

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This study is aimed at investigating the language of editorials discussing controversial issues, specially, (a) how the editorials published by the *New Straits Times* construct the discursive field of teaching of mathematics and science in English and (b) How the various moments of interdiscursivity (i.e pedagogic, political, and perception of national interest) intersect with the discursive field of teaching of mathematics and science in English?

3.1 Theoretical framework

In doing so, the Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA), (Fairclough 2009) is adopted for the method of analysis. The researcher identifies the dialectical relations between semiosis and other social elements, in the social elements, in the social processes which are under investigation.

In, defining the dialectical relations between semiosis and other social elements, Fairclough lines up three semiotic categories: *genre*, for example job interviews, reports or editorials in newspapers or advertisements on TV, *discourse*, in example the construction of physical, social and mental which can be identified with different positions or perspective of different groups of social actors, and last but not least the third category which is *style*. Styles, according to Fairclough are identities or ‘ways of beings’, in their semiotic aspect.

These semiotic dimensions of social practices which constitute social fields, institutions, organizations etc. is actually orders of discourse (Fairclough,1992a). Order of discourse is

defined as a social structuring of semiotic difference, a particular social ordering of relationships between different ways of meaning making – different genres, discourses and styles.

3.2 Data

The genre chosen for this study is the op-ed taken from the national English newspaper, *The News Straits Times*. The op-eds discussing the issue of teaching mathematics and science are selected from the newspaper, from November 2007 to November 2009.

The selected op-eds are taken from the years mentioned, (November 2007 to November 2009) as it is the height of the discussion of the issue by politicians, parents, educationists and non- governmental organizations. Part of the research is inspired by the theory of “*Language is connected to power and ideology*” Fairclough (2009), and the aim is to investigate how power of a social institution affects a discourse in the construction of a discursive field. Therefore, the op-eds are deliberately chosen as the genre because, this is the platform in the newspaper where the distinguish figures behind the newspaper who write in it, can be judged through their opinions and views of the issue.

The figures who are identified to be actively writing on the issue are, Zainul Arifin, Ahmad A. Talib and Syed Nazri Syed Harun. Zainul Arifin , NSTP's Emedia chief, is the group editor from 10th June 2009. Zainul is also a columnist in NST. He was Business Times editor and NST's business editor. He had also served as NST's New York correspondent. He replaces NSTP group editor-in-chief Hishammudin Aun.

Syed Nadzri Syed Harun on the other hand, assumes the position of group editor of the *New Straits Times* from 1st January 2009. Syed Nadzri, who joined the NST in 1979 as a cadet

journalist, has held various positions, including chief news editor and executive editor and for the past month was the group editor designate.

Last but not least, Ahmad A. Talib is the Executive Director, for Media Prima Berhad (Media Prima) and the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd (NSTP). He was appointed to his current position on 11 June 2009. He started out as a Cadet Reporter with BERNAMA in 1972 and served the Economic Service there for six years prior to joining Business Times as a journalist in 1978. Later, he was promoted to become a Specialist Writer who covered national politics and industrial relations issues such as the trade union matters, labour disputes and management issues.

3.3 Data Analysis

The DRA approach lends itself to four major stages and further elaborated as ‘steps’.

Table 1: Stages of Dialectical Relational Approach

STAGE	STEPS
STAGE 1 Focus upon a social wrong in its semiotic aspect	STEP 1 A research topic which relates to a social wrong is selected
	STEP 2 Construct objects of research for initially identified research topics by theorizing them in a transdisciplinary way.
STAGE 2 Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong	STEP 1 Analyse dialectical relations between semiosis and other social elements: between order of discourse and other elements of social practices, between texts and other elements of events.
	STEP 2 Select texts, and categories for analysis.
	STEP 3 Carry out analyses of texts, both interdiscursive analysis, and linguistic/semiotic analysis.
STAGE 3 .	Consider whether the social order ‘needs’ the social wrong
STAGE 4	Identify possible ways past the obstacles

Demonstrated below are the stages and steps of the approach. Detailed analysis is carried out using Fairclough's (2009) Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA) of its stages and steps.

Stage 1 : Focus upon a social wrong in its semiotic aspect

A 'social wrong' is identified. In this case, 'social wrong' is defined as aspects of social systems, forms or orders which are detrimental to human being and which could in principle be restructured if not eliminated. A few examples quoted are like poverty, forms of inequality, lack of freedom or racism.

Stage 1 is further elaborated into 2 steps :

Step 1 : A research topic which relates to a social wrong is selected.

Step 2 : Construct objects of research for initially identified research topics by theorizing them in a transdisciplinary way.

Stage 2 : Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong

Fairclough suggests that the obstacles to addressing the social wrong identified in this part. In this stage, the social wrong is approached in a rather indirect way by asking what it is about the way in which social life is structured and organized that prevents it from being addressed. This stage thus further requires bringing in the analyses of the social order, and 'one point of entry' into this analysis can be semiotic which involves selecting and analyzing relevant 'texts' and addressing the dialectical relations between semiosis and other social elements.

Stage 2 is further formulated into 3 steps:

1. Analyze dialectical relations between semiosis and other social elements: between order of discourse and other elements of social practices, between texts and other elements of events.
2. Select texts, and focuses and categories for their analysis, in the light of an appropriate to the constitution of the object of research.
3. Carry out analyses of texts, both interdiscursive analysis, and linguistic/semiotic analysis.

Stage 3 : Consider whether the social order ‘needs’ the social wrong.

At this stage, it is considered whether the social wrong in focus is inherent to the social order and to see whether it can be addressed within it, or only by changing it. The analysis should connect with questions of ideology as it contributes to sustaining particular relations of power and dominations.

Stage 4 : Identify possible ways past the obstacles

The analysis is moved from negative to positive critique here. This is done through the identification of a focus on dialectical relations between semiosis and other elements. It could also be possibilities seen within the existing social process for overcoming obstacles to addressing the social wrong in question. This, according to Fairclough includes developing semiotic ‘point of entry’ into research on the ways in which these obstacles are actually tested, challenged and resisted, be it in organized political or social groups or movements or more informally by people in the course of their ordinary working, social and domestic lives. A specifically semiotic focus, according to Fairclough would include ways in which dominant

discourse is reacted to, contested, criticized and opposed (in its argumentation, in its construal of the world, its construal of social identities and so forth)

3.4 Conclusion

The next chapter will demonstrate how this framework is used in the analysis of the selected opinion editorials.