ also, ‘untimely.’

A “symptomatic” (Althusser, 1971) or a “skewed” (Bourdieu, 1991) reading of *Bernama* reports cited above shows how a state-funded media contributes to a pro-policy election campaign. *Bernama* takes the position of an interpreter, but one inclined to disseminate the views of the Minister. The references made within the news report helped to produce a coherent argument both for the policy and for the election campaign. The two issues reinforced one another. The positive portrayal was well-supported through the mention of developmental discourses, the perceived needs of the local constituencies, status of national language ensured in the national constitution and global reality.

Another report published by *Bernama* on the same day (17th July 2002) ensured the constituencies where the by-elections were held that “The Government has yet to decide on the use of English.” The use of “yet” is perhaps not without political implications for the voters in Kedah. When the election was due the next day and the opposition was found to be using the issue of MOI policy, it became necessary for the government (and also the national agency) to rely on the adverb “yet.” The reason why the government postponed the cabinet meeting was that “many of the Ministers were campaigning in Pendang and Anak Bukit in Kedah,” reported *Bernama*. Within the official discourse promulgated by the national news agency and the Minister of Education, it is apparent that a decision on the policy was linked to the decision to hold the two by-elections.

In the representations of the official discourse it became also apparent that the two constituencies were significant enough to postpone the cabinet meeting on the policy. DAP Chairperson Lim Kit Siang expressed his ‘annoyance’ through his blog entry on 14th July 2002:

Why should the presence of the Cabinet Ministers at the Pendang and Anak Bukit by-election nominations last Wednesday be so important that the weekly Cabinet meeting on Wednesday had to be changed?

And now, the special Cabinet meeting specially convened on Tuesday, July 16, to discuss the proposal of the committee headed by the Education Ministry's director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat on the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English and determine its implementation in schools next year had to be postponed to Friday – again because of the Pendang and Anak Bukit by-elections.

This is a *most irresponsible and unprofessional manner in running the Education Ministry and the Cabinet* – and it is unthinkable that such things would have taken place under the first three Prime Ministers, Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tun Razak and Tun Hussein Onn or under the previous Education Ministers (emphasis mine)!

(<http://www.limkitsiang.com/archive/2002/july02/lks1727.htm>).

In the above text, the Chairperson of DAP criticised the actions taken by the current Education Minister Musa Mohamad. The DAP leader also used this opportunity to contrast the current Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad with previous nationally acclaimed leaders. He possibly implied too that the meetings were postponed due to the reason that the decisions made might affect the results of the elections.

For the pro-government English daily *Malay Mail*, the issues in the by-elections were mainly, twofold: first, the elections were about the political contestations between two Malay-based parties, i.e., the Islamic PAS and the nationalist UMNO; and, second, the proposed English language policy. There were other smaller issues like who could garner more support, and draw or split the votes from the other Malay-based party, Keadilan. The Chinese votes were divided too between the ruling ally, MCA, and the opposition, DAP. Although the fight was mainly between UMNO and PAS in the two constituencies, the reference to Keadilan was important. Keadilan won a by-election in November 2000 in Lunas, a state seat in Kedah. In the election, with the help of the Chinese rights-based NGO Dong Jiao Zhong, the opposition was able to frame the campaign as a discourse about Chinese rights of education. Lunas is a constituency in which 37% of the voters were, at the time, Chinese (Collins, 2006).

In their portrayal of UMNO, the *Malay Mail* constructed the ruling political wing as a pro-development party while PAS had been portrayed mainly as a party keen on establishing

Islamic Sharia Law. PAS was also framed as a threat to a multiethnic Malaysia, due to their recent enactment of Islamic laws at the state levels in the two states of Terengganu and Kelantan, two neighbouring states of Kedah where the two by-elections were held. The *Malay Mail* wrote:

[Text 8.04] The pertinent question on everybody's mind is whether the people who put Fadzil into power in the last election are convinced that candidates contesting for the Pendang Parliamentary and Anak Bukit State Assembly by-elections can carry their voices and bring about development, prosperity and peace (MAILnr03-150702).

We read in the previous chapters that the discourses of development, prosperity and peace put forward by the ruling coalition had been constructed within the discourse of a global economy. These discourses were next connected to the nation's ability to communicate in "good" English. When the opposition referred to the proposed English language policy during their campaign, the *Malay Mail* wrote that the opposition had brought in such issues because there was no relevant development issue in the constituencies. However after the election results were published, the *Malay Mail* wrote:

[Text 8.05] PAS naturally viewed Amiruddin's victory [in the state seat of Anak Bukit] as a blanket approval of its policies, like the controversial Hudud law *and its opposition against the use of English to teach Mathematics and Sciences subjects* (MAILnr12-190702, emphasis added).

Similar to the *Malay Mail*, the other English newspaper, the *New Straits Times* (NST) also gave ample space to the framing of the policy and the elections, predictably taking a pro-government stand. On 8th July 2002, the Deputy Education Minister Hon Choon Kim, who is also a member of MCA was reported as "willing to meet Chinese education groups to discuss issues related to Chinese vernacular schools." The place chosen to discuss the policy was Anak Bukit, by-election operation centre. NST wrote:

[Text 8.06] Hon, who was visiting the MCA Anak Bukit [by-election] operation centre, said the Opposition was expected to politicise the Government's decision to use English as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science and called on the Chinese voters, in particular, not to be influenced by such campaigns.

"Don't be alarmed ... whatever policy to be implemented is for the benefit of the students," he said [...] Hon, who is MCA central committee member, said he was

confident the Chinese community in Anak Bukit and Pendang would continue to give their support to Barisan Nasional as the country's stability had allowed their children to receive proper education (NSTnr02-08072002).

The place where the MCA leader wanted to discuss the proposed language policy was the operations centre established for the by-election. The place and occasion of the meeting were precisely to discuss the election and the policy. MCA knew the consequences of ignoring the Chinese parents and Chinese education activists from the Lunas by-election results two years before (see above in the current section).

As the election date got closer, the use of antagonistic discourses intensified. An NST report on 12th July stated that

[Text 8.07] Opposition leaders wasted no time in hurling attacks on the country's leadership and Government policies in two separate *ceramah* [tr. gatherings] in the Anak Bukit state and Pendang parliamentary constituencies on Wednesday night [...]

Keadilan deputy Youth chief Saifuddin Nasution Ismail also jumped on the bandwagon - he questioned the policy to revert to using English for Mathematics and Science subjects in schools next year. He likened the move to “changing of clothes” which, he said, was not proper as the new policy would affect the general public (NSTnr07-120702).

Saifuddin had won the state seat in the Lunas by-election in November 2000. The reference to his jumping “on the bandwagon” can be understood intertextually by the readers of the *NST* and indeed by Malaysians in general who followed the by-election. The target readers would have been able to connect the figure of Saifuddin with what had been implied by the *NST* through (a) opposition’s stand on the language policy, (b) the practice of sudden changes in policy-making (expressed through populist discourse, e.g., “changing of clothes”) and (c) the government agenda for challenging Malay nationalism.

The opposition’s criticism of the government has been expressed by truncated phrases in the columns of *NST*. Besides the use of phrases like “changing of clothes” we read that the opposition accused the government of “selling-off” the national language. These shorter value-laden phrases, in contrast to the longer ones used by the government, ministers and selectively chosen coalition leaders, gave the opposition a platform to frame them as

exploiters of local sentiments by using populist discourses. A report on 15th July 2002 stated that

[Text 8.08] Pas has no moral standing to question the proposed teaching of Mathematics and Science subjects in English as it has never championed the national language, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today. He said the Opposition party should stop deceiving the people, especially the rural folks.

[...the Prime Minister] was asked to comment on Pas' harping on the issue of the proposed re-introduction of English (for the teaching of Maths and Science subjects) in schools in its Pendang and Anak Bukit by-election campaign. It [Pas] claims that the Government was "selling-off" the national language. "This is purely political, nothing more ... they are willing to politicise everything [...] There is nothing that they have done which does not aim to solicit votes," he said (NSTnr12-150702).

To disseminate the government's position on the policy, *NST* allowed extensive space, precisely in the manner of a benign ideological state apparatus (Althusser 1971), while, the opposition was depicted as an entity that was set against the very people they wanted to represent. Through their populist discourses Malay politicians appear to foreground the question who can represent the Malays better. Should this be the nationalist UMNO, the Malay-Islamic PAS, or Keadilan (a party that in 2002 still centred on Anwar Ibrahim, country's former Deputy Prime Minister, who was ousted from power by Mahathir in 1997)? The UMNO-based government being aided by the mainstream newspapers were able to construct an "us" against "them" scenario during the by-elections. They did so amidst discourses of development and promotion of English language policies. In an opinion editorial an author wrote as follows:

[Text 8.09] Pas denounced the Government's intention to introduce English for the teaching of Mathematics and Science subjects, alleging that UMNO leaders are "dishonouring" the national language! I can't believe that Pas - which wants to abolish Malay privileges and special position (that includes the protection of the Malay language) to attract non-Malay voters and its erstwhile ally the DAP - is now spinning a fictional hatred for English among the rural folk, no longer an innocent community, really.

As the Prime Minister said, Pas has no moral standing to champion the Malay language, as it had never really fought for its advancement. Dr Mahathir stressed that Pas was simply trying to hoodwink the voters. Well, Pas is known to prefer Arabic replacing English initially, before it takes on Malay. The party's policy is clear: an Islamic theocratic state a la Pas and the first language shall be Arabic.

...What we want is simply that, while we promote the national language, we mustn't neglect English as we did in the past, for which we are now paying the cost. I made it clear in the New Sunday Times editorial that lack of English and negotiating skills can sell the country short. Would you want that? Malaysians need to articulate their place in the world. What language can accomplish it better than English (NSToped04-170702)?

Table 8.1 Analysis of a pro-UMNO editorial: Discourse strategies identified

<p>Articulation: PAS (i.e., the opposition) which does not believe in the constitutional clause on Malay rights had criticized the government regarding the current policy move. They did so in order to secure non-Malay votes. PAS wants to replace English as the MOI with Arabic. But on the contrary, the country needs more English speaking graduates who can “articulate their place in the world.”</p>				
<p>Framing: The opposition misdirects people. PAS aims at constructing a theocratic state. The Chinese-dominated DAP cares about the interests of their own community only. The innocent village people can be misguided by the opposition if they are not careful. PAS will choose Arabic if elected. However, competent use of English can ensure success in the contemporary world.</p>				
<p>Entextualization: The way the different roles of English, mother tongue and national language, and party politics were formulated in the opinion editorial.</p>				
<p>Intertextuality: The implicit references made to the constitution to affirm the status of the different languages in the country, explicit reference to the policy initiatives taken during different regimes and the perceived demonization of PAS and DAP.</p>				
<p>Interdiscursivity: The use and mixing of the discourses of language politics, communitarian identity, party-politics, religion, globalization, economic value of English to construct a discourse on MOI policy debates in the country.</p>				
Perspectivization devices				
Deictics	Linguistic factuality Statements about what PAS (and the opposition) did currently and in the past	Voice Pas, DAP, Prime Minister, self-reference	Modalities “can’t believe...”, “we mustn’t neglect”	Metaphors “negotiating skills can sell the country” Adjectives: dishonouring, spinning a fictional hatred, hoodwink, Label: theocratic state a la Pas
Legitimation devices				
Authority Malay privileges and special positions ensured by the Constitution	Morality Linguistic nationalism in contrast to Pas’ rendition of Islam	Institutional Economic value of English	Rewarding Malaysia’s place in the world economy will be ensured when the proposed policy is adopted. Punishing: By voting for the opposition, the constituencies will lose development which can only be ensured by the government (ruling coalition)	

When any example text (as an instance of an articulation) is read against the categories cited in the above table, the manifestations of perspectivization and legitimation appear to be present there. A news item, opinion editorial or a letter to the editor carries an argument. An argument is constructed in a specific way, with an instrumental goal. An argument, as an example of an articulation, perspectivizes and legitimizes certain issues by quoting established authorities and effective discourses for their target groups within a political contestation.

On the day of the election *NST* published another opinion editorial with the following heading: “Pas banking on letter containing Nik Aziz's message to woo voters.” It went as follows:

[Text 8.10] PAS thinks a message from its spiritual adviser Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, is its trump card to counter Barisan Nasional in Pendang and Anak Bukit...The message, titled, “Surat terbuka kepada pengundi Pendang dan Anak Bukit” (Open letter to voters in Pendang and Anak Bukit) explained five topics, including the controversial Pas’ hudud [Sharia] law, its opposition to the Internal Security Act and the introduction of English as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science in schools next year [...] Pas’ hudud [Sharia] law and the Government’s decision to use English to teach Mathematics and Science in schools were the main issues raised when campaigning (NSToped06-170702).

Nik Aziz (1931-2015), a Master of Arts in Islamic Jurisprudence from the Al-Azhar University in Egypt was an *ulama* (tr. religious scholar). He was a PAS representative in the parliament since 1967. He was also the spiritual leader of PAS (1991-2015) and had served as the Chief Minister of the state of Kelantan (1990-2013). In the Malay heartland of Kedah and Kelantan Nik Aziz’s discourses were popular as he provided a highly localized interpretation of Islam by mixing ethnicity, religion and political contestations (Noor, 2003). The *NST* report defined Nik Aziz’s open letter as a possible “trump card” to convince the voters casting their ballots in the by-elections. In contrast to a nationalist, pro-Malay, pro-English, and a pro-development Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, the opposition leader Nik Aziz was constructed by the mainstream media as a laidback, anti-progress, anti-economic, anti-English, pro-Arabic and a Muslim leader equipped with a local version of Islam. To define and contest the ‘true’ meaning of Islam is a political necessity in Malaysian politics, since both UMNO and PAS (often in

conjunction with Keadilan) aim to appropriate and exploit the sublime signifier of 'Islam' in order to attract Malay votes(Liow, 2004).

After the elections were over Mahathir reflected on the issue of Muslims and Islam, and their current level of knowledge in science and mathematics, during a seminar on Islam and politics that was held in Kuala Lumpur in July 2002. *NST* covered the seminar by comparing Mahathir's (and hence UMNO's) perspectives on Islam with the version mooted by the overtly Islamic PAS. *NST* rephrased Mahathir's utterances in following words,

[Text 8.11] As seen in the recent Pendang and Anak Bukit by-elections, Umno was accused of rejecting Islamic law. But Islamic law is only a subset of Islam. Contrary to what Pas says, there is more to Islam than just legal injunctions [...] And this is where religio-political parties with a superficial understanding of Islamic law or a rigid attitude towards Islamic traditions err, often with dangerous consequences (NSTnr17-210702).

Another opinion article, published also after the elections, framed UMNO leaders as being able to lead the Malays and also the country in the right direction. In the article, while the reference to English language policy was not explicit, one can still recognise that the mainstream discourse against the opposition was part of a wider discourse in favour of the proposed MOI policy.

[Text 8.12] Pendang/Anak Bukit demonstrated that Islam, even in the manipulative hands of Pas, remains a powerful force in Malay politics. ...Unless the party can merge nationalism, modernism and liberalism with a strong Islamic grounding, it could eventually lose out. Pas has carved a position in the Malay psyche where it can capitalise mightily on disaffection with Umno. Umno represents Islam's modern and tolerant face and it is in tough competition with Pas' version of the religion. It does seem Umno is being punished for its own success (NSToped10-240702).

The UMNO-friendly *Utusan Malaysia* during the by-election appears to frame the MOI policy debates in ways unlike those found in the explicitly pro-English discourses foregrounded by the English newspapers. *Utusan* knew that their newspaper would be read by people in the Malay heartland because the newspaper is published in Malay.

In reflecting on controversial issues in relation to ethnicity, local politics and religion, *Utusan* usually refers to the constitutional rights of the Malays to legitimize their claims (Sofian & Hussein, 2014). In their first issue, *Utusan* claimed that the newspaper had the aim of fighting for the Malay race, Islam and the Malay land (“*berjuang untuk bangsa, agama dan tanah air*”) Sofian & Hussein, 2014, p. 141). With the double responsibility of championing the cause of the Malay language and the economic advancement of Malays through English, *Utusan*’s coverage of MOI policy debates was complex. The newspaper backgrounded the issue of MOI policy. What the newspaper foregrounded were a criticism of the political agenda of PAS and the (ir)relevance of the opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

The newspaper framed the by-elections centring on Islamic PAS’ campaign for Sharia law and the party’s perceived ‘ignorance’ of development in the constituencies. Next, the opposition figure of Anwar Ibrahim who had played such a vital role in challenging the UMNO-led coalition during the latest general elections (10th parliament, 1999), was cited. The figure of Anwar was however dismissed as “not going to be relevant” (*tidak menjadi relevan*) during the by-elections.

[Text 8.13] *Isu dan faktor yang menghiasi pilihan raya umum 1999 seperti pemecatan Anwar Ibrahim ternyata sudah tidak menjadi relevan lagi dalam pilihan raya kecil ini. “Situasi kali ini cukup berbeza, mana-mana parti tidak boleh bergantung kepada isu 1999 kerana ia sudah ketinggalan,” kata seorang pemerhati politik dari Australia kepada penulis.*

Tr.: Issues and factors that adorned the 1999 general election like the sacking of Anwar Ibrahim could not be relevant again during these by-elections. “The situation is quite different this time, no party can rely on the issue from 1999 because it is outdated” said a political observer from Australia to the author [of this article] (UTUSANoped12-180702).

The clear rhetorical slant in the above in framing the election (note the sarcastic use of *menghiasi*, ‘adorn’) was also the angle taken in the *Malay Mail* (see above). The newspaper implied that Keadilan was unable (during the current by-elections) to use the issue of (the sacking of) Anwar that had helped them to draw “sympathy” votes during the general elections in 1999. Being left with no proper issues to unite the voters in the two constituencies, the opposition used the issue of language policy, claimed the *Malay Mail*.

Unlike *NST* and *Malay Mail*, *Utusan* did not often associate the MOI policy debates directly with the by-elections. *Utusan*, it appears, was more willing to make a case based on local issues and developmental promises (“*mencapai pembangunan dan kemajuan*”). Typical discourse in *Utusan* was the following

[Text 8.14] *BN tidak mahu rakyat tertipu dengan Pas yang selama ini memperalatkan Islam untuk tujuan politik mereka. Apa yang BN ingin lihat ialah rakyat di semua daerah, kawasan atau wilayah di negara ini mencapai kemajuan dan pembangunan* (UTUSANoped08-140702).

Tr.: BN does not want people to be deceived by PAS which has been exploiting Islam for their political purposes. What the BN wants is that people in all districts, areas or territories of the country achieve progress and development.

The above text frames the ruling coalition’s developmental agenda as being against PAS’s (and Keadilan’s) Islamic discourse. *Utusan* perhaps felt that to frame the proposed MOI policy by using similar discourses to those used by the English language newspapers may backfire when they are read by Malay language readers living in the Malay heartland of Kedah.

The explanation for *Utusan* not linking the MOI policy with the by-elections, as happened in the English language newspapers, may seem somewhat contradictory. It was *Utusan* which published on the policy when it was voiced first by the Prime Minister at a meeting organized by the UMNO Supreme Council. *Utusan* framed the discussion merely as the possibility of returning to English medium schools, as legitimized through the typical discourses of “*kemajuan*” (tr. progress) and “*kemakmuran*” (tr. prosperity) constructed by UMNO. *Utusan* appears to help UMNO to frame the language policy for their Malay readers in early May 2002. The following long excerpt from *Utusan*’s editor-in-chief’s regular column suggested a number of ways in which an English language policy could be applied in Malaysia:

[Text 8.15] *Mereka yang memahami pemikiran Dr. Mahathir Mohamad akan sedar betapa beliau mempunyai pemahaman yang berlainan terhadap bahasa Melayu, kedudukannya sebagai bahasa rasmi negara dan kegunaannya yang terhad sebagai bahasa ilmu [...].*

Bagaimanapun golongan yang menyifatkan diri mereka pejuang bahasa dan nasionalis Melayu mempunyai fahaman yang berbeza sama sekali. Mereka

percaya bahasa Melayu boleh menjadi bahasa ilmu. Tidak mengapa walaupun prosesnya sukar dan lambat. Maka mereka memperjuangkan supaya sekolah aliran Inggeris dihapuskan. Ini sudah pun dilaksanakan dan hari ini kita sedang merasai akibatnya.

Hari ini juga semakin lantang kedengaran suara supaya keutamaan diberikan semula kepada bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa ilmu. Kelonggaran sudah pun diberikan kepada universiti untuk mengajar pengajian tertentu dalam bahasa Inggeris. Kesedaran terhadap pentingnya penguasaan bahasa Inggeris terus meluas sehingga sudah ada ibu bapa yang mahu kerajaan mengajar beberapa mata pelajaran seperti sains dalam bahasa Inggeris di peringkat sekolah rendah lagi [...].

Dan sekali lagi golongan pejuang bahasa mempunyai pandangan yang berbeza. Sebab itu Awang sangat menghargai kenyataan Perdana Menteri bahawa nasionalis yang hanya memperjuangkan bahasa bukanlah nasionalis sebenar kerana nasionalis sebenar adalah mereka yang berpendirian untuk membangunkan bangsa secara keseluruhan [...].

Awang harap golongan tersebut berpijak di bumi nyata dan menyokong pendirian yang lebih terbuka dalam hal ini. Bagi Awang, sekolah aliran Inggeris elok diwujudkan semula sebagai pilihan. Kepada nasionalis bahasa, syor ini tentulah suatu yang melampau. Tapi yang penting itu ilmu, bukan bahasa. Memetik Dr. Mahathir: "Jangan jadi fanatik bahasa. Kita hendakkan ilmu. Kita hidup dalam era maklumat."

Tr.: Those who understand the pattern of thinking of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad will realize he has a different understanding of the Malay language, its position as the country's official language and its limited usefulness as a language of knowledge [...].

However, those who describe themselves as patriots and Malay nationalists have completely different beliefs. They believe Malay can be the language of knowledge [to disseminate knowledge]. It is alright if the process is difficult and slow. Hence, they fought to abolish the English medium schools. This has already been implemented and today we can feel the consequences.

Today also an increasingly strident voice is heard [asserting] that priority [should] be given back to the English language as English can be the [best] language to disseminate knowledge. Deregulation has already been applied to the universities [with regard] to teaching certain courses in English. Awareness of the importance of English language proficiency continues to expand so that [now] there are parents who want the government to teach some subjects such as science in English in primary school [...].

And once again those language patriots have a different view. So I really appreciate the Prime Minister's assertion that the nationalists who merely fight for their language are not true nationalists because true nationalists are those who insist on developing the nation as a whole [...].

I hope that those groups can be realistic and support views which are more open in this regard. For me, it is good to have English medium schools as an option. To the language-nationalists, this recommendation may sound extreme. But what is important is knowledge, not language. Quoting Dr. Mahathir: "Do not be a language-fanatic. We demand knowledge. We live in the era of information."

The discourse in the above excerpt did not question whether a policy can be proposed. The framing by *Utusan* foregrounded the "hows" but not the "whys" of the policy. To create a stand for English medium schools was one of the main options discussed widely in *Utusan*. Through this option parents could be given responsibility to choose schools for their children. To a large extent such construction appears democratic since parents were given additional options; but others may find such attempts detrimental to the future workforce of the country. Politically, the introduction of the parental option does not question the position of the Malay language directly. By not antagonizing various Malay nationalist groups and the proponents of mother tongue education, *Utusan* can be viewed to frame a middle path for all Malaysians. *Utusan* in the above text did not take a stand against the government, but neither did it give way to the demands of the language-nationalists. As a newspaper that depends heavily on the discourses of Malay nationalism, it had to invent an alternative discourse (and we will see below how they crafted a way to support the government in constructing a complete policy reversal that advocated a return to the Malay language in 2009).

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the mainstream pro-government media was in a difficult position when they had to craft and cover the MOI policy discourses. Analysis shows that they were unable to oppose the MOI policy directly. This could be due to their ties with the government and government linked companies. Being constrained by the relation with the state, the mainstream media constructed their arguments by centring mainly on ethnic interests, national goals, and global needs when required.

8.2.2 Discourses within the non-mainstream media

Non-mainstream media in Malaysia in 2002 were still at their infancy. *Malaysiakini* was one of the earliest news portals which challenged the monopoly of the country's pro-government public sphere (Chin, 2003; Steele, 2009). Most of today's popular news portals like *Malaysia Today* (b. 2004), *Malaysian Insider* (b. 2009), and *Nutgraph* (b. 2009-2014) were born much later, mainly in post-Mahathir (i.e., post-2003) era.

The possibility of a change in government control on the dissemination of news occurred first in 1996 when the country's Premier Mahathir Mohamad launched the ambitious Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project. The objective of the project was to attract the world's leading Information Technology (IT) companies. In the MSC Bill of Guarantees a commitment about never to censor the Internet was made by the Malaysian government (Sani & Zengeni, 2010). Alternative journalism, otherwise labelled "contentious journalism", began at this juncture to express dissent concerning the government monopoly of the media industry (George, 2006, 2007). When the politically charged *Reformasi* era began after the sacking of the country's Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in 1998 (see section 1.2.4, Chapter One, for more discussion), the oppositional discourses were extensively covered in the country's alternative media, but these were constructed mainly by the news portal, *Malaysiakini* (established in 1999). Accordingly, the country's other alternative media outlets, i.e., PAS' *Harakah Daily* and DAP's *Rocket* deemed partisan, were read only by a small group of readers. With the arrival of *Malaysiakini* (although its access is still restricted by subscription) the country experienced an apparently non-partisan news outlet (Weiss, 2014).

Malaysiakini covered the proposed MOI policy extensively. To link the by-elections in Kedah with the proposed MOI policy, the news portal wrote on the day of the election (18 July 2002) that "the national issues raised in the by-elections...deserve critical analysis."

Chinese and Malay language activists, educationalists, national intellectuals and the politicians from the opposition were given ample space to articulate their views on the policy and the by-elections. The elections were “seen as a barometer of UMNO and BN's popularity, and a way of gauging its current political support in the state” (KINloped04-080702).

Malaysiakini reported that the most significant issue during the elections was the issue of Islamic Sharia Law, an issue also raised by the mainstream newspapers. The second significant issue cited was “the call by the UMNO-predominated government to upgrade the proficiency of the English language by making it the medium of instruction for science and mathematics in all primary schools” (KINloped14-180702).

Malaysiakini appears not to label the opposition stereotypically, the way this was done by the mainstream pro-government newspapers. PAS is depicted as a political party not entirely against the MOI policy. *Malaysiakini* constructed a PAS which “opposes” only “the ways and means to implement the policy,” a stand taken by DAP and Keadilan in general, which they also explained in the country's parliament (see chapters Six and Seven). *Malaysiakini* wrote

[Text 8.16] Judged by the public statements of top PAS leaders, the party is not against any effort to upgrade the proficiency of English. What it opposes is the ways and means to implement the policy in a non-Anglo-Saxon polity, and in the absence of adequate infrastructure like teachers and textbooks, especially in rural and semi-rural areas.

On this issue, UMNO does not seem to enjoy any advantage. PAS' position seems to have even won the empathy of many Mandarin-educated Chinese who also worry that Chinese-language education and their cultural identity would be affected adversely. In semi-rural areas like Pendang and Anak Bukit, most of the ethnic Chinese are educated in Mandarin, not English.

It is for these reasons that some Chinese Malaysians in PAS, Keadilan, PRM and even DAP still think it is important and reasonable to assist PAS. (KINloped15-180702).

In the previous section on mainstream media it was obvious that these had constructed a PAS which is anti-progress and is ready to take the country backwards by even implementing Arabic as an MOI (see above NSToped04-170702) when elected. But

Malaysiakini did not use such labelling. While Kini foregrounded that “none of the political parties seems to support the *hudud* law in Terengganu,” non-Muslims in general were depicted as undismayed:

[Text 8.17] since PAS would not come to power alone at the federal level, the Islamic party can serve as one of the checks and balances on UMNO whose policies threaten the development of Chinese language and education.

Non-English-educated and non-Westernised Malays/Muslims are certainly more prone to support the relatively ‘moderate’ position of PAS on the issue. It is also a great matter of ethnic and cultural identity (KINlped10-150702).

When asked to respond on the issue of MOI policy during the election campaign, a senior leader of PAS (as reported by *Malaysiakini*) stated the following,

[Text 8.18] “It is not only the Malays who are affected. I have read reports that Chinese schools are also protesting the move.” [And also], “If the Malays are not progressing fast enough even with the use of Malay in teaching, what would happen if they were taught in English? As for the Chinese education groups, this would also be denying their right to mother tongue education” (KINInr10-160702).

The opposition leader from PAS was reported to have stated that “the party is not against students acquiring third and fourth languages.” *Malaysiakini* quoted him as saying that

[Text 8.19] “Many of our leaders are bilingual or multi-lingual. We are for learning foreign languages. However, to blame language as a cause of (poor performance in schools) is wrong,” he said. Chinese rights (KINInr10-160702).

Besides espousing an apparently positive portrayal of the opposition (if the mainstream portrayal is read as negative), the Chinese-background ruling coalition party MCA also received attention from *Malaysiakini*. The MCA leader and Minister of Housing and Local Government, Ong Ka Ting, was heard voicing “his confidence in garnering the support of Chinese Malaysian voters” as the Minister’s alluded to PAS’s use of “extremism and fanaticism” in the elections (KINInr09-160702). While any reference to MOI policy as a threat to Chinese-language education was not made, MCA was heard to accuse the Islamic opposition’s perceived tendency to attack Chinese culture and identity through the mentioning of specific cultural issues. For instance, the reference to pig-rearing made by Ong Ka Ting before the elections was crucial:

[Text 8.20] PAS' assurance that Chinese Malaysian voters will be guaranteed their 'rights' was not true. "For example, it was said that the Terengganu government allowed the Chinese to rear pigs but they actually set conditions [...] So as far as rearing pigs is concerned, it is no-go for the Chinese over there," he added. Ong also criticised the controversial Terengganu Syariah Criminal Offences (*Hudud and Qisas*) enactment passed by the PAS state government recently (KINInr09-160702).

The portrayal of MCA leader in the above example foregrounds a cultural aspect of Chinese life which is considered controversial in Malaysia and has been used by both sides on several occasions as a means to score political points. Studies show that in Malaysia an "animal-linked racialization continually polices the boundary between the dominant, elite Malay-Muslim hegemony and the comparatively less powerful Chinese pig farmers" (Neo, 2012, p. 950). The MCA leader in his framing of the pig-industry and the enactment of Islamic Sharia Law implied a cultural assault on the Chinese people in general which can be compared to the opposition's claims about the elimination of Chinese way of life in Malaysia including Chinese-medium education (see Chapter Seven). Peripheral discourses like that around pig-farming, when read in relation to cultural identity can hardly be separated from an argument about education policies designed for specific populations or ethnic groups within the polity.

The representation of the political leaders of the opposition in the mainstream newspapers was found inadequate; it was written in truncated phrases and as such the voicing of figures across political divides was largely lop-sided. *Malaysiakini* was also found to report issues which were not covered widely in the mainstream. For instance, it gave the impression that the ruling coalition was divided on the issue of education policies. This matter was broached by the Prime Minister Mahathir during MCA's annual general meeting,

[Text 8.21] Pointing to education as a sticky issue, Mahathir said the government wanted to bridge the communication gap between various races by bringing national and national-type schools together. "Unfortunately, our good intention for the future of Malaysia has been labelled by the extremist groups as an effort to get rid of Chinese schools. This issue has been politicised by the opposition parties and sometimes, even BN component parties," he said (KINInr14-270702).

In the coverage of the above program *Malaysiakini* brought up the issue of disagreement within the ruling coalition on the issue of the proposed MOI policy. The issue of a split within the coalition was not mentioned in the mainstream newspapers. What has been implied here by *Malaysiakini* had been raised more explicitly by members of the opposition in the national parliament (see chapters Six and Seven). MPs from the opposition often indicated that the policy was an invention by the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and was supported solely by the members of the ruling Malay-background political party, UMNO.

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the non-mainstream media gave the people of the country a voice to mount criticism against the state version of the MOI policy realities. Even the voices from the ruling UMNO which negated the position of the state were published by the non-mainstream media.

8.3 The construction of the policy debates in 2009

Similar to the situation in 2002, when the policy was first proposed, there was an election in 2009 too when the policy was abolished. Manek Urai is a small constituency in the opposition-ruled state of Kelantan in Malaysia. In mid-July (14th July) 2009 there was a by-election held in the constituency when the state assemblyman, Ismail Yaacob (1949-2009), passed away (22nd May 2009). It was the first by-election in the country after the new Prime Minister of the country Najib Razak had assumed office on 3rd April 2009. His deputy, Muhyiddin Yassin, assumed office on 10th April 2009. Muhyiddin was also appointed as the Education Minister of the country and he was the person who instigated the abolition of the PPSMI policy by reclaiming the Malay medium of instruction for the teaching of mathematics and science in both primary and secondary schools.

When the possibility of reversing the MOI policy first appeared, the chief proponent of that policy, Mahathir Mohamad (now the former Prime Minister), suggested to Education Minister Muhyiddin that they should continue the policy in high schools, so the changes (i.e. the reversal to Malay) would occur only in primary schools (Gill, 2012). That suggestion notwithstanding, the Education Minister changed the medium of instruction from English to Malay for *both* the primary *and* the secondary schools. The Education Minister's rationale for changing the medium of instruction also for high schools was that in high schools science and mathematics were no longer two single subjects. For science

stream students, science, e.g., physics, chemistry etc. would constitute the majority of the subjects they would follow. As a consequence it was quite possible that science stream students would receive poor exposure in schools to the national language and, this being so, the Education Ministry was be concerned that Malay, as a vital force in encouraging social integration, would be neglected.

Meanwhile others argued that the Education Minister was right to claim that the rural and urban divide was widening with regard to school results achievement, and also that the dropout rate in rural schools had increased after the implementation of the MOI policy in 2003. Furthermore, those rural students were mainly from Malay backgrounds (STARnr08-120709). Hence, for these others, the issue of policy reversal was viewed as an attempt by the UMNO-led Education Minister to pursue a Malay-first agenda. And the Malay-first agenda for obvious reasons allowed the Malay daily *Utusan* to frame the issue in its most vigorous form, in contrast to what had happened in 2002.

8.3.1 The mainstream newspapers

Malay-based political parties and the Chinese-based parties in the opposition and within the ruling coalition were divided on the MOI policy in 2009. DAP Chairperson LIM defined the reversal decision as “disastrous” while the President of PAS namely “Hadi is all for it” (NSTnr10-140709). Hadi was reported by NST to state on his party website that,

[Text 8.22] the move to use Bahasa Malaysia to continuous campaigns by language fighters, academicians, parents, researchers, non-governmental organisations and political parties like Pas (NSTnr10-140709).

Civil society activists and academics, together with certain NGOs unhappy with the reversal of the policy, were of the strong view that the minister should not undermine the development of abilities among rural children. Voices of public intellectuals were raised in the country’s social media to argue that the policy reversal was an attempt to establish that “the rural children especially the Malays, cannot be challenged and must continue to be given easy passes through social promotion” (Rahman, 10 July 2009).

These contested positions held by different segments of the polity reflect closely Fairclough’s (2009) dialectical-relational approach to discourse analysis, which takes the position that there are crucial elements in every society which cannot be talked about directly. As a result, any articulations of a ‘radical,’ nature are likely to be involved in

some degree of compromise with the dominant discourse in the society. In Malaysian mainstream media, ethnic or language purity arguments are downplayed in favour of economic globalization arguments while certain aspects of cultural identity are prioritized. This situation, constructed discursively, can be explained by what Petrovic and Kuntz (2013) call the “interface” between language planning and political theory in a liberal state (p. 131). Chapter Two of this thesis underscored the socio-political reality of Malaysia as a struggle between its feudal past and a neoliberal capitalist present and future (Holst, 2012; Jomo, 2013; Lan, 1998; Hooker, 2003).

In 2009, besides Chinese and Tamil education activists, various members of the civil society criticized the move to abolish the PPSMI policy; a segment of Malay intellectuals and civil society groups also criticized the move, employing different discourses centring on pedagogical, ethnic and nationalist dispositions. Political scientists and historians such as Farish Noor penned columns and blog articles as soon as the abolition of the policy was announced. Noor defined the scrapping of the policy in very negative terms, asserting that “yet another half-baked and lacklustre policy has been overturned by the powers-that-be, for reasons that I can only assume, *to be political in nature*” (Noor, 10th July 2009; emphasis mine).

Noor’s arguments were posted at the PAGE (Parent Action Group for Education) website. PAGE is a pro-PPSMI Malay urban organization comprising parents of the so-called ‘victims’ of the policy, where such parents are able to critique the position of the current regime. Noor, like PAGE activists, foregrounds the globalization and economic arguments as a means to critique the abolition of the policy. In particular his analysis links the abolishing of the policy directly with the by-election that was to be held in a less than a week’s time on 14th July 2009 in Manek Urai, Kelantan. The election appears as a local site of engagement in which the country’s stands on education, ethnicity, and national aspirations and so on were juxtaposed within a complex web of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. For Farish Noor “the politicians of this country chose the quick and simple way out, [they] *played to the ethno-linguistic gallery, for the sake of a few cheap votes and to win the odd by-election or two*” (10th July 2009, emphasis mine).

In contrast to Noor’s position, that the policy was abolished to garner Malay support for the by-election, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Education Minister Muhyiddin stated during a press conference (the interview also appeared on the DPM’s website at pmo.gov.my) that there was no connection between the two incidents. When the Minister

was asked the question, “Will the announcement boost (theruling coalition) in the Manek Urai by-election?” he replied that

[Text 8.23] This decision is not political. I must say that. I do not take this opportunity to gain political mileage. I want to say that it is not a consideration made based on Manek Urai. What is Manek Urai to the question of the people and the country’s future? What is important is that Barisan Nasional will win in Manek Urai, *Insyah-Allah*. But this is about our children’s future, so our decision is made based on the objective and not political. (STARnr10-120709).

The Minister’s responses, about whether this decision was political or not, were reported in all major dailies. *Utusan* reported “*Mansuh PPSMI tiada kaitan politik*” (09th July 2009),

[Text 8.24] *Keputusan kerajaan memansuhkan dasar Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam bahasa Inggeris (PPSMI) bukan berdasarkan pertimbangan politik, kata Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin [...] “Keputusan ini dibuat atas asas pertimbangan objektif berdasarkan kajian empirikal dan saintifik, iaitu penemuan-penemuan atas dasar kajian yang khusus dilakukan.”*

[...] Beliau menjawab pertanyaan pemberita sama ada keputusan pelaksanaan pengajaran dan pembelajaran Matematik dan Sains di sekolah kebangsaan dalam bahasa Melayu dibuat kerana desakan politik, lebih-lebih lagi menjelang Pilihan Raya Kecil Dewan Undangan Negeri (DUN) Manek Urai pada 14 Julai ini. Beberapa kumpulan pendesak yang dipercayai didalangi parti-parti pembangkang sebelum ini begitu lantang mendesak kerajaan memansuhkan PPSMI termasuk mengadakan perhimpunan haram dan ceramah politik. Muhyiddin menjelaskan, keputusan memansuhkan PPSMI setelah enam tahun dilaksanakan tidak sepatutnya dianggap membazir kerana segala infrastruktur yang disediakan seperti komputer akan terus digunakan.

Tr.: The government's decision to abolish the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) was not based on political considerations, said Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin [...] “This decision was made on the basis of objective considerations based on empirical and scientific research, namely on the basis of the findings of specific studies.”

He answered questions by reporters [asking] whether the results of the implementation of the teaching and learning of mathematics and science in public schools in the Malay language was made because of political pressure, especially due to the by-election of Legislative Assembly (DUN) Manek Urai on July 14th. Some pressure groups, which were believed to have been forced by opposition parties, stridently urged the government to abolish PPSMI including holding illegal gatherings and political rallies. Muhyiddin explained that the decision to abolish the PPSMI after implementing it for six years should not be considered a waste because the entire infrastructure provided for it, such as the computers, would continue to be used (UTUSANnr12-090709).

In order for the DPM to make the policy reversal sound apolitical, he needed to distance the issue from the current political atmosphere, inventing a frame similar to the one that the ruling UMNO had constructed in 2002 during the two by-elections. However, upon reading the Education Minister's statements made earlier at the Manek Urai by-election, intertextually and interdiscursively, one can reach a different conclusion. For example, one can see how discourses of development, race, religion, political mileage among others are central to the abolition of the MOI policy when those are read against the background of a by-election. The mainstream press's coverage of the reversal of the policy by publishing the complete interview given by the Minister, in which he had foregrounded the issues of pedagogy and infrastructure, is politically significant. We did not hear similar long conversations that the press had had with individuals who criticized the reversal as part of a different set of political manoeuvres.

The Manek Urai ruling coalition's Election Director wanted to embed the two events, i.e., the policy shift and the by-election, in the minds of voters within the two constituencies. The Election Director was reported as saying that "the government's scrapping of teaching of Mathematics and Science in English would help to sway some votes to BN as there were many teachers opposed to the policy" (*The Edge*, 10th July 2009). The teachers were identified as having had a significant influence in the winning of the election at Manek Urai. The Minister of Education appealed to the teachers to help "to unshackle the minds of their pupils and their parents" – a remark the Minister made while attending the state level teachers' celebration day at a Manek Urai school (NSTnr13-130709).

Historically, Manek Urai was always a stronghold of PAS. Since 1985 each election in that constituency had been won by PAS, except in 2004. There was only a small hope among

ruling coalition campaigners that if they worked hard, that is if they were able to propagate a discourse that established a modern Islamic worldview for the Malays, one which was filled with references to national development, they might win the seat back from the opposition. In this context we note that the UMNO Youth Chief was quoted as saying that

[Text 8.25] This by-election is important. If Barisan wins, it shows the voters support the push for unity in the country.” (STARnr08-110709).

It is worth remarking here how a local constituency, located far away from the capital and other seats of development in the country, became a site of national-unity discourse. However, such unity must be understood as unity among the Malays, not among the multiple ethnic groups in the country. The majority voters in Manek-Urai were Malay-Muslims (99%). This discourse of Malaysia prospering as a moderate Muslim country has been widely articulated throughout the country, most notably during the regime of Mahathir Mohamad (1981-2003), the long-ruling Prime Minister who had proposed the English language policy back in 2002.

One of the main arguments of Mahathir during the launching of PPSMI policy was that Malays needed to study science in English so that they could bring back the ‘glorious’ past in Islam (Beng, 2006; Camroux, 1996). This type of discourse, mixed with ethnicization and developmental jargon, appears to be a key ingredient both in making a case for legitimizing the MOI policy and in the ruling coalition’s victory in local and national elections.

While Muhyiddin abolished the MOI policy he also had to invoke the signifiers of education and development and link it to the Malays. Hence the jargon of development was used by the DPM and amply reported in the national dailies. A news report titled, the Islamic party “PAS not capable of developing Kelantan,” published in *The Star*, states:

[Text 8.26] PAS does not dare speak about development in Kelantan because the PAS-led state government does not have the capability to help develop the state, says Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (STARnr13-120709).

It is crucial to note here that the DPM called on teachers, particularly those who were serving in the rural areas, “*to unshackle the minds of their pupils and their parents*”. *The Star* reports DPM saying that the “teachers must go that extra mile to ensure the government's agenda of holistic development was met.” Concurrently, the *New Straits Times* quotes the DPM as state that

[Text 8.27] “This is my fifth trip here in the last few weeks and while PAS is going around claiming that the people are not bothered about development in Manik Urai, the villagers are sending a different message to UMNO and BN (NSTnr11-130709).

Among other locally directed policy actions which the DPM promised were to build a bridge and to develop Manek Urai as an ‘agropolitan’ centre with suitable farming facilities and ‘financial returns.’ To the school teachers the DPM said:

[Text 8.28] If that (development) is what they want, we are ready to help but they must also be ready to help us,” he told reporters after launching the state-level Teachers Day celebration at *Sekolah Manek Urai Baru* here yesterday (NSTnr11-130709).

The DPM was meeting school teachers at Manek Urai. That such teachers are widely considered the conscience of the country is not unusual in a post-feudal collectivist society and, on that argument, teachers were deemed to be one of the main subjects of recruitment efforts by both the opposition and the coalition. In the above quotation, the DPM makes his case at the specific site of a school on the national Teachers’ Day celebration. We may discern that herein lies the validity of the claim made by ruling coalition Election officer – that if the teachers are happy as a consequence of abolishing the MOI policy, the by-election results may be in favour of the ruling party.

In a report entitled, *D-Day for people of Manek Urai* on 14th July 2009, *The Star* reminded the voters of whom they had to choose between. The candidates were saliently defined by their educational qualifications. The mainstream newspapers framed the choice as being between a senior federal officer, an educated person, who represented the ruling coalition, and a fish wholesaler representing the opposition.

[Text 8.29] Asked to comment on the statements by Pas leaders that academic qualifications were not the sole qualifying criteria for a candidate, Mustapa said UMNO would not ridicule Pas' candidate just because he was not highly educated.

“We are not questioning their candidate’s academic qualifications. However, our candidate stands a better chance because of his overall ability as a grassroots leader who has a good relationship with the villagers in Manek Urai.” [And] “His academic qualifications and experience in serving the people through Kesedar

[South Kelantan Development Board] is no doubt an added advantage as he can serve the constituency effectively.” [NSTnr02-030709]

The connection drawn between the ruling coalition’s concern for education and the development of the constituency, on the one hand, and the perceived ineptitude of the opposition Islamic PAS, not being able to deliver on such promises as to build “a truly progressive Muslim nation respected by the world,” on the other, was obvious. To refer to such images would be effective in Manek Urai, a Malay-Muslim constituency. In Malaysia quite frequently a connection is made between becoming a truly Muslim nation and being educated, a contrast popularized first by Mahathir in the 1990s.

We can further discern two discourses focusing on the matter of being prosperous in Malaysia. The first is articulated through urban NGOs like PAGE and the former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (a respected Malay voice in the society), emphasizing that being competent in English and Science will lead to a prosperous reality in the contemporary global village; and suggesting that, therefore, PPSMI policy should stay. The second discourse backgrounds the medium of instruction debate while foregrounding education in general.

Taking interdiscursivity as an ontological property of a text, that is, the ways texts in general are constructed from more than one discourse, we can discover two aspects of the discursive phenomenon of the Manek Urai by-election. Discourses were produced to include themes and topics effective enough to attract both (1) the legitimate voters of Manek Urai; and (2) the ordinary citizens of Malaysia.

In order for the discourses to be meaningful to a broad spectrum of voters, local issues were elevated to an abstract level so that the citizens of the country in general could be involved. In other words, a promise to build a bridge or a new mosque made by the DPM during a by-election was connected to national or global realities. Hence, the discourse included reference to education, ethnicity, religion and socio-political antagonisms in general in the country. The local-national dialectic at the heart of the Manek Urai by-election eventually opened up an avenue to discuss the MOI policy.

Since Manik Urai is a small constituency, issues raised could not deal entirely with national-level controversies like the abolition of MOI policy. On the other hand, not all local-level problems could be elevated as matters of national concern. Hence, a back-and-forth between local and national interest was found to be present in many articulations of

Manek Urai election discourse. Those local issues involving the constituency, as framed by the DPM Muhyiddin in his speeches and interviews and covered by mainstream newspapers, were mainly issues of infrastructure, as for example, building bridges, mosques and schools. On the other hand, the national issues that arose were mainly concerned with sustaining the rights of the Malays as a discrete ethnic and a religious group by forming a unity government composed of the ruling Malay party UMNO and the Islamic PAS.

In general, the mainstream media reflected the stand of the government on the MOI policy. However, one may trace certain dissatisfaction within the media as they had to produce contrasting discourses when the government first proposes and later abolishes the policy. There was a difference between the manner of articulations used by the Malay and the English language dailies. While, there was also a difference between the ruling United Malays National Organization owned *New Straits Times* and the Malaysian Chinese Association owned *The Star*, as they perspectivized and legitimized their stands on the policy.

8.3.2 Non-mainstream discourse

In 2009, Malaysian non-mainstream news media were relatively stronger than in 2002. The opposition's success in the 2008 general elections was frequently credited to the non-mainstream news media. *Malaysiakini* (<http://www.malaysiakini.com/>), *Malaysian Insider* (<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/>) and *Malaysia Today* (<http://www.malaysia-today.net/>), among other online portals, had given Malaysia an alternative voice. The way the ruling government “maintained power through strict controls on the judiciary, the police, and, importantly, the mass media” (Miner, 2015, p. 66) was affected adversely by the rise of alternative media and internet penetration of the country.

The *Malaysian Insider* published an article commenting on the first 100 days achievement of Najib Razak, the current Prime Minister, while also reflecting on the MOI (PPSMI) policy,

[Text 8.30] *Isu pembatalan PPSMI yang diumumkan baru-baru ini tidak menyelesaikan banyak masalah melainkan menimbulkan lebih banyak suara-suara tidak berpuas hati di sana-sini terutamanya di kalangan masyarakat Bandar.*

Masyarakat kita sudah terpisah dua kerana PPSMI yang diperkenalkan oleh Tun Dr. Mahathir (INSIDEoped01-120709)

Tr.: The issue of PPSMI cancellation announced recently does not solve the problem but raises many more dissatisfied voices here and there, especially among people in the cities. Our society is split into two since PPSMI was introduced by Tun Dr. Mahathir.

The above text refers to the reception of the policy on different sides of the rural-urban divide. The article implies that the people in the cities, in particular, were not happy when the policy was abolished. The country is portrayed as divided also because the policy was introduced by the previous Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who is still viewed as charismatic personage by much of the population – but not be all. Another article raises the issue of a policy flip-flop with every change to the Ministry of Education,

[Text 8.31] Each time a new minister takes office, new initiatives are introduced, but which ultimately do little to improve the overall quality of our education. Sadly, we even seem to be regressing with each passing year.

Uphold the tenets of *penyata* [the official statements made by] Razak. Let *Bahasa Melayu* be the medium of instruction in schools, but concurrently, take radical and concrete steps towards improving the standard of English. Start with the teachers; ensure that they are well-versed in both *Bahasa Melayu* and English. The reality is that PPSMI is getting us nowhere and in the end, it is our children who suffer (INSIDEoped03-120709)

The reference to Abdul Razak in the above example is significant. This Razak is the father of Najib Razak, the current Prime Minister. Abdul Razak has been celebrated as the champion of the Malay language. Hence, the abolition of the previous policy can be viewed as re-establishment of the political legacy of Malay nationalism. It is relevant that when Abdul Razak took office from Tunku Abdul Rahman, as the second Prime Minister of Malaysia, he “emphasized the primacy of Malay political hegemony” (Shamsul, 1996, p. 335).

Similar to *Insider*, the news portal named *Malaysia Today* covered the MOI issue widely. However, connecting it with the Manek Urai by-election was not carried out consistently here, unlike in the mainstream news media. The coverage from March 2009 which is not part of the data for this study (due to space limitations) can be mentioned briefly. In the

month of March, 2009 (07th March 2009), when Malay-based NGOs (e.g. *Gerakan Mansuhkan PPSMI*) organized demonstrations to abolish the policy, *Malaysia Today*, like other news outlets, covered the news adequately (from early-March to end-March 2009). Within this period, *Malaysia Today* published articles both pro and contra the policy, which the portal had collected from various blogs, newspapers and other online news portals.

Similarly, *Malaysia Today* gave wide coverage to the policy debates in July, both at the height of Manek Urai by-election (14th July 2009) and when the policy was abolished (08th July 2009). The news portal published Mahathir's well-known post *Saya Sedih...* ("I am sad...") from the former Prime Minister's blog, Chedet.com (the post was also published by the Malay daily *Utusan*). A contrary view on the topic was penned by national laurate Ungku Aziz, which also appeared in the Malay daily, *UtusanMalaysia* and was re-posted by *Malaysia Today* ("*Keputusan Tepat – Ungku Aziz*" tr. The Proper Decision – Ungku Aziz). News portals like *Malaysia Today*, which re-post articles published by a variety of websites, blogs and newspapers, can appear to take an all-inclusivestand on the issues they cover.

Malaysiakini probably provided one of the largest and most influential platforms to frame the election, the MOI policy debates and the country's national politics. This news portal offered such a platform by not only quoting the local politicians and citizens in their *vox populi* corner, but also by publishing columns written by internationally reputed scholars of Malaysian studies (e.g., Meredith Weiss, Bridget Welsh and others).

Malaysiakini published citizens' views in their popular "Yoursay" corner. For instance, "Yoursay: Let the parents decide" was published explicitly to give its readers an opportunity to take a stand on the policy. One parent said that

[Text 8.32] It is really a case of difference in opinions and the government has decided. Well, why couldn't the government have left that choice to the parents? What's stopping the ministry from providing schools in both the English and the Bahasa Malaysia mediums?

This way, urban parents can choose to send their children to English medium national schools. The rural folks and those protective of their mother tongue can send their kids to their respective language schools. All the kids sit for the same

examination papers but only in different languages. Content remains the same, only the format (language) is different.

Another parent gave his opinion by stating that,

[Text 8.33] Dr Mahathir knew that rural kids generally perform poorly in most of the subjects even though the medium of instruction was in Bahasa Malaysia. Despite this fact, he still insisted that English be used in teaching Maths and Science [...] I wonder if Dr M's poll is a reflection of all walks of life. Did Awang or Ah Kow or Muthu partake in the poll?

In the above example the parent was referring to Mahathir Mohamad's poll that was conducted through his blog (chedet.com) to garner support for the PPSMI policy on the day (09th July 2009) after it was abolished. By referring to a Malay, Chinese and Indian name in his comment, the parent who wrote this comment was asking whether in such polls the multiethnic multilingual citizens of the country were adequately represented. If they had not participated in the poll, those who oppose the policy should stop politicising the issue and "let the new government have a mind of its own", the parent claimed.

To conclude, the non-mainstream media was much stronger in 2009 when the policy was abolished, in contrast to 2002 when the policy was proposed. In 2009 more people had Internet access. People also uploaded audio-visual contents on the news portals as they discussed the policy. While, specific portals like *Malaysiakini* had allocated sites like *Your Say* dedicated entirely to capture contrasting opinions about the policy. It was evidenced that various non-mainstream media outlets constructed a common platform for voicing out socio-political antagonisms by centring on the policy.

8.4 Conclusions

Critical discourse analysis, given its commitment to issues of social importance and concern, is not oblivious to the historical settings in which various discourses come together to form discursive formations. Critical analysts reflect simultaneously on politically sensitive issues that are relevant to local, national and global consumption at the moment of inception of discursive formations.

The analysis above shows that when political leaders, educators and lay people are quoted by various news outlets, to create a rich type of intertextuality by voicing a variety of

individuals, the articulations represented may not always reflect directly on the issue of MOI policy. They reflect on various other aspects of what they view as a Malaysian way of life, as warranted by existing understandings of various social imaginaries and specific orders of discourse. This is how, by selective referencing, and by adopting specific stands on the cultural rights of the ethnic communities, different stakeholders centrally and peripherally contributed to the policy debates in Malaysia.

Specific media houses reflected specific political articulations which resonated with their distinctive political affiliations. Different news outlets had attempted to influence decisions on the MOI policy from their respective positions. Between the time when the policy was first discussed as a possibility in early May 2002 and the time it was passed by the cabinet in July 2002, the country's media had framed the policy in diverse ways. History was repeated in 2009 when the policy was abolished. Although discussions around the MOI policy have never stopped in the Malaysian media (they continue till this day), we have focused here on the discussion that took place during two by-elections. Our objective in this chapter was to show how a polity hosts a national policy debate that reflects 'real' and 'imaginary' socio-political antagonisms, genealogically and archeologically, at two specific moments of political contestation (i.e., the two by-elections). It seems clear that Malaysia's politics and policy decisions have always revolved around its multiethnic and multilingual composition. In other words, the antagonisms surrounding the MOI policy can be viewed as a symptom of its plural nationhood.

Hence explaining why some articulations surfaced and others did not becomes just as important as analysing the actual utterances contained within a given text or texts. When certain discourses emerge within a discursive field, it is pertinent to ask why these discourses but not others appear within the discursive formation. And why are those discourses deemed central in that formation when they are certainly not universally? Any given text thus needs to be read against the background of the existing socio-cultural and political contestations within a specific society. Therein lies the relevance of the Laclauian plea that an analyst needs to provide a specific analysis of a specific situation (Laclau, 1975).

To conclude, CDA's performative promise lies in its critical social analysis, and not merely in the 'formal' analysis of discourse as text. This is perhaps the most radical lesson for a critical discourse analyst. This was also underlined by Billig (2000). According to

Billig, an analyst needs always to be cognizant of the difference between “revolutionary” and a “normal” critical science (Billig, 2000, p. 292).

Chapter Nine

Conclusions and Recommendations

*[In Tlon] a book which does not contain a counterbook is considered incomplete –
(Borges, Tlon Uqbar Obis Tertius)*

9.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the main findings of this study of medium of instruction (MOI) policy debates in Malaysia. The summary begins by answering the Research Questions. The first research question was, *How do the Malaysian parliamentarians construct the MOI debates discursively?* The question included two sub-questions which were,

- a. How do the individual MPs construct a text as a discourse of identity (i.e., ethnic, local and global) and pedagogy (i.e., education in general and MOI in particular) to perspectivize and legitimize their arguments?
- b. What is the mechanism (i.e., intertextuality and interdiscursivity) in these discourses that holds them together in the discursive formation?

The second question was, *How do the Malaysian media construct the MOI policy debates discursively?* The sub-questions included were,

- a. How are the individual discourses (e.g., on ethnicity and pedagogy) represented in the discursive formation?
- b. How do the specific newspapers perspectivize and legitimize their discourses?
- c. What is the mechanism (i.e., intertextuality and interdiscursivity) in these discourses that holds them together in the discursive formation?

9.1 Discursive construction of MOI in the parliament

The current study viewed parliamentary discourse as a “sub-genre” of political discourse constructed within an “institutionalised” context of political contestation (Bayley, 2004, p. 1). Parliament is an institution in which politicians, as a discourse community, i.e., members of the parliament (MP), take part in talking, arguing, debating and finally accepting and rejecting, what citizens in a polity define as policies. In order to

explicate the discursive construction of MOI policy debates in the Malaysian national parliament (*Dewan Rakyat*), the current study developed an analytical toolbox (see Table 5.5 at section 5.3 in Chapter Five). By taking insights from critical discourse analysis (CDA) the toolbox showed that a text which is a complex linguistic act involves taking into consideration various extra-linguistic practices (e.g., political struggle in the street) mediated by the “social imaginaries” (Taylor, 2004) and the “order of discourse” (Fairclough, 1992a, 2013a) of a society, as appropriated by a speech community (i.e., members of the parliament) within a specific institutional context (i.e., national parliament).

A text as a discursive articulation is framed in a specific way to contextualize arguments by means of intertextual and interdiscursive references. The producer of a text can be inspired by certain “motivational relevancies” (Sarangi & Candlin, 2001). S/he is also located within an ideologically contested or a political setting (e.g., within a parliament) and hence predisposed to articulate a text in such a way as to perspectivize and legitimize an argument which is eventually going to be part of a larger discursive process (e.g., the discursive construction of MOI policy debates in Malaysia).

In order to explain the articulation of MOI in the Malaysian parliament, the current study explored not only the linguistic construction of empirical data within a specific genre (i.e., parliamentary Hansard) and medium (i.e., transcription of spoken data in the Hansard), but also relevant extra-linguistic phenomena, that is, in particular the context in which the discourses were produced. In other words, the dialectic relation involving a discourse and the context in which it was produced was considered to be a significant factor in the analysis of the data.

Chapters One and Two provided detailed socio-political background to the nature of political contestations in Malaysia. The dialectic as an inevitable reality allowed and constrained the discursive construction of MOI policy by an individual, a political party, and a coalition and so on. The discourses were read as part of a discursive formation since multiple individuals reflected on a single MOI policy. They constructed their discourses by occupying multiple subject positions, for instance the discourses of UMNO and MCA within the ruling coalition in contrast to the discourses produced by the opposition on the policy. The five different discourses (UMNO, PAS and Keadilan, MCA and DAP) can be seen as a discursive formation, resulting in a data-bank with multiple discourses (similar and different) on the same MOI.

The discourse in the parliament was found to be constructive but also deliberately “adversarial” (Harris, 2001), often to the extent of being deemed ‘un-parliamentary’ (Ilie, 2004), as the members entered into live debates on MOI policy. When the MPs took a stand and constructed their arguments, they did so, mostly, as members of specific political parties. In general, individual MPs identified their opponents as representatives of UMNO, PAS or DAP, but not as individuals. MPs saw each other as constructing a common voice for their entire political wing – an exception was the case of the Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who had been framed by the opposition often as a “dictator” in relation to the implementation of the proposed MOI policy.

Each construction was constrained by the specific party-lines on an issue. In Malaysia, dissent among intra-party members is almost completely absent. Crossing the floor is viewed as “punishable” by both the government and the oppositions (*New Straits Times* 9 May 2006). By following the reality on the ground, the members of the parliament adopted positive or negative evaluations in accordance with the over-all take of the party on that particular policy. In other words, the debates in general were between the government and the opposition political parties.

Also apparent in their discourses were the claims made by some MPs that “they” do “ideology” while “we” know the “truth” (Van Dijk, 1993). In the process, they fought to control or occupy the contents of the “empty” signifiers (Laclau, 2005), sites of contestation which surfaced in the debates. Some of the most salient of these empty signifiers in their discourses were the Malays, Islam, multiethnic Malaysia (*Bangsa Malaysia*), education, and development in general. These key signifiers were projected into elaborate discourses on ethnicity, nationalism, pedagogy and so on. Malays or Chinese were defined in specific ways within the discourses by the ruling coalition and the opposition. Specific historical narratives were recounted by specific political wings to construct their version of national or ethnic identities.

Through perspectivization and legitimation of their stands the engaged groups framed their arguments as “common sense” (Fairclough, 2013a) to their followers, and to the numberless future recruits, in order to “interpellate” (Althusser, 1971) them. The members in the parliament, by co-constructing arguments along chains of equivalence and of difference (Laclau 2005), forwarded a discourse for an “imagined community” (Anderson, 2006) for whom these debates were relevant.

A crucial point about the parliamentary debates on the proposed MOI policy is the fact that the coalition always had the necessary majority to pass the policy in the house. Therefore, should the debate be explained as a mere orchestration of democratic practices within the context of Malaysian parliament? Is it also possible that both the ruling coalition and the opposition were addressing certain interest groups outside the parliament (i.e., their constituencies and citizens in general)?

Dissemination of party stands, translation of legal jargon and explanation of complex technical terms into everyday conversation for an imagined community often amounted to the “conversationalization” of discourse. The members of parliament, when arguing for a particular MOI policy, often used discourses which were based on personal anecdotes, references to their visits to the local constituencies and similar other narratives.

Fairclough sees conversationalization as being closely linked to marketization of discourse. In his words, conversationalization “is partly constituted through colonization by the discursive practices of market domains” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 140), in the manner of advertising aimed at selling a product. Such discourse is also closely linked to what sociologists like Featherstone have defined as the “informalization” of discourse; that is, language users bring in experiences from a private domain, e.g., through the use of anecdotal or personal narratives, to make their various points. In the same way, as a “striking and pervasive feature of contemporary orders of discourse,” conversationalization often blurs the line between the public and the private domains (Fairclough, 1993, p. 140). MPs brought in their local worlds constantly to frame the issues under discussion and to make their articulations appear like matters of “common sense” (Fairclough, 2013a), as also to sound less technical and to add necessary persuasive force instead of presenting the claims as mere products of their ideology.

Besides holding debates by using antagonistic discourses as a general discursive practice, the MPs occasionally chose to use humour to make a point. It is difficult to indicate whether the MPs were using their “stories” (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2008) to make thoughtful points or were simply giving the floor some comic relief after the day’s heated debate on MOI policy. To illustrate the point we cite two examples. These two examples, produced by Malay opposition MPs, were not discussed in Chapter Six as humour was not found to be a consistent category within the discourses produced by the MPs from the oppositional or the ruling coalition. The reason for citing these examples at this juncture is to reflect on the nature of possible otherization of marginal groups, as mediated by their

language abilities, within an “immigrant” (Reid, 2010) or “plural” (Milner, 2003) nation like Malaysia.

In the first example, a member from PAS stated that one of the countries that speak very good English is India. He added next by saying that India is good for only two things, Bollywood (i.e., the film industry) and weaponry. “They are not successful” In other areas. These views were presented as factual claims, without using any hedging devices or modal verbs. The MP provided an account of visiting the country to make his claims sound authentic. In his words,

[Text 9.01] *Kalau kita turun di Lapangan Terbang Bombay Tuan Yang di-Pertua, orang minta sedekah pun cakap orang Putih. Please Sir, I'm very poor, help me. Peminta sedekah bercakap bahasa orang Putih di Bombay. Adakah mereka maju minta-minta sedekah begitu di India itu dengan menguasai bahasa Inggeris?*

Tr.: When we got off at Bombay Airport, Mr. Speaker, people who asked for alms also spoke the language of the White people. “Please Sir, I'm very poor, help me.” Beggars speak the language of the Whites in Bombay. Have they progressed to beg alms like that in India by mastering English?

His views were immediately supported by another MP who brought in examples from his visits in the Philippines. In his words,

[Text 9.02] *Setuju! Selain daripada India ada sebuah negara lagi di Asia Tenggara yang semuanya bercakap bahasa Inggeris iaitu di Filipina. Filipina juga tidak digolongkan sebagai sebuah negara maju, walaupun rakyatnya bercakap Inggeris termasuklah kalau kita pergi ke Manila peminta-peminta sedekah dan pekerja-pekerja yang tidak baik di situ pun macam-macam, buruh kasar dan sebagainya bercakap Inggeris tetapi Filipina tidak juga menjadi negara maju.*

Tr.: I agree! Apart from India there is another country in the Southeast Asia where everybody speaks English, it is the Philippines. The country is not categorized as a developed country, although everyone can speak in English, including, if we go to Manila [we will find that], beggars and workers who are not well-enough, all types of labourers and similar other people speak English, but the Philippines is not seen as a developed nation.

In his study of the use of humour in the Malaysian parliament, Yoong (2012) cited examples to show how the MPs across political divides discussed national issues like the

country's roads and highways, juvenile crimes, and medical services among the political parties. Certainly there were more immediate examples of face-threatening acts in such discourse situations. However, the two examples cited above are not face-threatening, the people who were made the objects of joking were not present in the parliament. An immediate goal of the argument could be a simple attempt to emphasize that the learning of English does not guarantee a success. Others may argue that the members' remarks reflected the attitude of a certain segment of Malaysian society towards the people of these two countries. In 2009 MCA issued a press statement to criticize comments made by one of the Keadilan MPs regarding Filipino female migrant workers' use of English. The MP stated that "Filipinos are fluent in English but only succeeded in exporting many maids" (Press statement, MCA, Malaysia, 13th July 2009).

Close to the concept of conversationalization is the concept of the contextualization of discourse, or rather the recontextualization of certain themes and topics by rephrasing them for different audiences or different purposes. "Contextual resources," Linell (1998) argues, "are mobilized, constructed, negotiated, modified and used" (p. 144) during the course of communication. As we listened to the members of parliament, both from the ruling coalition and from the opposition, we heard how they constructed a topic for their target audience. It was possible for them to recontextualize the struggle and the aspirations of the Malays and the Chinese in opposing terms. The members of parliament were able to construct persuasive arguments through recontextualization of the topics under discussion.

For instance, the ruling coalition members from the UMNO used the discourses of economic globalization, Muslim leaders' interpretation of the industrial revolution in the 1800s, and the need for an English-speaking smart pool of graduates for the country to flourish. On the other hand, the opposition's construction relied on an "authentic" category of Malay identity which they defined as being rooted in the Malay language and in their own religious practices. These narratives were mediated by the MPs' reflection on the proposed MOI policy. Constructs of Malay identity based on language and culture were in conflict in the discourses of the two groups of Malays. Similarly, within the Chinese-based discourses (see Chapter Seven), different aspects of Chinese identity were foregrounded, backgrounded and tendentiously justified as the different oppositional groups reflected on MOI policy.

It is not that a member of the parliament through his/ her use of recontextualization conferred fixed meanings. The purpose of recontextualization is to acknowledge that

discourses or language resources can be carried across “multiple or contesting contexts” but can “still be meaningful to a discourse community” (Linell, p. 145). In the discourse of the members of UMNO, the specific aspect of Muslim identity foregrounded was an identity rooted in the Islamic Renaissance that took place from the 10th Century when Baghdad was a centre of Islamic culture and civilization. For these MPs, Muslims went through a period of decadence after Baghdad, a position which the members from the opposition-PAS denied vehemently (see Chapter Six). Hence, these two Muslim political parties represented the same religion and ethnicity in entirely different terms, once again illustrating Laclau’s theory of the “empty signifier” (Laclau, 1996).

The dynamic mechanisms of reformulation and conversationalization were also made possible via the use of (1) intertextuality and (2) interdiscursivity. It is by the constant voicing of selected individuals and values that claims are made. Intertextuality is a strategy of referring directly or indirectly to other antecedent texts while interdiscursivity refers to other discourses (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986; Candlin & Maley, 1997; Fairclough, 1992a, 1992b; Kristeva 1986). An example of interdiscursivity is how a discourse of pedagogy might be combined with a discourse of ethnic identity or employment opportunities. When discourses are combined selectively one may ask the question, Is this act of combining discourses innocent?, i.e., are such juxtapositions without any political purposes? Why is the discourse of economic globalization foregrounded or backgrounded within an articulation? Also, why do we find ideologically opposed groups constructing debates using different discourses?

Laclau opined that within political contestations it is necessary to “construct people” (e.g., Malays, Chinese, Malaysian, global citizen and so on in our data). The “discursive struggle” (Rear & Jones, 2013) over signifiers of ethnic, national or global identity carried out by different political groups to define the group may appear as if the Malays of UMNO and PAS were entirely different and unrelated groups of people. However, the occurrence of alternative articulations can be explained as products of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses, in order to perspectivize and legitimize a specific debate at a specific historical juncture. The discourses produced by the opposing political parties in the parliament may however appear as if they are constructing a fixed ‘truth’ and as such are determined to ‘annihilate’ their *other* (Lievens, 2013; Schmitt, 1996). The debates fought locally can also be interpreted as merely aiming at achieving certain instrumental goals (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), without a concern for transcendental truth. For instance

the members merely wanted to ensure that the policy is accepted or rejected. The MPs worked together as a community (i.e., ruling coalition MPs as opposed to the MPs from the opposition) to establish a stand which they would oppose at other times as has been explained through the discussion of media data, particularly through the UMNO-linked newspaper, *Utusan*'s take on the policy in 2002 in contrast to 2009.

Interpretation of a debate can be provided by referring to the consequence of the dialectical relationship between the society and the discourse produced (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Interpretation in that sense is an overdetermined product (i.e., resulting from the interactions among the various elements) within a social-institutional context of discourse-production (Fairclough, 2013a).

Analysis of data shows that a discursive construction within an historical reality can be illuminated by referring to the specific stakeholders who have fought to establish their ideals. The construction can also be interpreted as an outcome of dialectical or “relational” processes, as Fairclough (2013a) suggested. The construction is thus framed within the perspective of historical materialism which takes into consideration the elements of class struggle, economic determinism, relations of production, and political economy of policy formation and so on.

MPs were found to underscore the fact that certain individuals, for instance Mahathir Mohamad, and other prominent UMNO leaders were pushing an agenda aimed at establishing a certain policy. Likewise, the pro-government coalition were attempting to establish the premise that certain orthodox Muslim and Chinese organizations were pushing an agenda which did not reflect the “objective” reality on the ground. We will take up the issue of the construction of objective reality in a while. But for now we refer to another example of discourse which was constructed by an individual authority apart from Mahathir Mohamad.

When the parliament was debating the proposed MOI policy in 2002, the Hansard entry shows that the Minister of Finance took part in the discussion on the policy. He used the occasion of responding to the leader of the opposition, who was also a leader of the Islamic PAS, namely Abdul Hadi. The leader of the opposition had questioned the rationale for the policy. To respond, the Minister reiterated most of the phrases employed by the other pro-policy MPs, e.g., “English is increasingly important in the era of globalization and IT,” (“*bahasa Inggeris bertambah penting dalam era globalisasi dan IT*”), science “is

expanding rapidly nowadays” (*“ilmu yang sentiasa berkembang pantas masa kini”*) and English can “also [help to] develop relationships between countries by facilitating international trade and commerce” (*“juga dapat memajukan perhubungan, memudahkan perdagangan antarabangsa serta perindustrian negara”*).

Once the Finance Minister had established his terrain he assured a set of future plans which could only be made by a minister of his stature. He acknowledged the lack of English teachers in the rural areas but assured the parliament (and the opposition) that various programs had been designed to solve that problem including the recruiting of experts from English speaking countries. He also referred to education companies like McMillan which were preparing to collaborate with the National Language and Publishing Institute (*Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka*) in order to ensure books would be translated into English before the school year began. By mentioning specific bodies who would participate to facilitate the policy he established his own credentials while also entering into a conversation with the member from the opposition. It is worth pointing out that all the projects the Minister mentioned were expected to involve massive financial support, which he as a Finance Minister could only ensure.

To return to the topic of objective reality in contrast to a few political leaders’ arbitrary decision to implement the policy, we may well ask: Is reality a fact or a construction? In political contestations, when a construct is defined as “objective,” does it not lose its validity to become part of a political articulation, i.e., a debate, by blocking the possibility for recontextualization of that topic? In other words, within a contestation of MOI policy debates, perhaps neither of the groups engaged in the act of producing adversarial discourses could claim access to ultimate truths of the key signifiers (e.g., Malays, Muslims, and Chinese and so on) that they referred to. That is, their construction of ethnic, national or a perceived objective identity within a developing society was inherently open to further contestations.

Another aspect of parliamentary discourse that became obvious from the analysis reported in chapters Six and Seven was that members of the parliament could refer only to certain discourses which they knew – based on what Fairclough (2013a) defined, their “member’s resources” – were going to have specific perlocutionary effects on the target audience. That is, the “social imaginaries” they referred to were relevant only locally (Taylor, 2004). None of the members referred to ideas which the local Malaysians could have had difficulties associating with.

For instance, a Chinese identity constructed by the Chinese-based political parties, could not be built on by using references to Hong Kong, Taiwan or mainland China. The Chinese members of the parliament, when making a case for Chinese medium education, constantly distanced themselves from mainland China. But why did they have to signal a distance? When DAP constructed a case for Chinese schools by referring to the Chinese Malaysians' struggle during the British colonial era, they did so by constructing it as a Malaysian case. The British used to believe that the Chinese schools were teaching communist-style lessons or nationalist lessons "made in China" (Chapter 2, section 2.5). DAP's claim that "the curriculum used by the Chinese schools [now] follows the same national policy and not the curriculum from China" (*Kurikulum yang digunakan oleh SRJC itu sama dengan dasar kebangsaan Malaysia, bukan ikut kurikulum di China*) needs to be read against the above historical background.

An associated discourse developed when a certain DAP-led MP reflected on his views on the nature of race-based politics in Malaysia. He 'accused' the Prime Minister Mahathir for addressing the Chinese-origin Malaysians as "Chinese Malaysian" instead of the generic term Malaysians. In his words, "I get hurt when I see the word 'Chinese Malaysian' is used (*Saya sakit hati apabila saya nampak perkataan 'Cina Malaysia' digunakan*). In emotive terms he continued by code-switching in English to state that "*That is the way you talk to your fellow Malaysian, you panggil dia "orang Cina"* (you call them "Chinese people"?). He lamented that it is done on a regular basis in the Malay daily, the *Utusan Malaysia*. He added, "but who dares to reprimand *Utusan Malaysia*" (*tetapi siapa berani memberi teguran kepada Utusan Malaysia*). What this particular MP was asking for is the use of a more locally inclusive label for all Malaysians regardless of their ethnic identities.

Similarly to the Chinese situation, when the Malay-based political parties referred to Islam, they evoked a local rendition of Islam. No member from the Islamic PAS wanted Arabic to be the medium of instruction in school (although we encountered in Chapter Eight that an opinion editorial published by the pro-government newspaper NST to imply that if PAS were elected, they would have established Arabic as an MOI). Thus, there was a specific discursive nature to the debate which made it Malaysian. The arguments made by Malaysian members of the parliament could not have been made by the Chinese MPs in Taiwan or the Malays in Indonesia (the nature of colonial struggle in Malaya and Indonesia were different, as they were fought against different empires). Herein lies the importance

of specificity of the context and of the specific nature of a political struggle (Laclau, 1975, 1985).

9.2 Discursive construction of MOI in the media

The current section summarises the second research question posed in this thesis which was, *How do the Malaysian media construct the MOI policy debates discursively?* There were three sub-questions, or aims, first, to explore the individual discourses (e.g., on ethnicity and pedagogy) within the discursive formation; second, to identify the general trend in perspectivization and legitimation used by specific newspapers and third, to examine the use of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in these discourses within the discursive formation.

Mainstream newspapers like *Utusan*, *Malay Mail*, *New straits times* and *The Star* along with the national news agency *Bernama*, constructed a discursive formation with the instrumental goal of disseminating the views held by the government. Their component discourses centred on ethnicity, national aspirations, globalization and pedagogy in general.

There were certain differences though between the Malay daily *Utusan Malaysia* and English dailies like NST, *Malay Mail* and *the Star*. In 2002 when the policy was proposed the pro-government news media articulated a case for English in terms of cultural and economic capital. The English newspapers did not have the cultural baggage of *Utusan Malaysia* and hence the need to fight for Malay language nationalism.

The English language dailies perspectivized and legitimized the issue mainly by using factual utterances. Those utterances were further strengthened by the voices to which they were attributed, i.e., individuals with authoritative positions on the topic under discussion. Academics with 'modern' outlooks were cited to make a pedagogic case, while various national figures were cited to make an ethnic or a national case. The discourse of *Bangsa Malaysia*, a discourse inaugurated by Mahathir in the 1990s to define the multilingual and multiethnic country as a pro-development, industrialized and modern country for all Malaysians, was also used frequently. The Malay language daily *Utusan Malaysia* used emotive phrases to define the struggle of the Malays to prosper within the multiethnic Malaysia.

From a structural perspective *Bernama*, the national news agency appeared to flout the genre of news report in which a print media is supposed to state the facts of the world objectively. The news reports published by *Bernama* were more like opinion editorials in which the reporters attempted to cover a news through the filter of personal opinions. For a national news agency, to publish the phrases that appear in the following example is quite unwonted. In the report the country's Deputy Prime Minister while visiting the voters of Anak Bukit and Pendang in 2002,

[Text 9.03] Asked about complaints by some housewives that they had been threatened by their husbands not to vote for the Barisan Nasional (BN), he said such acts were cruel (BNAMAnr04-160702).

Reports like the above perhaps suit tabloids more than a national news agency. The political significance of the above tabloid-type reporting is that the readers would be encouraged to contrast the Islamic PAS and their "dirty" campaigning "tactics" with the ruling coalition that promises a modern, developed and prosperous Malaysia. *Bernama* reports are frequently re-published by mainstream dailies. Hence, readers will get plenty of opportunities to find out how the opposition is framed 'negatively' (or in a comical way) in the mainstream discourse.

When an individual is portrayed as the father of seven children (see the excerpt below), he may not be viewed as a modern person in Malaysia. By giving an elaborate account of the family background of such an individual, the news outlet evokes certain "social imaginaries" in contemporary Malaysia. An individual with many children is often viewed as a man from the past who should not be allowed to lead the contemporary Malays. The ideological implications of the foregrounding of the private life of such a father cannot be ignored. Such framing brings certain political benefits once the story is read critically:

[Text 9.04] His campaign work had left him with little time for his children [...] his seven children aged between 4 and 19 had accepted his new role as a candidate [...] He said even though he was a new face in Pendang politics compared with the Barisan Nasional candidate Datuk Othman Abdul, Dr Hayati was confident that the voters would accept him (BNAMAnr04-160702).

What we find in the above text is a narrative of an individual which has been interspersed with the "metapragmatic evaluative grid" of the framer, i.e., *Bernama*. The above text can be explained as an example of entextualization in which the represented

individual is not present. *Bernama* records that the candidate “said” such-and-such, i.e., he narrated himself. But the candidate no doubt described himself “with a particular rhythm, prosody and intonation, generically formatted into different episodes, plots, side-plots and sub-plots, accompanied by gesture and facial expression, and in response to prompts given by an interlocutor” (Blommaert, 2005, p. 221). Hence his utterances have not been reported faithfully. Scollon (1997a) in his analysis of Hong Kong newspapers’ portrayal of individuals expressed similar concerns, speaking of manipulation through the technique of “framing.”

An important aspect of framing is expressed through what we call in CDA *backgrounding* and *foregrounding*. One of the most cited definition of framing in media studies was given by Entman (1993) for whom,

Framing is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

The above definition by Entman can be illustrated with another example from *Bernama*,

[Text 9.05] On the dirty tactics resorted to by PAS supporters who hurl abuses and profanities and spread lies and allegations by circulating posters including one depicting him as a Catholic high priest and another of his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, as a pork seller, Dr Mahathir said that such actions were demeaning and should be denounced by the community (BNAMANr07-170702).

Through linguistic factuality the above text constructs a definition of the supporters of PAS. PAS is represented as a political party which resorts to name-calling, attacks their opponents and as such it can be evaluated as not suitable to be elected in the by-elections.

Pro-ruling coalition English dailies like *New Straits Times*, *Malay Mail* and the *Star* were equally proactive in forwarding the agenda of the ruling coalition. While *NST* and the *Malay Mail* were not explicitly strongly hostile to PAS, the MCA-linked *Star* showed explicit criticism against the Islamic PAS. During their coverage of other controversial topics, the *Star* had explicitly taken up a position against PAS (Sofian & Hussein, 2014).

The non-mainstream media in 2002 were at its infancy. *Malaysiakini* was the sole independent outlet to cover oppositional voice within the country’s media-scape. Hence,

the opposition received very limited exposure. We have seen that the voice of the opposition in the mainstream news media was published in a truncated form if not ignored entirely. Even within this limited media opening *Malaysiakini* had to struggle with another problem in relation to public access, which was that the news portal was (and still is at present) accessible by subscription only. Therefore, while pro-government mainstream newspapers were easily available, that was not the case with the alternative media.

Since its inauguration, *Malaysiakini* had taken up an entirely different kind of journalism in order to give voice to the unheard (Chin, 2003; Steele, 2009). Their target however was mostly unachieved in 2002 due to limited internet penetration in the country generally and least penetration of all in the rural constituencies. The situation changed in 2009 with the proliferation of online news portals resulting in drastic changes to the country's political landscape. Various urban activist groups were born to protest the reversal of the 2002-MOI policy in 2009. And many of them used social media and online news portals. Due to the widening pressure from the alternative news media, the mainstream media too had to open up to accommodate diverse voices. Activist groups like PAGE were given ample space in the *Star* and the *NST* to construct a case for the continuation of the policy, while alternative media quoted Chinese and Malay language groups to make a case for mother tongue education.

Utusan played a different role in 2002 in contrast to 2009. In 2002 they had to construct a case for a modern, pro-development, and industrialized Malaysia, while in 2009 the newspaper could use its Malay nationalist discourses to make a case for the shift in the policy. A pedagogical claim for education through the mother tongue was also constructed by citing various intellectuals and educationalists from a Malay background.

9.3 Ideology as a political factor and the needs for critical insights

To illustrate the conditions of possibility and of the specificity of the struggle we refer to Malaysia's colonial past. This will help us to develop a genealogical critique of our research problem. What is crucial here to acknowledge is that the historical process that Malaysia went through and the discursive formation of the historical processes are two epistemologically different issues, in which one is properly a subject matter of history while the other is a subject of discourse analysis. But is a discourse analysis possible without reference to history? Or, to delimit the discussion, should we bracket the historical

incidents from the previous decades and focus on a specific period and the individuals who constructed events within that specific period? A genealogical interpretation might be lost during the process, as Pennycook (2002) too feared while offering his thesis on English and the discourse of colonialism. Perhaps we need to embrace both epistemologies. Within a thesis on discourse analysis, different epistemologies can be recognized through what Fairclough (2013a) suggested as “transdisciplinary” and Wodak (2001) as “conceptual pragmatism.” Within the confine of sociolinguistics the relevance of “social theories” have also been highlighted (Coupland, Sarangi & Candlin 2001). Perhaps many researchers who promise a multi-, trans- or an interdisciplinary research, tend to forget their promises halfway and put more emphasis on one or the other. When a study focuses too much on the construction of linguistic mechanisms of discourses, it is possible to forget the epistemology of history or historical materialism or the dialectical development within an historical formation. CDA in general reminds a researcher that it is only interested in linguistics phenomena within a broader context. That is, it is,

not interested in investigating a linguistic unit per se but in studying social phenomena which are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 2).

CDA has often been deemed as an approach instead of a method within the wider field of discourse analysis, while analysts differ regarding the claim that CDA would solve the problem of inequality, misrepresentation and so on. The purpose of CDA is to explain why different discourse formations are possible. That is, due to differences in agenda, how ideological preferences and contextual necessities might enable particular types of emancipations and their discursive formations. What CDA does, then, is offer a theoretical solution to a practical problem. In our case, the analysis of the empirical data that framed a language policy debate should enable us to discover the latent ideology behind the surface discourse. That is, an understanding of why and how different stakeholders within the policy debate articulated the same issue in entirely different ways: how the data, being historically grounded, let us comprehend the socio-political antagonisms within a society; why certain identity-metaphors and political negotiations could be viewed as vanishing mediators, since some of the previous articulations were contextually irrelevant; and finally, how novel metaphors replaced obsolete metaphors following the “dance of the dialectic” (Ollman, 2003).

It is necessary to acknowledge that an historical materialist interpretation can only be realized as the discourse data manifests it, or through what Fairclough (1992, 2001) defined as “textually oriented discourse analysis.” Since our main objective was to find evidence from the concrete discourse data framed as the language policy debates, we used Fairclough’s textually oriented analysis in order to explain how by means of linguistic elements and strategies, a social formation is constructed as a text.

When we claim that the language policy in Malaysia is a manifestation (or a symptom in psychoanalytical terms) of the socio-political antagonisms, perceived by different groups, we do not suggest that these antagonisms are explicit or readily obvious in the policy debates. The reading of the term needs a critical perspective. In a context like Malaysia which, mainly during Mahathir-era was able to contain the manifestations of such antagonisms ‘efficiently,’ the claim that a debate is a manifestation of socio-political antagonisms, can be taken more ‘cautiously’ than in some other places. The public sphere was contained, as it were, through the use of various draconian laws which the country had inherited from the British colonizers. Therefore, when the mainstream media in 2002 was mostly “mute” about the language policy conflict in Malaysia, it is perhaps not proper to draw a hasty conclusion, i.e., that there was no resistance to the proposed language policy. Pennycook’s reading of discourses of colonialism has shown how the colonial rulers, through a construction of “docile bodies” of the locals, erased their voices when these contested colonial language policies (Pennycook, 1994, 1998, 2002).

Post-2004 Malaysia has experienced more antagonisms or, rather, antagonisms have surfaced more in post-Mahathir era, and the culmination of this was reflected in the 2008 general elections which have been described as a “political tsunami” in favour of the opposition (Weiss, 2009). In countries like Malaysia which practice “limited democracy,” often antagonisms are not evident in any public sphere. As we have seen, the country’s opposition-friendly media was virtually non-existent in 2002. We heard more discordant voices in 2009, as the analysis of the media data shows (Chapter Eight). I would just emphasize that an apparent absence of antagonisms does not mean that there is no antagonism, just that there is no available discourse data. It is not that suddenly in 2009 the country woke up to the play of ethno-political antagonisms. These always existed as “hidden transcripts” (Scott, 1992).

For Jones (2004) the events in a society, that is to say the historical construction of these events as manifested through discourses(s), can best be accounted for by referring to socio-

political antagonisms instead of logics of rhetoric or discourses per se. Jones's (2004) views may appear 'extreme.' However, what he implied here is that it can be difficult or almost impossible to explain a society and its historical developments without referring to its power structure, the nature of class struggle and its principal hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forces.

An overemphasis on the analysis of the discourses that actually surfaced in a society, while ignoring the roles of individuals in a society, may end in what Žižek defined as a "fetishistic fascination of the content" which is "hidden behind the form" (Žižek, 1989, p. 11). Therefore, "the secret to be unveiled through analysis is not the content hidden by the form, but on the contrary the secret of this form itself" (Žižek, 1989, p. 11). For Žižek, the main object of analysis is the form, the genre, or the text type in which certain content is expressed. He wonders why the latent content (from the unconscious) expresses itself as the manifest content of a dream. It is not the manifest content of a dream but the form in which it appeared that should be viewed as more significant. He reaches this conclusion by juxtaposing the psychoanalytic concept of the "symptom" with Marx's notion of commodity fetishism. A symptom is a manifestation of a repressed desire. But when it is manifested, the patient is unaware of its occurrence because it contravenes the accepted norms within which the patient lives his/ her daily life. In that way the symptom is a manifestation of a 'disease' – but only in a partial way. Commodity fetishism is a concept designated to explain how "the economic forms of capitalism conceal underlying social relations" by establishing "a dichotomy between appearance and concealed reality" (Fine, 1991, p. 102).

It is the arrangement of what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) defined as "moments," "elements," and "floating" and "sublime" signifiers within a discourse that needs to be investigated. Therefore, how the participants within a discursive field were allowed and constrained from foregrounding and backgrounding certain contents in their discourses, in order to produce certain effects in the reproduction or transformation of a society, was selected as our main focuses in the current study.

To theorize further in psychoanalytic terms, it seems that the absence of making concrete claims by discourse producers in their linguistic assertions, does not eliminate the possibility of claims made. Žižek (2006b) develops a critique of absence by taking example from popular culture. In order to explain how ideology works in reality, Žižek referred to the American drama film *Casablanca* (1942). In the film when Ilse, the female

protagonist came to reconfirm her romantic attachment for Rick (played by Humphrey Bogart), they embraced. It is at that moment that the camera moves to the tower of Casablanca. When the camera moves back in to the room they were found to be smoking cigarettes and their clothes were scattered around the room. For Žižek, this act of moving the camera in and out was a deliberate choice by the director of the film to save the movie from the hands of the censorship board. In the 1940s the Hollywood film industry was not allowed to show close physical intimacy. The director's play with signifiers (i.e., the embrace, them smoking cigarettes and their scattered clothes) were used to activate the "phantasmatic imagination" of the audience. For Žižek,

Hollywood needs both levels in order to function. At the level of Ego-Ideal (which here equates to the public symbolic law, the set of rules we are meant to observe in our public speech), nothing problematic happens, the text is clean, while, at another level, the text bombards the spectator with the superego injunction 'Enjoy!' - i.e., give way to your dirty imagination the very awareness that they did not do it gives free rein to the opposite conclusion (Žižek, 2006, pp. 83-84).

Taking *Bernama*'s depiction of the PAS candidate during the Bukit Anak by-elections in 2002, the candidate has been described in an elaborate way, in terms of how many children he has fathered, and how he spends his time after being selected as a fresh candidate, in contrast to the behaviour of the experienced ruling coalition candidate. When the dispositions of the candidate from PAS is contrasted with that of the ruling ally UMNO, the listeners or readers can come to a certain conclusion about whether this individual will create a modern or a laidback rural constituency. The features of the candidates can also be used to evoke a mother-tongue versus an English language speaking identity within a debate on MOI policy in the country.

A hasty reading of the media representation of MOI policy debates in the contemporary Malaysia may give many outsiders the impression that the alternative media and certain intellectuals in the country serve the opposition. There is a common view that foreign media, non-Malaysian intellectuals and certain sections of the intelligentsia in the country hold an anti-government view. The purpose of citing "outsiders" is perhaps to *otherise*, something which has been done by both the government and opposition-linked MPs. As the reference to outsiders has been floated by MPs in the parliament, so has it been used by the media to frame their discourses.

On the other hand, in making claims, MPs from both factions cited selected intellectual voices. It is relevant here that for Bourdieu, to be considered as an intellectual, an individual as a “cultural producer” must fulfil the following two conditions:

(1) on the one hand, he must belong to an autonomous intellectual world (a field), that is, independent from religious, political, and economic powers (and so on), and must respect its specific laws; (2) on the other hand, he must invest the competence and authority he has acquired in the intellectual field in a political action, which is in any case carried out outside the intellectual field proper (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 656).

Following Bourdieu, an intellectual making a political statement (e.g., in the case of MOI policy debates) should be viewed as political. But in the case of individuals from Dong Jiao Zhong, it is often difficult to distinguish whether they performed the identity of a research group, education group, public intellectuals or any similar other identities, and thus whether they fall within the category of intellectuals as defined by Bourdieu. Dong Jiao Zhong have always supported the stand of specific political parties or individuals on education policies during national elections (refer to the case of by-elections held in the constituency of Lunas, Kedah in 2000, also, Collins, 2006).

To focus on ideology as a political factor as the title of this section suggests, the following question is apposite. Can ethnicity (i.e., ideology directly emanating from the practices of a specific ethnic group) in Malaysian conditions, be considered as a structural constraint for the members of the polity preventing them from being able to discuss certain issues in universal terms? When a Malay-Muslim political leader or an activist of such ethnic-religious background constructs a discursive claim on the basis of his/ her ethnic and religious premises, can s/he make the claim acceptable to the whole of society? How do we interpret it when a Chinese background MP in the parliament insists that the Chinese have a specific view about education or when a Malay-background MP establishes her arguments by referring to special privileges ensured by the national constitution?

By adopting a consociational type of constitution, the country has certainly given voices to every community (Gomez, 2007). But in light of the simultaneous adoption of a constitutional monarchy with a Malay as head of the country, and the implementation of various “preferential policies” (Haque, 2003), the country’s political system may seem contradictory. We cannot however do justice to these issues within a thesis focused solely on MOI policy debates and written from a discourse analysis perspective. Such a limitation

however may encourage us to develop a more efficient form of discourse analysis by sharpening the current tenets of critical discourse analysis which relies on inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary research frameworks.

Fairclough (2009) has suggested that it is the “order of discourse” in a society which contributes towards the formation of obstacles to speaking a universal language. In Malaysia the conflicting groups often failed to accommodate each other and to celebrate a plural society as had been originally intended by the country’s constitution. The situation gets complex when the public sphere constrains individuals from articulating community-specific rights-based arguments within the society. The former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohamad, in 2003 dubbed the positions of the prominent Chinese NGO Dong Jiao Zhong and the Chinese political parties from the opposition on MOI policy as “chauvinist” (Brown, 2005). The Malay-based opposition parties in the parliament also brought up the “threat” of being tried under the Internal Security Act if the Prime Minister found them working against the country’s ‘welfare’ by opposing the policy (see chapters Six and Seven).

These types of adverse labelling resulted in challenging the opposition group’s abilities to negotiate the production of the policy. It is only in the post-Mahathir era that the mainstream media slowly began to reflect on various controversial issues (Sani, 2005). The proliferation of civil society movements facilitated by alternative media changed the scene radically in 2009. Although the relevant policy was scrapped as the political parties within the opposition were divided on the issue, the antagonisms felt were adequately expressed.

In societies like Malaysia where antagonisms, due to multiplicity of ethnicity and language-based differences are not new, peripheral groups and their discourses often fail to influence the society as they are hardly represented (this was more the case in 2002 than in 2009). In their absence, the existing political elites shape the public discourses by almost denying the dialectics of discourse and society that was mooted by Chouliarakai and Fairclough (1999).

In the dialectics of discourse, it is not two simple entities, i.e., discourse and society that participate. Society can be broken down into different fields, which is, what makes an articulation possible. The analytical chapters in this thesis have shown that in order to explain the play of different fields within the Malaysian nation (or the contradictions of the

nation), it is necessary to trace the intertextual and interdiscursive references made by different stakeholders within the different fields. For Bourdieu a field is,

a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents of institutions, by their present and potential situation (*situs*) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology, etc.) (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 97).

What Bourdieu defined as “fields” can also be viewed as “critical sites of engagements” (Scollon, 1997b). The fields/ critical sites in our case are those platforms (e.g., the media and the parliament) which allow different participants to articulate their interests. These participants are products of a specific historical time. It became obvious in the analytical chapters that in order to explain empirically attested linguistic utterances in their specific textual manifestations, we need to read them against the historical realities at a specific historical juncture (e.g., the by-elections in Chapter Eight).

9.4 Significance of the Study

This study is significant mainly because it has developed, in contrast to existing models, a novel approach towards interpreting language policy discourse in Malaysia. By incorporating a poststructuralist, post-Marxist discourse theoretical model, the current study showed that any analysis of language policy in a given polity needs a complex analytical framework, i.e., inter/trans/multidisciplinary. The conceptually novel aspect of the thesis is its concept of articulation and antagonism from a post-Marxist which has been done by going back to original texts of Marx, Althusser, Laclau (with Mouffe), Bourdieu and other thinkers who shaped our very notion of articulation and antagonisms in a society. Existing CDA (except Fairclough and a few others) hardly includes Marx and Althusser, let alone, Laclau.

From a discourse theoretical perspective, the events in a society can be translated into theories (Torfing 2005). The current thesis drew a similarity between the events of '68 with the demonstrations in 1997 in Kuala Lumpur. I claim that the demonstrations in Kuala Lumpur could have initiated a similar theoretical move in Malaysia but such a move was

not offered by the discourse analysts who studied Malaysia. Researchers from other disciplines (e.g., sociology, economics and political science) studied participation of the members of Malaysian society from their theoretical concerns, while discourse analysts largely ignored the linguistic aspects of such events. The current research shows that the voicing of dissatisfaction about the MOI policy could be translated into a discourse theoretical model by referring to different types of antagonisms arising out of ethnicity and mother-tongue rights within this (or similar other) plural society.

Such an enterprise can be expected to elucidate the policy 'deadlocks' in not only Malaysia but also in other national political contexts that share similar modes of socio-political antagonisms. The current reality is that most societies are plural. The ethnic groups could be different but the nature of their socio-political antagonisms and articulations can coincide with the realities in Malaysia. The interest groups may manipulate and attempt to legitimize their policy preferences using similar discursive strategies.

9.5 Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research

There are three limitations to the present study, which should be obvious to readers. First, from a methodological perspective, the media data (see Chapter Eight) collected from multiple newspapers could have been analysed by using certain corpus linguistic tools only. Second, instead of reducing the voices of the subjects to texts composed in the genres of 'letters to the editors' and 'opinion editorials,' the 'real' subjects who struggled against the MOI policy debates could have been interviewed.

The third limitation is that the Hansard data collected from the Malaysian parliamentary website was transcribed by the parliament officials. The data is claimed to be transcribed verbatim. However, certain phrases which were viewed as un-parliamentary had been deleted by the authority (note: un-parliamentary discourse could be interpreted to mean phrases against an ethnic community, constitutional rights and so on as MPs in the parliament could exercise freedom of speech at its maximum). Therefore, utterances from actual video footage of the debates as ideal data could have been transcribed by the researcher and analysed using the tools of conversation analysis. However, to manage the entirety of the data that has been analysed in chapters Six, Seven and Eight by using the subtle tools of CA would have been a lengthy task. To reiterate, the study was rooted in the ideals of critical discourse analysis; hence, it was felt necessary to focus on a specific

period of time and a specific body of data to discover the construction of socio-political antagonisms reflected therein.

Another limitation was the selection of contextual data foregrounding the pro-Malay and pro-Chinese discourses in the parliament. To put it historically, the Indian political party within the ruling coalition did not oppose the proposed MOI policy as they felt by the 1990s that Tamil schools were “a dead-end professionally and socially” (Gupta, 1997, p. 505). In the parliament they did not participate in debating the issue similar to the Malay and Chinese based MPs. Hence, the decision about selecting data from the MPs with Malay and Chinese background was not designed to ignore the Indian population.

While the position of the non-Malay indigenous language-groups mainly located in the East Malaysia (i.e., Sabah and Sarawak) was ignored since the Malaysian vernacular school system allows only Malay, Mandarin and Tamil medium schools. To a large extent the politics of demography in Malaysia silences (by accommodating) the voice of the non-Malay indigenous population (albeit wrongly) by accommodating their position only within the position of the dominant Malays. We have seen that Malay based political parties within their parliamentary discourses did not distinguish between the non-Malay indigenous and Malay indigenous population in constructing a claim for Malay hegemony. Similarly the diverse Chinese and Indian communities in Malaysia who do not speak Mandarin and Tamil are accommodated within the rights-based discourses under the general category of ethnic groups (i.e., Chinese and Indian). Officially they are not represented by their authentic language identities (e.g., Hakka, Hokein, Teochoo and Hindi, Punjabi, Malayalam and so on).

To reiterate my point regarding the matter of not engaging with the real subjects, specially, policy makers and school teachers – obviously a limitation of the study – this can be explained by the harsh reality of the presence of many draconian laws like the Official Secrecy Act and Special Power Act which delimits subjects’ ability to articulate debates in ‘politically correct’ terms. Future studies must be conducted to find ways to accommodate multiple views in politically ‘hostile’ contexts – or what are popularly dubbed ‘Asian democracies’.

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Appendix 1

Letter of confirmation for the translation of texts from Malay to English



16 February 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that the translation of the text in this document has been checked and verified by Prof. Dr. Azirah Hashim from the Department of English Language, Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University of Malaya.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norizah Hassan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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