

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the research methodology framework adopted in this present study. As the study was investigating and exploring the discursive construction of identity of four individuals from a minority group – Malay homosexuals males in Malaysia, the research methodology best suited this type of study was seen to be one that was based on the discourse-historical approach proposed by Wodak (2001), Wodak et al. (1999), and Reisigl and Wodak (2009), which has branched out from the broader framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This choice of framework was rationalized by the fact that within the framework of CDA, language use which makes up texts and discourses is perceived as “always simultaneously constitutive of i) social identities; ii) social relations; and iii) systems of knowledge and beliefs” (Fairclough, 1995: 55).

The objectives of this study are to examine how its four Malay homosexual male participants discursively constructed their identity through the linguistic means they use in the discourse of the narration of their lives; and how they positioned themselves in relation to the dominant sexual and gender ideologies. In a narrative discourse, the speaker takes on multiple roles or various facets of the self: the ‘author’ of the discourse; the ‘animator’ as a participant in the interaction; a ‘figure’ or character in the discourse; and the ‘principal’ who assumes accountability for the sentiments underlying the words (Goffman,

1981: 128). Through these roles, the speaker communicates his/her evaluation of many facets of social experience and puts across his/her position on a variety of social conditions. It is through these roles that the speaker makes his/her stance with regards to ideologies and behaviors (de Fina et al., 2006); and discursively constructs his/her identity.

Considering that CDA is a rigorous rhetorical analysis; it was essential that the mode of research methodology for this present study be qualitative in nature. This present study employs qualitative tools of 'participant interviews' to obtain the discourse data. In addition, participants were asked to complete a background information questionnaire to help describe themselves better. The information from the questionnaire is also vital to better understand and analyze their discourse data.

Even though there are analysts who have started to use large corpora as their data for analysis (e.g. de Beaugrande, 2001; Zuraidah and Knowles, 2005; Khan, 2006), CDA from the beginning has always favored small corpora (Khan, 2006). As pointed out by Khan, "In identity studies detailed descriptions are necessary in order to study 'moments' of articulation 'exposing' subject position and ideology" (2006: 103). In order to achieve such detailed descriptions, it depends a great deal on a small corpus. Nevertheless, Khan innovatively chose to use a large corpus for his study by incorporating a quantitative tool of survey through questionnaires. The present researcher feels that his data managed to reveal 'attitudes' of a larger group so that generalization could be made, however, such data did not permit in-depth exploration of discursive construction of identities of the larger group. Therefore this present study will opt for a small corpus so that a detailed analysis can be achieved.

One of the main points made by critical discourse analysts is that language use, which makes up a discourse, is a form of social practice, wherein the language use and the society have a dialectical relationship; or in other words, both language and society constitute and are constituted by one another. Therefore, Wodak (2001), Wodak et al. (1999) and Reisigl and Wodak (2009) in their critical discourse-historical approach, emphasized that in order to fully understand a social phenomenon, in this case how members of a minority group in a community perceive themselves and others, the data cannot simply be analyzed at the linguistic level (micro level) without analyzing the backdrop information, including the historical background of the society (at macro level). Therefore, it is essential that intertextuality and interdiscursivity be incorporated into the analysis by presenting data from various genres and public spaces, known as fields of action, such as politic, legal, religion, and etcetera. It is one of the most important features of discourse-historical approach to “integrate a large quantity of available knowledge about the historical sources and the background of the social and political fields in which discursive ‘events’ are embedded” (Wodak, 2001: 65). The background of the society in relation to homosexuality in Malaysia and Malay identity has been discussed in the literature review in the previous chapter under Section 2.5.

3.1 Research Design

The two main research instruments used in this study to gather data were participant background information questionnaire and interview. A background information questionnaire was given to the participants to be completed prior to the interviews for the researcher to have some information about them and to determine that they were

homosexuals. Then an in-depth semi-structured interview was administered to each of the participants.

3.2 Samples

The participants of the study were four young Malay homosexual males living in Malaysia. All of them were born and raised in Malaysia. They were chosen through purposeful and snowball sampling based on their relationship with a partner from the same gender or their interest in having a relationship with a partner from the same gender. The present researcher did not have access to many young Malay homosexual males, therefore the researcher decided to use the snowball sampling method to help find the participants. Some potential participants were referred to the researcher by the first participant that had been identified and chosen by the researcher. Only those who fulfilled the criteria, i.e. those who were leading a homosexual lifestyle and were interested in participating in the study were contacted. All four participants selected were students from various universities. Three of them were 19 years of age at the time of the study, and the other one was 21 years old.

3.3 Questionnaires

The questionnaire was designed to obtain specific background information about the participants. There was only one section in the questionnaire, and the questions posed were to elicit information as to the participants' age, place of birth, race, level of education, current occupation, place of growing up and number of siblings. In addition they were also

asked how long they had known that they were homosexual, the number of partners they had had thus far, and whether they were in a homosexual relationship at that time. These questionnaires were given to the participants to get to know them better and to determine if they were qualified to participate in this study; as well as to provide some background information that could be useful in the analysis of their interview data. The questionnaires were completed by the participants before the interviews.

3.4 Interview

Adapted from Wortham and Gadsden's (2006) research methodology in their study on the construction of identity of urban parents through narratives, a semi-structured interview was administered with the present research participants. The semi-structured interview included open-ended questions about the participants' lives and their experiences as homosexuals living in Malaysia as well as their feelings vis-à-vis the out-group's attitudes towards them. The participants were provided ample space to narrate stories about their lives – stories about their childhood; their relationship with their parents, siblings, intimate partners, and others around them; their negative experiences as homosexuals, and their goals and aspiration for the future. The interview was semi-structured and conversation-like; therefore, there were many questions that arose naturally as the conversation progressed.

The interview questions can be divided into 3 main thematic areas:

The first set of questions posed is designed to determine whether or not these individuals are homosexuals.

1. When did you first realize that you were gay?
2. What went through your mind when you realized that you were gay?
3. How was your life before you realized that you were gay compared to what it is now?

The second set of questions focused on their relationship with the people around them. These questions were posed to uncover how they construct the identity of 'self' and 'other'.

4. How is your relationship with your immediate family – parents and siblings?
5. How does your family's attitude towards you impact your life?
6. Have you ever had a negative experience because you are gay? If so, can you describe the experience?
7. Have you had a lot of negative experiences? If so, how have these experiences affected the way you interact with the people around you?

The third set of questions was centered on their lives in Malaysia and their aspirations for the future as homosexuals. These questions attempt to disclose their positioning against the mainstream ideologies of the society.

8. Have you ever considered or wished that you were living in another country, such as USA or England? If so, why?
9. How do you view your life in Malaysia as a gay man?
10. What do you anticipate in the future with a life as a gay man in Malaysia?
11. Most people have aspirations of getting married and having children. What about you? Do you hope to marry and have children one day?

12. How do you picture your life 30 years from now?
13. Do you think that you can ever change or want to change the way you are in the future?

The interviews took place between mid-August and mid-September 2009 at 4 different times. The researcher was the interviewer for two of the participants. For the other two participants, the researcher decided to consider Bamberg's (2005) second level of narrative positioning process in which a narrator chooses how to position him/herself to the audience while telling his/her story (as pointed out in Chapter 1, page 2), and assigned a homosexual associate to carry out the interviews. Even though this procedure made the interview secondary data, the researcher felt that it would be valuable to see if the participants would assume a different approach or attitude in telling their stories to a different immediate audience – in this case another homosexual; and thereby produce diverging data. Two of the interviews took place in the researcher's office and the other two were carried out in the residence of one of the participants. All the participants were second language speakers of English. During the interviews, two of the participants spoke mainly in English with a few occurrences of code-switching to Malay, but the other two participants were more comfortable with the Malay Language, and thus spoke mainly in the Malay language with minimal code-switching to English. The interviews were approximately thirty to sixty minutes in length. They were recorded using a digital recorder.

3.5 Method of interview transcription

For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose denaturalized transcription instead of naturalized transcription to transcribe the interview data. Naturalized transcription is ‘verbatim depiction of speech’ (Oliver et al. 2005: 1276) which recorded all utterances including involuntary vocalizations, overlapping speech, laughter, stuttering, accents and so on produced by the conversation participants. On the other hand, denaturalized transcription is more concerned of the substance of the conversation/interview and other elements of speech such as pauses; involuntary vocalizations; etc. are left out. What are important in denaturalized transcription are the meanings and perceptions created and shared by the interlocutors during the conversation/interview (Oliver et al. 2005). Naturalized transcription is vital for conversation analysis but is not necessary for critical discourse analysis. As proposed by Cameron (2001), conversation analysis focuses on exploring how people talk, whereas critical discourse analysis focuses on what people’s talk tells about other aspects of their life. As a critical discourse analyst, Fairclough described his transcription method as “fairly minimal type of transcription, which is adequate for many purposes. No system could conceivably show everything, and it is always a matter of judgment, given the nature of the research questions, what sort of features to show and in how much detail” (1993: 229). Fairclough stressed that in choosing a method to transcribe interview data, the purposes of the research should be the main basis for the choice. Since critical discourse analysis is concerned with the analysis of power, and the manipulation of power is encapsulated in the content of the speech rather than in the technicalities of the conversation, the denaturalized transcription is deemed to be the most suitable method (Oliver et al. 2005).

The interview data for this study were transcribed by the present researcher with the help of her assistant interviewer (a twenty-year old homosexual Malay male). The input given by this assistant interviewer has helped the researcher to understand some of the terms used by the younger generation as well as homosexuals.

The transcribed data will be presented in Chapter 4 in parts extracted from the original transcription for lucid corroboration of the analysis. The following designations are assigned to respective people involved in the interviews: I1 – to the researcher as the interviewer; I2 – to the assistant interviewer; and P1, P2, P3, P4 to the homosexual participants. The initial T indicates the conversational turns in the extracted portion.

Some of the data collected are in the Malay language. Therefore, the Malay data were translated into the English language and presented within parentheses []. As a native speaker of the Malay language, the present researcher had chosen to translate the data based on her interpretation of the conversation rather than verbatim.

3.6 Method of Analysis

The discourse-analytical tool adapted from the three-dimensional Discourse-Historical approach (Wodak et al., 1999; Wodak, 2001; and Reisigl and Wodak, 2009) was used by this present researcher to analyze her data. The table below illustrates the data analysis procedure which consists of three levels: content, strategy, and linguistic realization.

Table 3.1
Data Analysis Procedure (adapted from Reisigl and Wodak 2009)

Aspects of Study	Operationalization
Content: The discourse of identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Content definition of groups 2. Self-assessment 3. Norm-respect 4. Authority coercion 5. Internal struggle
Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rationalization 2. Exaggeration/mitigation 3. Accommodation 4. Rejection 5. Assimilation
Means and forms of realization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lexical units with semantic components creating difference 2. Rhetorical devices like metaphors, hyperboles and metonymy 3. Modalities

The discourse-historical approach to critical discourse analysis lists down five aspects through which the analysis of a discourse can be approached. The five aspects or questions that a researcher can concentrate on in the analysis of a discourse are (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009: 93):

1. How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?
2. What characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?
3. What arguments are employed in the discourse in questions?
4. From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?
5. Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or mitigated?

For the purpose of answering the research questions of this study, aspects 1, 2, 3 and 5 were incorporated into the three-dimensional discourse-historical analysis tool that has been adapted.

As shown in Table 3.1 above, first, the main content or topic of the discourse was specified as the discourse of identity. This main content or topic is divided into two subtopics, which are the construction of ‘self’ and ‘other’; and the construction of Malay and Muslim identity of the research participants, which they produced in the narration of their life stories. The analysis under these topic and subtopics tackled aspects/questions 1 and 2 above in analyzing how these participants define groups; assess or reflect upon themselves; perceive the societal norms; describe others’ treatment towards them as homosexuals; and describe their positions concerning the Islamic ideology in relation to man-woman relationship in order to (de)construct their identities and demystify the struggle they face living a homosexual lifestyle in Malaysia.

Second, the analysis focused on the discursive strategies or arguments employed by these participants in constructing their identities. Aspect/question 3 above was given attention to in the analysis at this level. The discursive strategies that were found employed by these participants were strategies of rationalization, accommodation, exaggeration/mitigation, assimilation and rejection. Rationalization strategy is a strategy used by the participants in creating and providing plausible reasons in an attempt to justify their acts or opinions. Accommodation strategy is used when one attempts to consider others and to bring ‘self’ and ‘other’ into a harmonious situation. The strategy of exaggeration is to intensify one’s claim about an object or state of affair. On the contrary, the strategy of mitigation is the

opposite of the strategy of exaggeration whereby one lessens the effect of one's utterances or claims. The strategy of assimilation is used when one accepts the existing norms as to sustain the status-quo of groups, whereas the strategy of rejection is used when one abandons or refuse certain customs or ways of life.

The next level of the analysis procedure examined the participants' linguistic means and forms in realizing their discursive strategies in constructing their identities. At this level, aspects/questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 through which the analysis was to be approached, were dealt with to determine the features of the language used by these participants in realizing their construction of identities. As shown in Table 3.1 above, special attention was given to the lexical choices of the participants, which also included figurative and rhetorical means utilized by these participants to explain their perspectives and simultaneously construct their identities. It was identified that these participants used metaphor, hyperboles and metonymies in many parts of their narration. Hyperbole is a rhetorical device specially used for exaggeration. Metonymy is a figurative speech in which a speaker uses a word or phrase in place of another word or phrase which is closely related in concept. Metaphor is also a figure of speech in which a thing is liken to something else which seemed unlikely the same but both actually have something in common. Another linguistic device that was found frequently used by the participants was modalities. Since two of the participants chose to use code-switching between the English and Malay languages, the grammatical aspect of the Malay data were analyzed based on *Nahu Melayu Mutakhir* by Asmah Haji Omar (1982). All of these linguistic means and forms used by the participants in discursively constructing their identities were examined in Chapter 4.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Since the topic is rather sensitive, the participants were informed of the purpose and the procedures of the research. A contract was drawn and signed by both parties. The researcher promised to protect the privacy and identity of the participants. The participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished, and no obligation would be put upon them (see Appendix B). The researcher to the best of her ability, tried not to be biased or prejudiced during the interview as well as in her analysis of the data.