CHAPTER 3 : METHODOLOGY

3.0   INTRODUCTION

The core data of this study are 179 news articles and reports on issues regarding disabled people from *The Star* (1 July 2004 – 30 June 2005) (*cf. Appendix B*). This chapter focuses on issues related to the choice of data, procedures involved, the framework adopted for analysis and presentation of data. Definitions of the formal characteristics of the key phrases employed for analysis at the micro level will also be presented in this chapter.

3.1   DATA : DESCRIPTIONS AND RATIONALE

3.1.1   Primary Data : News Reports and Articles

This subsection explains the rationale for the selection of the main source of data (i.e. news reports and articles) which is based on the genre type, circulation, readership and stakeholder of the press. The justification for the chosen time frame will also be explained here.

The news genre has been selected for this study as it is an authentic 'way of acting' (Fairclough, 2003:17) that reflects the social practice in the society. Fairclough (2003) claims that one of the ways of (inter)acting as part of our action in writing and speech is through genre (ways of acting) apart from discourses (ways of representing) and styles (ways of being). Newspapers are a source and genre containing real-life news and issues that allows social reality to be perceived. Subsequently, the discussions and issues

derived from the analyses and findings can be considered valid, as they are genuine real life documents that reflect actual discursive practices of text production and consumption.

As reflected in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 below, *The Star* controls the widest newspaper circulation in the country of approximately 300,000 copies and a readership of about 1 million daily. This is significant when compared with another mainstream press, *New Straits Times* (NST) which only commands about 140,000 copies in daily circulation and 300,000 in readership. This means the demand for *The Star* is double that of NST in terms of circulation and almost thrice in readership. With a wider circulation and readership, the producers of texts will be able to influence more consumers of texts. Thus, it is even more pertinent to examine how these articles could generate and influence readers' interpretations.

Table 3.1 : Circulation of the Malaysian English newspapers

Circulation			
Star		**Other newspapers**	
The Star **(daily)**	**299,589**	New Straits Times	139,517
Sunday Star	**316,463**	New Sunday Times	150,723
* Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations, Malaysia - 1st July 2004 - 30th Jun 2005		Malay Mail	42,913
		Sunday Mail	55,661

Source : The Star (2006) Retrieved 14 Mac 2006 at http://thestar.com.my/info/thestar.asp

Table 3.2 : Readership of the Malaysian English newspapers.

Readership		Other newspapers	
Star		**Other newspapers**	
The Star (daily)	**1,040,000**	New Straits Times	305,000
Sunday Star	**935,000**	New Sunday Times	289,000
* Source: Nielsen Media Research Q4 2005 (Jan - Dec 2005)		Malay Mail	96,000
		Sunday Mail	90,000
		Sun (daily)	185,000
		Sunday Sun	61,000

Source : The Star (2006). Retrieved 14 Mac 2006 at http://thestar.com.my/info/thestar.asp

The Star also dedicates columns for occasional publications on disabilities (e.g. *Parenting*, *One Voice* and *Wheel Power*) compared to NST which has no specific section for this type of issue. Furthermore, in a preliminary study conducted to check on the feasibility of this study (*cf. Section 3.2.1*) it was found that out of the 225 news stories and articles collected within the time frame of 1 July 7 2004 to 30 June 2005, only 46 (20.44%) were published by the NST whereas *The Star* published 179 (79.56%) within the same period (*cf. Appendix C for list*). This means more data from *The Star* would be accessible for analysis, thus would help increase the reliability of findings.

The Star has also been chosen since criticisms on its biasness in its news reporting had been openly and publicly made known by the former MCA Vice President, Donald Lim (*cf. Section 1.1.1*). He had in fact admitted the existence of stakeholder cum political interference in *The Star*'s news reporting and editorials, and therefore had urged for more press freedom. MCA through its investment arm, Huaren Management Holdings

Berhad, owns *The Star* (The Sun, 2008). Besides, it also owns another 60 million units of shares worth RM47 million or 3.5% of stake in *Media Chinese International Limited* (MCIL) which controls major Chinese papers in the country such as S*in Chew Daily, China Press, Nanyang Siang Pau* and *Guang Ming Daily* (The Sun, 2008). Hence, it would be interesting to examine how this media negotiates and mediates any influences in its discursive practices.

In terms of the time frame chosen, i.e. 1 July 2004 – 30 June 2005 (one year), this is firstly based on the findings from a preliminary analysis done to determine data availability and accessibility (*cf. Section 3.2.1*). It was found that a complete set of *The Star / The Sunday Star* was available and easily accessed from the *University of Malaya's* library compared to the earlier dates. Secondly, as has been mentioned in Section 1.1.1, this issue of discrimination against the disabled was highlighted in a linguistics conference held in October 2004 by Baskaran (2004), Alexander (2004) & Mac (2004). Concurrently, the MCA's Lifelong Learning Campaign (*cf. Section 1.1.3*) was also first introduced on 8 October 2004, although the focus and implementation of lifelong learning programmes for the disabled was only launched later on 26 March 2005 (MCA Secretariat, 2005). Thus, it will be worthwhile to investigate news published within the time frame of several months prior to the exposition of this issue at the said conference and a few months after the launching of the Lifelong Learning Campaign itself. The duration of a year will also allow more data to be obtained. This 'mini corpus' will reduce biasness in the critical interpretations made (*cf. Section 2.4).*

3.1.2   Secondary Data : Interview / Informants

To triangulate data interpretations, interviews were conducted with staff of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which support the advocacy and welfare of the disabled people in Malaysia [*cf. Appendices N(i)-(iv)*]. This would provide an insight from their perspectives into how society and the media perceive the disabled groups. Four NGOs were selected for the interviews namely *The National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM)*, *Beautiful Gate Disabled People Caring Centre/Foundation, The Dyslexia Society of Malaysia* and *The Chinese Disabled Society of Malaysia.*

As mentioned in Section 1.1.3, on 26 March 2005 at the Sunway Pyramid shopping mall in Petaling Jaya, the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) launched the Lifelong Learning Programme for the disabled. There was an exhibition held by seven NGOs and diagnosis clinics by their respective psychologists cum counsellors. Only four out of seven NGOs were available for the interview as the other three were occupied with clinical diagnosis and were therefore unable to participate. The researcher took this opportunity to interview the spokespersons of the four NGOs mentioned at the said venue and event. This was not only convenient but also saved time and money, and reduced the bureaucratic procedures in seeking permission to conduct the interviews.

Table 3.3 briefly presents the background of the interviewees. Names and personal details of the interviewees will be kept confidential.

Table 3.3 List of interviewees

	Name of Organisation	Interviewee
1	The National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM) *(Setapak, Kuala Lumpur)*	Public Relations Officer
2	Beautiful Gate Disabled People Caring Centre / Foundation *(SS2 Petaling Jaya, Selangor)*	Treasurer of Foundation
3	The Dyslexia Society of Malaysia *(Setapak, Kuala Lumpur)*	Vice President of Society
4	The Chinese Disabled Society of Malaysia *(Old Klang Road, Kuala Lumpur)*	Deputy Chief Co-ordinator

One can reasonably say that the opinions of the interviewees are representative of the views of their respective organisations given the esteemed positions they are holding and thus valid sources of opinions. These opinions will not be critically analysed but instead they serve as supplements to support and validate interpretations derived from data analysis. They will be mentioned in passing in the discussion of findings in the next chapter.

3.2   PROCEDURES : DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

3.2.1   Preliminary Study

Prior to the collection of the primary data, a preliminary examination of texts was made. The purposes were to :

a) determine the availability and accessibility of data and authentic samplings

b) identify/confirm if the attempt to study the intended site and genre was plausible

c) anticipate any arising problems

The newspaper reports and articles from *New Straits Times* (NST) and *The Star* (June 2000 – June 2005) were sourced from the backdated printed issues and microfilm collections at the *University of Malaya Library*, as well as from the library's online databases. It took almost 3 months to complete the browsing through these collections. The summary of findings from a preliminary check on availability and accessibility of data is appended in Appendix D.

A total of 225 news reports and articles were collected from both NST and *The Star*. They were photocopied to avoid the paper from turning yellow. Every article was numbered and rated according to its relevance to the objectives of study on a scale of 1-5; '1' - 'not relevant' and '5' - very relevant (*cf. Appendix C*). Referring to Section 2.4, this reflects CDA's nature of being selective in data to feed the research questions but as argued by van Dijk (1999), there is a need to take this explicit position to understand and expose ideological work in discourse. A content summary of each article was also made for a systematic record and effective retrieval of information.

An article was selected and Fairclough's analytical framework (1995a) was used to analyse it. Symbols were created to assist the identification of the various categorisations in the framework (*cf. Appendix E*). Some actual findings were examined to help postulate possible future findings and literatures to be reviewed for the actual study. Based on the findings from this pilot study and limitations of this dissertation, the focus of study was then narrowed down to the analysis of lexical items, discourse

representation, as well as the texturing of charity discourse. These elements seem to be more prevalent and popular in most articles.

Interview questions were also constructed and piloted with a representative from the National Autism Society of Malaysia (NASOM) to identify any strengths or flaws in the structures of the questions. These interview questions were initially prepared in English; they were then made bilingual (the Malay language translation was provided as well) since not all interviewees could express themselves effectively in English. The structures of the questions were also refined and made open-ended to allow for freer responses. After finalising, two questions were asked as the opinions gathered serve as secondary data to validate interpretations or findings. The two finalised interview questions are appended in Appendix F.

After taking into account the factors of availability, accessibility, convenience and economy of cost and resources in research methodology (Creswell, 2003), the proposal and final focus for this study was then conceived.

3.2.2 Actual Study : Analytical Tools and Stages

Based on the findings from the preliminary study and experiences at the piloting stage, it was decided that only the printed texts published by *The Star* / Sunday Star from 1 July 2004 to 30 June 2005 would be analysed using Fairclough's (1995a) CDA framework. Thus, the publications from NST were removed from the list in Appendix C, leaving the final list with only publications from *The Star* for the actual study (*cf.*

Appendix B). The list follows the order of the dates of publications; the new list was not renumbered as they do not reflect frequency but used for referencing purpose only.

The instrument employed in this study is solely derived from Norman Fairclough's 3-dimensional framework (cf. *Section 2.2 for detailed explanation*). According to Creswell (2003), a valid instrument actually investigates what it purports to investigate. Fairclough's approach consists of a set of theoretical methods, methodological guidelines and specific techniques for linguistic analysis. It outlines the linguistic elements to be analysed from the level of lexis, syntax, semantics to the level of discourse, and associate them with the discursive practices of the media and social practices at societal level. Since the study sets out to describe and analyse how the linguistic and discoursal elements of texts reflect and have the power to shape and reshape social practices in the society, this framework is felt most appropriate and scientific.

Combining Fairclough's framework (*cf. Section 2.2*) and the literature review on the relationship between CDA and the representation of disability (*cf. Sections 2.5.2 & 2.5.3*), the actual study focuses on :

a) Linguistic analysis : Lexical items
   - euphemistic terms
   - evaluative terms
   - metaphors

b) Intertextual analysis :
   - discourse representation i.e. speech reportage (*intertextuality*)
   - charity discourse (*interdiscursivity*)

The three stages of Fairclough's framework is adopted (Fairclough, 1995a), i.e. *description, interpretation* and *explanation* in analysis.

3.2.2.1 Descriptions

In this first stage, the formal characteristics of text structures (textual and intertexual) are identified and established. Below are formal definitions of the key phrases used in analysis :

a) Euphemistic term

- **Euphemistic term** is '..an alternative to dispreferred expression, in order to avoid possible loss of face : either one's own face, or through giving offence, that of the audience, or some third parties' (Allan and Burridge,1991:11)

In this study, Allan and Burridge's (1991) definition of 'euphemism' is used to refer to non-discriminatory language and appropriate styles for the purposes of naming and addressing which are deemed polite and face-saving. 'Euphemistic terms' and 'politically correct terms' will also be used interchangeably here. Burridge (1998) argues that politically correct language is a type of euphemism which historically was politically motivated.

b) Evaluative term / Overlexicalisation

- **Evaluative terms** is a word or phrase used to express a speaker's attitude towards what is being said (Crystal, 2003).
- **Overlexicalisation** refers to the availability of many words for one concept and indicates the prominence of the concept in a community's beliefs or interests (Fowler, 1985). When a writer is preoccupied with a particular problem in a culture's discourse, this will result in a surplus or excess of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms of entities or ideas (Fowler, 1991; van Djik, 1991) giving rise to a sense of overcompleteness or exaggeration.

c) Metaphor

- ***Metaphor*** is a term or phrase applied to substitute a literal meaning to suggest a resemblance or connotation meant to draw parallel between it and something already known (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

The choice of vocabulary and phrases are studied in relation to the connotations and implications they bring about in text consumption. There may also be occasional references to grammar (i.e. lexicogrammar) as vocabulary and grammar are an inseparable single unit as purported by Halliday and Webster (2005). The grammatical function of word contributes towards meaning making. Thus, an analysis on lexical items will also indicate value judgement made on the disabled in terms of their social images.

d) Discourse representation (Fairclough, 1992b:281)

- Traditionally known as 'speech reportage' referring to the reporting of words uttered by interlocuters including the structure of direct and indirect speech (Fairclough, 1992b).
- ***Direct Speech*** reports 'people's words, thoughts, beliefs etc, give exact words (more or less) that were said, or that we imagine were thought' (Swan, 2005:246).
- ***Indirect / Reported* Speech** makes 'somebody's words or thoughts part of our own sentence using conjunctions (e.g. that) and changing pronouns, tenses and other words where necessary' (Swan, 2005:247). Indirect speech without reporting verbs are also common in newspapers as the texts are presented in a report format' (Swan, 2005:253).
- ***Discourse representation*** goes beyond ideational or message content to include aspects of style and context of represented utterances (Fairclough, 1992b:281); it also highlights the interplay of voices of represented and representing discourse (Volosinov, 1973).

e) Charity, Charity Discourse, Activity Type & Objectification

- **Charity** is a set of social values as well as an organisational response to welfare needs (Swain, French & Cameron, 2003:90).
- **Charity Discourse** defines the disabled as objects of pity and dependant that need welfare provisions (Bourke & Worthington, 2000). The notions 'pity' and 'tragedy' are associated with disability to mobilise a spirit of generosity among those who do not have disabilities (Brown, 1997:168).
- **Objectification** refers to the disabled being represented as objects of pity and handouts in charity (Shakespeare, 1997:221).
- **Objectification in Charity Discourse** refers to attaching 'demeaning images of disabled people, intended to engender pity and sympathy in normal people', to 'motivate them to donate' (Shakespeare, 1997:222) or perform any act of kindness or good values i.e. 'activity type' to meet the needs of the disabled.
- **Activity type** is a 'structured sequence of actions' that include 'participants of activity' in which they are 'socially constituted' (Fairclough, 1992b:285).

With the formal definitions established, relevant items were extracted and categorised. The symbols in the preliminary study (*cf. Appendix E)* were not reused. Instead, a new table has been created and information from the texts studied was extracted, typed out and put in the relevant columns (*cf. Table 3.4*). This would avoid tempering the original texts with multiple and overlapping markings that would make reading difficult.

Table 3.4 Categories of Data

1	2	3	4	5	6
Article No.	Negative Words/phrases	Euphemistic terms	Non-euphemistic terms	Voices	Interdiscursivity

From this table, two lists on euphemistic and non-euphemistic terms against the voices that had employed them were tabulated (*cf. Appendices H & J*). These were later further summarised and recategorised *(cf. Appendices G & I).* A frequency count was done to determine the prevalence of these terms and the groups of social actors/participants that have the tendency to manipulate these terms.

In the analysis of charity discourse, the frequency count was done at the paragraph level as this is an analysis at the discourse level, not at the lexical or sentential level. Typically in news reporting, a paragraph is made up of a sentence or uncommonly two at the most (Swan, 2005). Percentage was then gauged by comparing the number of paragraphs on charitable activities with business intent with the total number of paragraphs in each text. The percentage will roughly indicate how widespread the chunks of promotional ideas are across each text.

Although this research is a qualitative study, the frequency count was necessary to highlight the prevalence or extensiveness of a said linguistic option. With statistical evidence, this can concretise interpretations and conclusions drawn. However, due to the lack of technological and mechanical facilities of a corpus software, the frequency count could only be done manually.

3.2.2.2 Interpretation

Texts are interactions between text producers and consumers. With formal definitions, categories and frequencies established, the second stage involves scrutinising the interpretation and processing of these data, especially the cognitive processes of participants. It looks at what and how data could lead and frame the way information is deciphered or consumed, how it shapes and reshapes the thinking of text consumers.

3.2.2.3 Explanation

The third stage explains the relationships between interaction and the social context. It perceives the social determination of the processes of production/interpretation and their social effects. These include factors and reasons that determine the discursive or editorial practices in constructing the social reality of the disabled, as well as what this says about the culture, behaviour, thinking vis-à-vis the social practices in society.

3.3 PRESENTATION OF ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

After these 3 stages of analysis, the data were further re-classified. They are presented based on categories of representations (thematic). Owing to the lack of space and time in this dissertation, only 3 categories are discussed:

a) **Misrepresentation of the disabled self** : how the disabled self and abilities have been misrepresented by euphemistic or politically correct terms.

- Textual analysis : Lexical choice - euphemistic terms (*cf. Section 3.2.2.1 a*)

b) **Representation of low social standing :** how the disabled have been prejudicially represented as a group with low social standing in the community.

- Textual analysis : Lexical choice – evaluative terms *(cf. Sections 3.2.2.1 b)* and metaphors *(cf. Sections 3.2.2.1 c)*

- Intertextual analysis : Discourse representation *(cf. Sections 3.2.2.1 d)*

c) **Objectification of the disabled** : how the disabled have been represented as objects of pity in the activity type in charity discourse and simultaneously objectified for business purposes. (*cf. Sections 3.2.2.1 e*)

- Interdiscursive analysis : Incorporation of charity discourse with business intent within the news discourse.

- Elements of interdiscursivity may include 'semantic, grammatical and lexical features of the text at various levels of representation' (Fairclough, 2003:67) to describe the activity type in charity discourse.

The next chapter outlines in greater detail these descriptions, interpretations and explanations. As a further note, texts produced by both groups of journalists/editors of *The Star* as well as disabled writers/advocacy groups are studied. Thus, there is intermittent mention of representation of voices, i.e. whose voice is speaking and for whom. Also, in the process of describing and discussing findings in the next chapter, the writer(s) of texts studied and the disabled person(s) will be referred to as 'he/him' or 'they/them' as general referencing without any gender biasness.