

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

The method of analysis for the opinion editorials is the Dialectical Relational Approach (DRA), (Fairclough 2009). Discussed in this chapter are the findings according to the stages and steps suggested in the approach. The research questions posed in this study are also answered in this chapter immediately after the stages and steps of DRA being reported.

4.1 Analysis

STAGE 1 / Step 1 : Focus upon a social wrong , in the semiotic aspect.

The ‘social wrong’ identified in the opinion editorials is, the mystification of the values of English in a non English speaking country. In the opinion editorials analyzed, the group of critiques mentioned, are, Gapena and Dong Jiao Zhong, who champion the issue of mother tongue education. Also that English is not at all necessary for a nation building, articulated as, “*Who cares about a foreign language?*” (ED 6 : November 20, 2007). The most common argument used against English is by citing the cases of Japan, France, Germany, Sweden and other first-world nation-states. They are also portrayed to be claiming that *Bahasa Malaysia* has to be promoted as stated in the Constitution and Malaysians should not rely on any foreign language, like how it is practiced in the countries mentioned:

[Text 1] “*Some people, of course, would like to dismiss this kind of concern as an overreaction, believing that Malaysia as an independent country should not be too reliant on a foreign language when it is Bahasa Malaysia that everyone should be promoting*” (ED 2: September 2, 2008).

The debates discussed by several agents as reported in the opinion editorials, involve multiple mediators, for instance cultural identity, mother tongue education and the preservation of national identity through the use of National language. These groups organized campaigns in order to compel the government to revert the policy, allegedly due to the following issues:

- Lack of qualified teachers with good English has undermined the implementation of the policy
- The policy belittled the declaration that *Bahasa Malaysia* is the medium of instruction in national schools.
- Malaysia as an independent country should not be reliant on a foreign language when it is *Bahasa Malaysia* that everyone should be promoting.
- Vernacular schools should be remained alive, whereby mother tongue is the language used.
- Culture and identities have to be preserved (Chinese political parties and non-governmental organizations)
- *Bahasa Malaysia* should retain its prime status (Malay nationalists and literary group)
- Chinese and Indians, have to be in touch with their roots. Need to learn the mother tongue.
- The policy is waving the Constitution whereby, *Bahasa Malaysia* is the National language.

As discussed in the opinion editorials, the writers consider English as a “*global language*” and a language of utmost importance. However due to interferences caused by these critiques, the country’s young generation’s future is claimed to be jeopardized and put to risk:

[Text 2] “*If English is the de-facto language of the information age, why should we deprive our children of the opportunity to grab as much knowledge out there as they can?*” (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

[Text3] *“Or perhaps of politicians merely paying lip service to the idea of promoting the language and looking at the interest of our kids, while yet again, in their many guises and agendas, jeopardizing the future of our children.”* (ED 4: December 10, 2008: p. 14)

[Text 4] *“The first, of course, is that no one can deny the superiority of English as a language for Mathematics and Science. It is proven that there are more knowledge sources in English than in any other language, so why should we deny our children’s access to them”* (ED 5: December 7 2008 : p. 13)

As a result, the writers claim that the standard of English in the country has forlornly declined, resulting from the denial of the importance of the language.

STAGE 1 / Step 2: Construct objects of research for initially identified research topics by theorizing them in transdisciplinary way.

In the opinion editorials analyzed, there are a few fields seen intersecting. The most common in all the opinion editorials are the fields of education and politics. Politics is revealed to have such great influence to the way Malaysian education system is being realized, and politicians are portrayed by the writers of the op-ed to be having their own agendas, championing everything else, except the nation’s interest and the future of Malaysian children.

[Text 5] *“Petitions were written and signature campaigns were launched to try to get the policy reversed or amended. Even politicians from within the same party argued endlessly about the advantages and the disadvantages of the policy. For example, Johor UMNO was among the first to object the policy* (ED 1: July 5, 2009 : p. 10)

Politicians are described to be interrupting the education system, bringing in their own agendas and at the same time, the government is seen to be allowing these parties to voice out their woes and despair over the issue, perhaps in the interest of politics.

[Text 6] *“I managed to wrangle an invitation to the fifth Ministry of Education roundtable to discuss the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, and I came out convinced that we, as a nation are capable of politicking almost anything, even the colours of the traffic lights, if we could .”* (ED 5: December 7 2008 : p. 13)

[Text 7] *“Champions of Bahasa Malaysia who are basking in the glory of reversing the policy to teach maths and science in English are forgetting that such strategy makes the desertion of national schools more permanent”* (ED 9: November 4, 2009 : p14)

Global needs, racial sentiments and politics are the fields seen intersecting. Despite the global needs and high demand for fluent speakers of English in the market, Malaysian government is portrayed by the writers as to be defying these needs by contemplating on abolishing the policy of teaching mathematics and science in English. The writers, constantly in their opinion editorials demonstrate the racial sentiments brought in by the parties like Dong Jiao Zhong and Gapena; each having their own political agendas.

[Text 8] *“It should be obvious by now that a lot has to do with the nationalistic and chauvinistic fervor of some sections of the population which, perhaps in tune with the demands of local politics, policy-makers sometimes cave in to.”* (ED 2: September 2, 2008)

The editors who wrote the opinion pieces may appear very cynical as they describe the positions taken by the pressure groups of Gapena and Dong Jiao Zhong and political leaders of various ranks. These op-ed writers are almost certain that these “champions” of Malaysian agenda are aimed at jeopardizing the future of Malaysia for the sake of obtaining their political agendas.

[Text 9] *“Or perhaps of politicians merely paying lip service to the idea of promoting the language and looking at the interest of our kids, while yet again, in their many guises and agendas, jeopardizing the future of our children.”* (ED 4: December 10, 2008: p. 14)

[Text 10] *“I tend to believe most politicians are just playing lip-service on national unity. At the end of the day, we are not really keen on keeping up with the tune”* (ED 8: December 3, 2008: p. 10).

[Text 11] *“But our politician oppose English schools, even the semblance of a semi-english education as per the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English”* (ED 8: December 3, 2008 : p. 10)

[Text 12] *Some were vociferously calling for a reversion to Bahasa Malaysia for the two subjects, which is a sad thing really, even if you take out the stark embarrassment of flip-flopping”*. (ED4:December10,2008:p.14)

[Text 13] *This is because doing so would fundamentally reduce an opportunity to enhance English competency, especially among Malay students and hence ruin their utility in the very competitive job market”* (ED 1: July 5, 2009 : p. 10)

[Text 14] *“Perhaps politicians should take a step back, just for a while in case they are worried, and let parents have their say”* (ED 9: November 4, 2009 : p14).

[Text 15] *“Some of the biggest opponents of teaching science and mathematics in English are representatives of Chinese schools, and Chinese politicians, who want to revert to Bahasa Malaysia”* (ED 7: November 19, 2008 : p. 10)

However, none of the writers has any qualms about *Bahasa Malaysia* being the National language as they agree that the National language deserves the highest respect. They want Malaysian children to excel both in *Bahasa Malaysia* as well as in English so that the future generation can meet the global requirements in the global market.

[Text 16] *“Yes, let’s do well in Science and Maths! Yes, let’s also do well in English! And no we don’t want to see the decline in the standard of Bahasa Malaysia in the schools.”* (ED 1: July 5, 2009 : p. 10)

[Text 17] “*First, the position of the national language- which we all admit is important and must be cornerstone of our nationhood. As Malaysians, we should all be proficient in Bahasa Malaysia. There are no two ways about it.*” (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

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.

The people writing the opinion editorials are distinguished figures in NST. The order of discourse is, NST being a *government* newspaper perhaps should align with the policy of the government. The ideology presented by the newspaper might depict the perspective of the government. This however, might be the obstacle in addressing the social wrong and a method of how they play the discourse.

For example, an editorial written by Syed Nadzri scorns the mutilation of the English language in an advertorial in honour of Yang Amat Mulia Raja Zarith Sofiah.

The obstacle is, the writer being the Group Editor of *The New Straits Times* (2007-2009) perhaps should be writing in favour of the government’s policy. However, he relates this particular language issue to the current education system, which is the policy of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English. The point made is, the editor perhaps is unable to produce a direct criticism of the policy. Hence, he criticizes the policy from the periphery. He chooses one of the sublime signifiers of education that is, how important it is to be an apt user of a language, for instance, in journalistic writing or producing even a eulogy for the royal family in a country like Malaysia. When the language user fails to perform the act it can be seen as a possible negative effects of the reverted policy, even though the editor does not refer to it directly:

[Text 18] *“The niggling discomfort and raging debate over the use of English in the teaching of Science and Mathematics is the case of point. The system introduced five years ago, is in jeopardy and may be scrapped following complaints that pupils, particularly in rural schools, find it hard to cope with the language.”* (ED 2: September 2, 2008)

A much more complex situation occurs when the group editor has to negotiate with his private life – in an opinion editorial the editor writes as a parent rather than an editor to a national newspaper owned by the government. Hence, the obstacle identified is, him being a parent who has a say in having to agree or disagree to a government’s policy. He uses the platform as a ‘parent to 7-year-old Zuleika’ to express his frustrations- regardless of the post he embraces.

[Text 19] *“Personally as a parent, I am tired of people who think they know better than me on what is good for my children. I don’t have any political or cultural supremacy agenda: may be I am shallow that way. All I want to do is give my daughter a fighting chance in this globalised world.”* (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

[Text 20] *“I went there without slides or power point charts, minus studies or papers, bereft of statistics or findings. I went there as a parent representing 7-year-old Zuleika, and I would also like to think, many other children in the country .”* (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

The other obstacle identified in the opinion editorials is that the writers being all Malays. Ironically, every one of them has issues with the Malays who are championing the Malay language. Gapena and other Malay leagues in consensus, have become the objects of contempt among these writers.

[Text 21] *“I pity the insecurity of those who oppose English, **but** for their righteousness and chauvinism, they deserve my contempt.”* (ED 4: December 10, 2008: p. 14)

[Text 22] *“I also have issues with Gapena for championing Bahasa Malaysia selectively in schools”* (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

[Text 23] *“It is without a doubt that English is the most popular language for the depository of knowledge especially in the fields of science and technology. I welcome the Gabungan Penulis Nasional (Gapena)- Dong Jioa Zhong- Tamil FoundationTroika to disprove my hypotheses.”* (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

In general, from the opinion editorials analyzed, the writers are seen to be defying the existing order of discourse, and that may be identified as the major obstacle. All of them represent the national newspaper and yet, they are seen trying their might to influence the government to retain the policy; at the same time influence the people who are affected by the policy. Their positions in NST seem to allow them to do so as they have access to send a message to the government and also to the people as they write in a widely read newspaper - through their editorials.

[Text 24] *“If there are flaws in the teaching of Science and Mathematic in English that have caused Malay students to lag behind, then fix it. Not scrap it.* (ED 2:September 2, 2008)

[Text 25] *“The solution lies not in lowering the bar but raising the performance and creating a competitive society in the process. This has nothing to do with not being nationalistic because the effect will be quite the opposite.”* (ED 2: September 2, 2008)

They are also seen to be using the platform in the newspaper to *coax* the government to decide in the name of the future generations. It is quite obvious that the reference to “future generations” appear as a constant sublime signifier in the most of the texts. It is sublime in the sense that it is a matter for everyone to worry, hence, can legitimize their appeal to question the reverted policy albeit in an inverted manner.

[Text 26] *“Well, let’s hope that the Ministry of Education shows us how this can be done—that our children have a good command of English, be excellent in Bahasa Malaysia and be able to compete successfully on the international stage. I’m quite sure the ministry would have done enough research and study to support its decision, one way or the other.”* (ED 1: July 5, 2009 : p. 10)

From the obstacles identified in the opinion editorials, it is discovered that the dialectical relationship exists between social practice (i.e., the concrete act of the reversal of the policy) and the order of discourse (i.e., the state-supported discourse on the policy). In other words, the social practice is seen to be the move of changing the policy of teaching mathematics and science in English, while the order of discourse is seen to be defying the practice.

Step 2 : Select texts and categories for analysis

The selection of text for the analysis constitutes of the object of research which reflects the dialectical relationship between the social order and the social wrong. Examples are taken from the opinion editorials in NST. Categories for the analysis include the various moments of interdiscursivity (i.e., pedagogical, political, and perception of national interest).

Step 3 : Carry out analysis of texts

The texts are selected and the samples are demonstrated in the summary of findings (see below)

STAGE 3 : Consider whether the social order needs the social wrong

As in the opinion editorials analysed, NST at large plays the issue of the decline of the language and what damage it could do towards the building of a successful and competitive nation.

[Text 27] *“But we have reasons to be worried by the bigger picture brought by this question: has the standard of English sunk to a new low here and is this reflective of all our universities?”* (ED 2: September 2, 2008)

[Text 28] *“It will go down as the most appalling bloopers, blunders or bungles of our time, gravely aggravated by the ironic fact that it originated in a respected university...”* (ED 2: September 2, 2008)

[Text 29] *“Love of our own language is fine and should be encouraged. It has its place in our hearts. But heads should rule, too, if we look at today’s world, I say we relegate and neglect English at our own peril.”*(ED 2: September 2, 2008)

[Text 30] *“The complaints about the poor standard of English among our students, including graduates, are not new. Corporate bosses often lament at the difficulties in getting qualified English-speaking staff.* (ED 1: July 5, 2009 : p. 10)

[Text 31] *Some were vociferously calling for a reversion to Bahasa Malaysia for the two subjects, which is a sad thing really, even if you take out the stark embarrassment of flip-flopping. This is because doing so would fundamentally reduce an opportunity to enhance English competency, especially among Malay students and hence ruin their utility in the very competitive job market.”*(ED 2: September 2, 2008)

On the other hand, those opposing the policy are portrayed as not to be engaging into the discussion of the global needs and the future of the young generation. Instead they have been side tracked by foregrounding the issues of national identity, cultural rights and indigenous values. This is precisely what Fairclough (2009) defines as mystifying the social wrong instead of clarifying it to end the wrong.

The conflict, hence has raised the verity that the social order are often tied to the social wrong, sustain the wrong; although it might be avoided. NST being a source to reach out to the public, needs to debate the social wrong using certain metaphors, like global needs and future generation as Malaysians, according to NST must see the urgency of shaping the future nation to meet the global demands. This stance by NST is as ideological as the stance of the ones that they articulate. The authors of the editorials suggest that the standard of English in the country should not be jeopardized to meet political demands and interest as well as racial sentiments. Also that the Malaysians need to see when English is highlighted of its importance, *Bahasa Malaysia* is

not meant to put at risk. But to what extent their articulation of the problem in favor of future generation, instead of being another set of ideological arguments, further mystifies the problem in order to sustain the social wrong (i.e., mystification of the values of English in a non-English speaking country).

In short, the writers of the opinion editorials, representing the newspaper, need the mystification of the problem (i.e., social wrong) in order to ascertain the value of the English language deemed ideal by them in this non-English speaking country.

[Text 32] *“The solution lies not in lowering the bar but raising the performance and creating a competitive society in the process. This has nothing to do with not being nationalistic because the effect will be quite the opposite.”* (ED 6 : November 20, 2007)

STAGE 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles.

From the opinion editorials analyzed, there are three possible ways identified to win the obstacles:

1. The use of institutional power to dispel the mystification (i.e., the social wrong)
2. The dichotomous role of Malay/ Malaysian (i.e., the writers being Malays and by associating themselves with the rights of the Malay language, officially known as *Bahasa Malaysia*, can produce a critique of Gapena, a Malay writers association)
3. Playing the role of parents

One possible way past the obstacle (NST being the ‘government’s newspaper’), is through the use of power as writers and prominent figures in one of the most circulated English dailies in Malaysia. Their opinions may reflect the ideology of the newspaper, not necessarily their own.

In the opinion editorials analyzed, they are seen to express their hopes to see the success of the country. In doing so, they subtly criticize the government. For example:

[Text 33] *“Well, let’s hope that the Ministry of Education shows us how this can be done—that our children have a good command of English, be excellent in Bahasa Malaysia and be able to compete successfully on the international stage. I’m quite sure the ministry would have done enough research and study to support its decision, one way or the other.”*

(ED 1: July 5, 2009 : p. 10)

[Text 34] *“But **the country** sadly appears to be still confused about its education policies and priorities.”* (ED 2: September 2, 2008)

In their position in the organization, they have the power to address the social wrong. Hegemony, that is, the use of institutional power and effective convincing ideas, is traced in the writers’ writing style and this, in a way helps to correct the social wrong.

The second way to win the obstacle is the fact that these editors happens to be Malays. They make use of this opportunity to re-articulate the slogan of *Bahasa jiwa bangsa* (Language is the essence of a race) deemed ideal in nationalist spirit. They safely criticized parties like Gapena, Malay Educationists and UMNO politicians alike, as they could escape being labeled as racists.

[Text 35] *“Or perhaps our politicians merely paying lip service to the idea of promoting the language and looking at the interest of our kids, while yet again, in their many guises and agendas, jeopardizing the future of our children.”*

(ED 4: December 10, 2008: p. 14)

The author of the editorials made it clear that in defending the policy of the continuation of teaching in English, they however are not in denial of the importance of *Bahasa Malaysia*.

[Text 36] *“Yes, let’s do well in Science and Maths! Yes, let’s also do well in English! And no we don’t want to see the decline in the standard of Bahasa Malaysia in the schools.”* (ED 1: July 5, 2009 : p. 10)

[Text 37] *“Love of our own language is fine and should be encouraged. It has its place in our hearts.”* (ED 2: September 2, 2008)

[Text 38] *“We acknowledge the importance of both and we must try to accommodate both. It should not be a zero sum game where we choose one over the other”* . (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

[Text 39] *“First, the position of the national language- which we all admit is important and must be a cornerstone of our nationhood.”* (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

The other way to win the obstacle, is as it is demonstrated by Zainul Arifin. He uses the platform by playing the role of a parent. The family metaphor being deemed ideal in a collective society like Malaysia gives the editor the opportunity to articulate his ideological position. Put in other words, this gives him the freedom to voice his opinion (i.e., his ideological stance). At the same time, he as someone although belongs to a family is heard louder due to the post he holds in the institution, as a public figure.

[Text 40] *“Personally as a parent, I am tired of people who think they know better than me on what is good for my children. I don’t have any political or cultural supremacy agenda: maybe I am shallow that way. All I want to do is give my daughter a fighting chance in this globalised world.”* (ED 4: December 10, 2008: p. 14)

[Text 41] *“I went there without slides or power point charts, minus studies or papers, bereft of statistics or findings. I went there as a parent representing 7-year-old Zuleika, and I would also like to think, many other children in the country .”* (ED 5: December 7 2008 : p. 13)

[Text 42] *“I was there with an agenda that is basically my child’s; they are neither political, nor chauvinistic nor unreasonable. In fact, my agenda is practical and pragmatic- offer our children the tools to prosper in the globalised world.”* (ED 5: December 7 2008 : p. 13).

The writer is seen to speak to the governing party (i.e., the coalition of Barisan Nasional and the political party UMNO, in particular) through his column in the newspaper. This is most probably one way to past the obstacle- with the power in hand which he possesses.

4.2 Summary of Findings

Below is the summary of the findings for Step 2 and Step 3 of the DR

4.2.1 Use of Agency

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Use of Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education minister • Some parents • The English language • An advertorial • The system • The proponents of mother tongue • The Chinese education lobby group • Political parties • The leaders of Dong Jiao Zhong • I • They • We • Those opposing the policy • Ismail • Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohammed • The detractors • More and more non Malays • Some of the biggest opponents • Most of us • The current system • The real world • Champions of Bahasa Malaysia

4.2.2 Missing agents (Nominalization)

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Missing agents (Nominalization)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petitions were written • Critiques argued that • Another group of critiques • Many people • Many will argue • Many claim vernacular schools...

4.2.3 Use of informal register (Use of first person narrative voice)

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Use of informal register (Use of first person narrative voice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Yes, let’s do well in Science and Maths! Yes, let’s also do well in English!”</i> • <i>“Personally as a parent, I am tired of people who think they know better than me on what is good for my children..”</i> • <i>“And please don’t tell me about the Germans or French or everyone else who prospered without English”</i> • <i>“...all I know is that English is a superior language for science and technology.”</i> • <i>“I am sure of that as Dong Jiao Zong has been on the superiority of Mandarin and Tamil...”</i> • <i>“I have been using this weekly soap box..”</i> • <i>“My suggestion is simple. So as our sensibilities are not offended...”</i> • <i>“I wish they would all disappear but alas they would not”.</i>

4.2.4 Questions as interactional conventions

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Questions as interactional conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“What are their arguments?”</i>• <i>“...has the standard of English sunk to a new low here and is this reflective of all our universities?”</i>• <i>“What about the kids in Sabah and Sarawak who have to contend with neither one of the major three as theirs?”</i>• <i>“Not enough qualified teachers?”</i>

4.2.5 Third person narration.

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Third person narration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Students, parents and teachers are anxiously waiting for the announcement”.</i>• <i>“The Chinese education lobby group..”</i>• <i>“The proponents of mother tongue”</i>• <i>“Critiques argued that...”</i>• <i>“Some of the biggest opponents of the teaching of science and mathematics..”</i>• <i>“The detractor’s next question is...”</i>• <i>“Political ideologies offering a racial edge...”</i>• <i>“Champions of Bahasa Malaysia..”</i>

4.2.6 The Use of Hedging

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
<p>The use of hedging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>And with that perhaps the whole education system in the country</i>”. • “<i>chauvinistic fervor of some sections of the population which, perhaps in tune with the demands of local politics, policy-makers sometimes cave in to.</i>” • “<i>...put a stop to the teaching of the subjects of Science and Mathematics in English are neither racist nor chauvinist, though some may be.</i>” • “<i>I don’t have any political or cultural supremacy agenda: may be I am shallow that way.</i>” • “<i>Or perhaps of politicians merely paying lip service to the idea of promoting the language...</i>” • “<i>I pity the insecurity of those who oppose English, but for their righteousness and chauvinism...</i>” • “<i>Perhaps, politicians should take a step back...</i>”

4.2.7 Use of Metaphoric Elements

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
<p>Use of metaphoric elements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>...toss the blanket suggestion</i>” • “<i>That train left the station long ago...</i>” • “<i>The English language was mutilated and murdered in one clumsy cock-up..</i>” • “<i>While everyone is now scrambling to plug the loop holes that led to the muddle, the whole episode has come as a useful reflection,</i>” <i>“...Nero fiddling as Rome burns, to pretend as if the problem facing us is not serious enough...”</i>

4.2.8 Use of Adjectives

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Use of adjectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “<i>appalling</i>”• “<i>gravely</i>”• “<i>boo-boo</i>”• “<i>horrendous</i>”

4.2.9 The use of Epistemic Modality

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
The use of epistemic modality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “...we all admit is important and must be a cornerstone of our nationhood.”• “These are two issues which must be de-coupled from each other...”• “It should not be a zero sum game where we choose one over the other”• “...which I must admit could be misleading,”• “The leaders of Dong Jiao Zong know how such a threat would play out in public...”• “I wish they would all disappear but alas they would not.”• “...then you would be registering them in the private school and later packing them off abroad.”

4.2.10 Writer's Agenda- (Unambiguous)

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Writer's agenda- (Unambiguous)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“I was there with an agenda that is basically my child's; they are neither political, nor chauvinistic nor unreasonable.</i> • <i>In fact, my agenda is practical and pragmatic-offer our children the tools to prosper in the globalised world.”</i>

4.2.11 Writer's Agenda- (Ambiguous)

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Writer's agenda- (Ambiguous)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“The second issue is the position of the national language in schools and in the society. Judging by the eloquence of the non-Malays who spoke at the round table, including deputy Education Minister Datuk Wee Ka Siong, there is no doubt that the future of the national language is secure”</i>

4.2.12 Flashback Strategy

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Flashback strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Here's a jolt from the past for the language romantics and the confused: the move to have Science and Mathematics taught in English in schools was actually the result of proposals made by, of all people, Malay educationists six years ago...”</i> • <i>“...at the Malay Education Congress in 2001 by Datuk Dr Ismail Mohd Salleh, the then president of the National Association of Bumiputera Private Higher Education Institutions, who said there was not enough reference material on Science and Mathematics in Bahasa Malaysia...”</i>

4.2.13 Use of Analogy

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Use of Analogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“It is akin to acknowledging the dangers of smoking, and yet continually to puff away. Why? Because the instant gratification of the nicotine fix is more compelling than the longer-term consequences of smoking.”</i>

4.2.14 Exaggeration and Generalization

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Exaggeration and Generalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Everyone is waving the Constitution when we talk of a single school system”</i>• <i>“There are tens of thousands of retirees, teachers and others...”</i>

4.2.15 Use of Sequence Connectors

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Use of sequence connectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“First, the position of the national language- which we all admit is important”</i> <i>“Second, the importance of English- and how it will add to the national competitiveness”</i>

4.2.16 Rhetorical Questions

LINGUISTIC CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
<p>Rhetorical questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“How can these be good for a multi racial country?”</i> • <i>“grab as much knowledge out there as they can?”</i> • <i>Why is it shouting about reverting to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools, where currently 60 percent of the</i> • <i>instruction is in the national language?”</i> • <i>“Why is it silent on the vernacular schools, where less than 15 per cent of the instruction is in Bahasa Malaysia?”</i> • <i>“Is its silence due to its alliance of convenience with the champions of Mandarin and Tamils, as well as the complicity in a common sense?”</i> • <i>“Did not the majority of our urbanites once live in the rural areas, some even without the benefit of indoor plumbing?”</i> • <i>“And why would you not want your children to get a head start in an international language?”</i> • <i>“But are Chinese schools, for example, popular because they are well run, or because they use Mandarin as the medium of instruction?”</i> • <i>Do our schools kids know the work of Usman Awang or Samad Ismail, unless if they had taken literature as subject?</i> • <i>So is there flip-flopping now?</i> • <i>How can they make friends with kids of other races, share their food, play catch, or be on the same team if they are not together?</i> • <i>Close down our vernacular schools?</i> • <i>“What can we expect when the Ministry of Education announces its decision on the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English soon, possibly this week?”</i> • <i>“Do we scrap something just because pupils find it difficult? Or do we find a way to make them overcome the difficulty?”</i> • <i>“But what does it do to our younger generation?”</i> • <i>“What does it do to our younger generations? What does it do to our children’s confidence and competitiveness in a globalised world?”</i> • <i>“Why?”</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“But how will that add to their, and the nations global competitiveness which is almost anchored in proficiency in English?”</i> • <i>“How?When?Where is the time during school?”</i> • <i>“...why should we deprive our children of the opportunity to</i>
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4.3 Summary of linguistic elements

The section summarizes the linguistic elements used in the data. This is to see its contribution to the construction of the discursive field. From the analysis carried out, it can be concluded that language is dialectically related with power and ideology that sustains the order of discourse (Fairclough, 2009 p.25), to a certain extent Various language elements are identified in the creation of the discursive field. The elements used in the data are discussed below.

4.3.1 Agency and/or missing agency

In the texts analyzed, agency is mentioned explicitly at large, specifically in the form of pronouns. The writers are seen to prefer writing in first person narration. Hence, the use of ‘I’ and ‘me’ are repeated. The use of agency is seen as a technique to express their opinion and their stand on the issue discussed. But then again, this may not reflect their personal beliefs as they work as an institute (Fairclough 2001).

For example in the opinion editorial “Why not get the people to decide” (ED 4: December 10, 2008: p. 14), the writer seems to be condemning the act of politicizing education. His thoughts are apparent to his audience. In doing so, the use of agency is very clear and lucid. There was no hiding of his thoughts; this finding questions the standard Faircloughian analysis

that ideology is usually *hidden* in a discourse. Also to note that no nominalization was used, instead, pronouns like *they*, *we*, *I*, *you* are used as agents.

However, a limited use of indirect language was found in the data analyzed, that is, certain parts of the texts did not particularly use agency to express opinions and stands. Instead, the writers are observed to be rather ambiguous in revealing their opinions. It is always not them who are discussing the decline of the language, but the people around them instead, hence the use of phrases like, "*Petitions were written..*", "*Critiques argued that..*", "*Many people..*" and so on (See table in 4.2.1 Use of Agency). This perhaps is their strategy to manipulate the readers in believing that they are writing in a neutral stance.

4.3.2 Informal Register

The register of the opinion editorials is rather informal. The effect of informality in their delivery is the readers would feel they are being directly spoken to. This is one strategy used to influence the readers to agree with their views and opinions. Miller (1997) alleged that writers may use this strategy to 'deceive' the readers.

In the opinion editorials, informal sentences are used when they want to reach out to their audience. Informality allows them to express themselves by showing the readers their exact thoughts and feelings towards the issue. This way, their hegemony is put across. In example; "*I wish they would all disappear but alas they would not*" (ED 4:December 10, 2008: p. 14). In this example the writer uses the pronoun 'I' as the strategy of being informal. (Harper, 2004) claims that the power of first person is the intimacy the writer can develop with the reader and it could also force the readers to find out things which the writer wants the readers to know.

In the given example earlier, by using first person narrative, the writer seems to be speaking directly to the audience. In other sample opinion editorials, the pattern is similar. In another example of informality, this strategy is used to show urgency of what is being delivered, understood by the readers:

[Text 43] “ *Most of us would be dead 50 years from now, but surely our biggest sin for the future generations would be to guarantee them a country destined to be divided*” (ED 7: November 19, 2008 : p. 10)

The example demonstrates the writer’s strategy to force the readers to know his actual position about the mystification of the English language by the adversaries.

4.3.3 Rhetorical Questions

A rhetorical question is a question used as a challenging statement to convey the addressers’ commitment to its implicit answer (Ilie 1999:128, cited by Schaffer (2005:434)). In the opinion editorials analyzed, this particular strategy is most commonly used in the opinion editorials. The writers are seen to use this strategy to get the readers to go along with their hegemony. They also use this strategy to provoke the readers, compelling them to think and apply their logical reasoning. This is done, especially because they are the people with power in the institution they represent.

Schaffer (2005) points out that rhetorical questions are presumably used to convey several assumptions, among which is the assumption of mutual knowledge and also the assumption of power maintenance. For example, a few sentences in the opinion editorials are in the form of questions, “*How? When? Where is the time during school?*” (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11). This particular example illustrates the writer’s anger and frustration. It also demonstrates the power maintenance of the writer. By continuously questioning, his power as

the writer is retained and established. The other examples are as illustrated in the long list of rhetorical questions used in the opinion editorials (4.2.5 Rhetorical Questions) .

4.3.4 Hedging

The writers in the opinion editorials are traced to hedge. This strategy is perhaps carried out to make their statements less provoking and less contemptuous. As what is believed by Salanger- Meyer (1995), main functions of hedging are to protect the authors against reactions which their propositions might provoke and to reflect their modesty and deference towards the target audience. In the context of the opinion editorials, hedging is done supposedly to mellow down the writers' accusation towards the group of critiques discussed in the editorial.

4.3.5 Analogy and Metaphoric Elements

According to Miller (1997), metaphors are used to convey connotations. The writers of the opinion editorials in some of their angry tones, use metaphoric elements. For example, words like “*mutilated*” and “*murdered*” are used to voice frustration towards the mistreatment of the English language.

In another example, Miller (1997) compares the “*racists*” and “*chauvinists*” act of championing their cause with the analogy of the act of smoking.

[Text 44] “*It is akin to acknowledging the dangers of smoking, and yet continually to puff away. Why? Because the instant gratification of the nicotine fix is more compelling than the longer-term consequences of smoking.*” (ED 3: February 25, 2009: p.11)

When analogy is used as the example given, it is to help the readers to agree or disagree on the topic discussed (Boroditsky 2000; Evans 2004). By using analogy, which is actually a representation of everyday situations (Musolff 2006), the writer is actually trying to build a mental picture to the readers. This way, the readers can evaluate the writer's view point on the topic conferred.

4.3.6 Modality

When a controversial issue is addressed, it is concerned with the speaker's assumptions of possibilities and, in most cases, it indicates the speaker's confidence (or lack of confidence), in the truth of the proposition expressed (Coates, 1983: 18).

The use of epistemic modality is traced in the opinion editorials analyzed. The use of this type of modals is perhaps to show the writers' degree of commitment. Sometimes, strong epistemic modals are used, for example, the modals "must", "will", "should" and "should not". The use reflects the writers' strong commitment to the issue discussed.

At other times in the opinion editorials, the most common modal used is 'would'. In terms of degree of commitment, this modal is categorized as the weakest modal. This shows that the writers are perhaps trying to be somewhat gracious despite all the attacks made;

[Text 45] *"I bet it **would** be the former , and the school **would** continue to prosper regardless if Mathematics and Science are taught in French."* (ED 4: December 10, 2008: p. 14)

The degree of commitment as asserted by Palmer (1986) is to what he says is to be interpreted as showing the status of the speaker's understanding or knowledge; this clearly includes both his own judgements and the kind of warrant he has for what he says (Palmer, 1986: 51).

4.3.7 Flashback Strategy

Flashback strategy is a tool used to add dimension to a writing piece (Tritt, 2006). This strategy which is used in one of the opinion editorial, is regarded as a successful technique. By providing flashback, the readers are brought back in time, with a purpose - perhaps to *ridicule* the government of the 'flip flopping' decisions made.

[Text 46] *“Forgetting that it was Umno itself which had supported the move five years earlier, the case brought up at the latest party congress against the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English was, apart from nationalistic reasons, the concern about the performance of Malay pupils and their difficulty in coping with the new system.”*

(ED 6 : November 20, 2007)

When a writer uses flashback strategy, it is to exhibit his motives by presenting a crucial information that happened some time ago (Kress, 2008). With regards to this particular opinion editorial (ED 6 : November 20, 2007), the tactic is purposely employed to challenge the readers to use their rationale when engaging themselves in the issue of the language policy.

4.4 Conclusion

The findings obtained from the Dialectical Relational Approach framework used in analyzing the opinion editorials, have in fact revealed very important aspects with regards to the dialectical relations between language and power.

First and foremost, *News Straits Times*'s stance in the policy of teaching mathematics and science in English is reflected in the way the opinion editorials were written. As highlighted earlier in Chapter Two in this report;

“...[in the] *editorial opinion is generally institutional, and not personal and that editorials count as the opinion of 'the' newspaper. This means that they will generally be shared among several editors, or between editors and management, or between editors and other social groups they belong to. Most importantly, therefore, is the realization that whatever specific opinions about specific events are being formulated, they will tend to be derived from social representations, rather than from the personal experiences or opinions of an editor*” (Van Dijk, 1996).

The newspaper had played the issue by foregrounding the critique groups who are against the policy (i.e Dong Zhiao Jong, Gapena, Politicians, NGOs, Malay Educationists and Troika) and backgrounding the important issue of the government contemplating on the reversal of the education policy.

The issue of language and cultural sentiments the protestors brought in, are criticized through the opinion editorials. To ‘counter attack’ the issues these groups are championing, the newspaper brought in the issue of the depletion of the English language in the country which is regarded to be ‘dangerous’ in the construction of a globalized nation. The sensitive issue of language is then balanced with the discussion of the importance of *Bahasa Malaysia* to the nation. All the writers in the analysis carried out, were observed to be writing in the same pitch.

The other important factor observed from the findings is the defying of the social order. This is plausible because of the power relations the writers possess. They discussed matters related to the issue overtly. To add to that, all of them being Malays bestowed them the superiority to discuss about *Bahasa Malaysia* as the national language, without appearing to be racially biased.

The textual analysis carried out on the linguistic aspects of the opinion editorials on the other hand, had revealed that the language used by the writers supports what the newspaper is

establishing (the policy should be retained in the name of the future generations). The tools used as discussed at length earlier, are all focused towards this ideology the newspaper created.

Hence it can be concluded that, the discursive field of teaching mathematics and science in English is formed by the editors, by zeroing on the groups of critiques, focusing on the language issues (English and *Bahasa Malaysia*) and demonstrating their power through the use of language (through the text analysis). Therefore, research question 1 of *How the editorials published by the New Straits Times construct the discursive field of teaching of mathematics and science in English* is answered.

From the analysis carried out, it was also discovered that these editors had foregrounded the protestors of the policy by highlighting their protests against retaining the education policy. On the other hand, the issue of the government giving in to these groups of people is backgrounded. Here, it can be assumed that education and politics are demonstrated to be intermingled. In short, political and national interests (i.e the denial of the importance of English language in meeting the global needs) are the two major elements seen intersecting. This therefore demonstrates that, research question 2, of “*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*” is therefore answered.

The research questions to this study is further discussed and tied up in the concluding chapter of ‘Conclusion and Recommendation’.