

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

There are two main objectives in this present research. One is to explore how the young Malay homosexual participants of this study discursively construct their identities through the use of their linguistic repertoire in their narration of their life experiences and aspirations in the interview-cum-conversation carried out in this study. Another is to explore how these participants position themselves in relation to the dominant traditional sexual/gender ideologies in constructing their identities in their narrations of their life story and future aspirations. Four young Malay homosexual males, who had been chosen through snowball and purposeful sampling, participated in this research. For the purpose of this study, the researcher has chosen to adapt the three dimensional model of Reisigl and Wodak's (2009) discourse-historical approach of Critical Discourse Analysis as the framework of the analysis, which focuses on the content, the strategies, and the linguistic realization of the content produced and strategies employed by the participants in constructing their identities in their narratives.

In order to achieve the objectives of the research, three research questions have been constructed which are:

1. What are the identities constructed by the subjects of the study through their language use in narrating their life experiences and aspirations in the interview-cum-conversation?
2. What are the discourse strategies they use in their narrative to discursively construct their identities through their positions against the dominant sexual/gender ideologies?
3. What are the linguistic means including lexical (such as metaphoric and metonymic) references and linguistic structures (such as modal verbs) that they use in constructing their identities in the narration of their life experiences and aspirations in the interview-cum-conversation?

5.1 Summary of the Findings

In constructing their identities, the participants of this research had produced group definitions which construct the 'self' (homosexuals) and the 'other' (heterosexuals). It was found that there was some uniformity in these participants' construction of 'us' and 'them'. Through their discourse data, none of these participants glorified the 'self' nor did they denounce the 'other'. For example, all of the participants, with the exception of Participant 2, reproduced the hegemonic identity of homosexuals and heterosexuals by referring to the heterosexuals as 'normal', and the homosexuals as 'not normal'. With this reference, the participants sustained the stereotyping of these two groups and as such maintained their status-quo in the society. Throughout their discourse data, it can be seen

that the participants had a mixed assessment of themselves and their lives. There were times when they described their life as wonderful and very happy, yet there were times when they reflected upon it as unsatisfying and unfulfilling. For example, Participant 4 described his life as heaven after he moved to Kuala Lumpur because he was able to meet other homosexuals and have a boyfriend. Yet, he expressed that he did not want his children to become (homosexuals) like him. Participant 3 also expressed similar feelings about his life. He explained that it was easy to love a man because a man could understand a man better, and homosexual life was fun, yet he too, would not want his children to become homosexual. When describing the ‘others’ treatment towards them, the participants showed that they accepted the ‘others’ behavior towards them. They even rationalized that some of the behaviors, such as not talking to them, not accepting them, teasing them, etc., were expected. For example, Participant I expressed that the heterosexual boys’ teasing the homosexual boys is a normal behavior and he did not mind it.

All the participants have in one way or other included their Islamic beliefs in their narrations of their life stories, therefore constructing themselves as Malays and Muslims. There were many instances in their narratives in which they revealed that their Islamic values and ideology were not completely abandoned; in fact they were still affected by them to a certain extent. Even though they viewed their lives as very happy, they experienced an internal struggle/conflict between continuing the lifestyle of a homosexual and conforming to the Malay culture and the Islamic teachings. While many of the homosexuals in Western countries, such as the U.S.A., are fighting for the same rights as the heterosexuals, such as the legal right to marry another homosexual, these young

participants did not show much attempt to fight the societal norms in Malaysia. As a matter of fact, there were many instances in their narratives that they expressed their sense of obligation to return to a heterosexual lifestyle when they are older because they felt that it was what was expected of them by the society. For example, in Participant 4's narrative, he expressed that by the age of thirty, if he was still not married, people would think that there was something wrong with him.

Throughout their narrative, the research participants used several discursive strategies in constructing their identities. The strategies used by these participants revealed their positions towards the dominant sexual ideology. They have used the strategy of accommodation, rationalization, exaggeration, mitigation, assimilation, as well as rejection. There were many instances in their narrative where they revealed that they tried to accommodate the societal norms. The impression that they created was that they did not wish to challenge the norms of the society. On the contrary, they rationalized that they had to accept and accommodate the norms and act in certain ways, giving the impression that they tried to create harmonious relationships between themselves and the society to avoid hostility. When describing their lives, the participants exaggerated their utterances to portray their lives as very happy. When describing others' treatment towards them, they mitigated their utterances giving the impression that they did not face many difficulties and were not subjected to any authority coercion living as homosexuals in Malaysia. Yet, they felt an internal obligation and struggle to assimilate the mainstream sexual ideology and reject homosexuality. On the whole, these participants did not once try to challenge or reject the mainstream ideology or legitimize homosexuality, as the matter of fact, they were more accepting of the dominant ideology. All of the participants, with the exception

of Participant 1, clearly expressed their sense of obligation to try to return to a heterosexual lifestyle sometime in the future even though some admitted that it would be very difficult to change.

In realizing the above discursive strategies in constructing their identities, the participants have used certain lexical items, such as adverbs, adjectives, discourse marker, modalities; and certain rhetorical devices such as metaphors, metonymy, and hyperbole in the narratives of their life experiences and aspirations. Examples of the metaphors used are 'scandal' to refer to their lovers; 'askew' and 'crooked' look to connote the disapproving looks given to them by the heterosexuals; and 'recipes' as in Participant 4's case after moving to Kuala Lumpur to refer to all the choices that he is now exposed to. Examples of metonymies used are 'inside' to refer to the heart; 'outside' to refer to physical appearance and mannerisms; and 'soft' to refer to femininity. An example of hyperbole used is 'full' to exaggerate the extreme happiness Participant 4 was feeling as a homosexual. The most frequently used linguistic item produced by the participants throughout their narratives is modalities. Modalities are linguistic items used by a speaker to inject their value judgments on certain issues through their utterances. Examples of the modal verbs used by these participants are 'have to', 'should', and 'must' to show obligations; 'can' to show permissibility or ability; and 'will' to show intention. Apart from these, certain word such as the cognition verb 'hope' was used as a hedging device by participant 2 to weaken his proposition that he would be able to change to heterosexual. The participants' linguistic repertoire and linguistic strategies managed to reveal the subject position they took in relation to the dominant sexual/gender ideology.

The findings of this research cannot be generalized to the whole Malay homosexual community in Malaysia. However, its findings are aligned to the findings of other research in the identity construction of the Malays, such as the Malay youth in Khan's (2006) study and the Malay transsexuals in Teh's (2001) study, i.e. the Malays regardless of the lifestyle they choose, their religion of Islam still plays a role in their life perception and some of their actions. The conclusion of this present research, in regards to the issue of the discursive construction of identities of the four participants of this study, adds strength to the notion that the Malay identity and Islam are inseparable. Furthermore, the findings of this research confirm Crotti's (1998) claim that the values and ideologies that one is born into and brought up with have a 'powerful' hold in influencing one's way of thinking and acting.

5.2 Implications of the Study

Identity is not an entity which is clear-cut or can be seen clearly and simply by the naked eyes. In reality, identity is a very complex entity. To label a person as having one identity does not seem appropriate or fair. CDA sees the language use which forms discourses as able to reveal social identities, social relations between groups, and systems of knowledge and beliefs (ideologies) of individuals. It attends to not only the linguistic aspect of the discourse but also integrates the social contexts in which the discourse is embedded in achieving real understanding of a phenomenon. One of the aims of CDA is to uncover the contradictions and conflicts that affect the relationship of groups of people in a society. The homosexuals have always been regarded as the marginalized group in the society. It is time that we hear their voices so that we will better understand them and their dilemma in

order to eradicate the prejudices and suspicions between opposing groups – the heterosexuals and the homosexuals. It is the intention of the researcher of this study not to prescribe what is right and what is wrong, but rather the researcher hopes that the findings of this research will bring some insights which can better improve the communication between these two groups.

5.3 Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Studies

The study of the construction of identities, especially the identities of homosexuals in Malaysia, at the time of this study, is very limited in number. Even though homosexuality may have existed for a long time in Malaysian society, homosexuals' activities have been carried out behind closed door. However, in recent years, as has been expressed by the participants of this study, homosexuality has become a common and noticeable phenomenon in Malaysian cities like Kuala Lumpur. Therefore, the researcher would like to recommend that further studies be made in regards to the discursive construction of identities of these homosexuals. One of the limitations of this research is that the number of participants involved is relatively small. Therefore, the researcher would like to suggest that a large scale study involving a larger number of participants be made so that the findings can be generalized to the whole homosexual community in Malaysia. It would also be interesting and enlightening if a study could be conducted that involved homosexual couples as the participants.