

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

On July 8, 2009, the government announced its decision to abolish the policy of teaching Mathematics and Science in English (otherwise known by its Bahasa Malaysia acronym, PPSMI—‘Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik Dalam Bahasa Inggeris’). The announcement ended months of uncertainty concerning the fate of the policy, as the government had initially promised to come to a decision on the matter by the end of March 2009 (Khoo & Chapman, 2009).

However, the decision was a controversial one as various stakeholders began to speak up either for or against it. Much of this debate took place in the form of media discourse, as the media duly reported the diverse reactions and responses to the government’s announcement.

Therefore, this study employs a critical discourse analysis to examine the media discourse on the issue of abolishing the PPSMI and determine how the media has represented the stakeholders’ views and voices on the matter.

1.2 Background to the study

This section will trace the history of language education in Malaysia to understand how language policies have affected the nation through the years. It will also discuss the reasons why using the English language as a medium of instruction in national schools is such a controversial issue and finally, it will discuss the government’s reasons behind the implementation and abolishment of PPSMI.

1.2.1 Language in education: A historical journey

Prior to independence in 1957, the system of education was “fragmented” (Rahimah Haji Ahmad, 1998). The first schools were religious schools, established by the Malays, and when Chinese and Indian migrant workers arrived in the country, they set up schools for their own community which used their mother tongue as the medium of instruction (Foo & Richards, 2004). Christian missionaries opened schools that were mostly English-medium, except for a few Malay-medium ones in Penang and Malacca (Gaudart, 1987). Later, the British opened Malay-medium schools with a secular curriculum for the Malays but did not attempt to standardise the curriculum across all the schools (Foo & Richards, 2004). Therefore, there were four types of schools, using four different mediums of instruction: English, Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. However, the English schools were considered the best because they offered a more ‘complete’ education in the sense that students could complete their education up to secondary school level and, if they wished to or could afford it, could even go on to university in England (Seng, 2007).

When Malaya began the push towards independence, the Education Ordinance 1952 was put into place to standardise all primary and secondary schools by establishing ‘national’ schools (Ambigapathy Pandian, 2001). English was made compulsory, resulting in a bilingual system of education using both English and Malay in national schools, with both languages given equal weight (Seng, 2007). Vernacular schools continued to use their own mother tongue as the medium of instruction and did not come under the national school system (Foo & Richards, 2004).

When Malaya obtained independence in 1957, her leaders recognised the need for a national education system that would unify the country and give citizens a sense of belonging as well as a national identity (Thevy Rajaretnam & Mildred Nalliah, 1999).

Therefore, an education committee was formed to study the matter. Led by Tun Abdul Razak, the committee's report came to be known as the Razak Report.

Among other things, the committee recommended setting up a national school system that would use the national language, Bahasa Melayu (as it was known at the time). The committee's recommendations were incorporated in the 1957 Education Ordinance which established Malay as the common medium of instruction in all national schools (Ganguly, 2003). As a result, English lost its equal status with Malay and became a second language to be taught as a single subject in the school curriculum (Seng, 2007). In addition, the Ordinance recognised and integrated vernacular schools as national schools, allowing these schools to continue using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction at primary level with the understanding that all schools would eventually use Malay at secondary level.

In 1960, the government formed an Education Review Committee to review the efficacy of the Language Ordinance in achieving its stated goals (Foo & Richards, 2004). The Rahman Talib Report, as it came to be known, found that English-medium schools were still operating and very few schools were using Malay as the medium of instruction (Seng, 2007). This led to the enactment of the Education Act 1961 (Foo & Richards, 2004), which set a deadline for the phasing out of English-medium schools. The implementation began in stages starting with the first year of primary school in 1970. By 1982, all national schools had fully converted to using Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction (Ganguly, 2003).

This state of affairs continued until 2003 when the PPSMI policy was instituted by the Cabinet led by then-Prime Minister Datuk Seri (now Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

1.2.2 The controversial English language

Malay nationalists have long regarded the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools to be “a symbol of colonial oppression” (Seng, 2007, p.214). This is because students from English-medium schools tended to have more economic opportunities, since under the colonial system, English had “become the language of economic opportunity and social mobility” (Gill, 2005, p. 246). As a result, English became viewed as the language of the ‘elite’. Moreover, most English-medium schools were located in urban areas and many of the Malays in rural areas could not attend those schools. Therefore, the Malays felt that the English language was used as a means of marginalising or oppressing them. Gill explains the result:

To rectify this felt social and economic imbalance, the Malays believed that the institution of Bahasa Melayu as the national language and its establishment by law as official language would provide them the educational and administrative capital which would lead to its development as a language of higher status. Making their language official would provide the Malays with linguistic capital and economic opportunity which would lead to social and professional mobility. (p. 246)

Ganguly (2003) has noted, “Since independence in 1957, language policies in Malaysia have been closely tied to questions of race, ethnicity, and citizenship. In the post-independence era, ascriptive beliefs about race and ethnicity have influenced political choices pertaining to the adoption of language policies” (p. 240). Therefore, it can be seen that the drive to make Bahasa Malaysia the medium of instruction in national schools was part of an overall national pro-Malay policy that was also reflected in the setting of quota systems for Malays in public universities (Kirkpatrick, 2011) and in fact was most clearly seen in the New Economic Policy (NEP) launched by the government in 1970 (Ganguly, 2003). The NEP was launched in response to the May 13, 1969 interracial riots (Seng, 2007) and aimed to equalise the economic disparity among the races, with particular focus on assisting the Malays by discriminating in their favour (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

Therefore, when prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohammad announced that national schools would begin using English to teach science and mathematics from January 2003, it is no wonder that this new policy caused a great deal of debate. Although the Razak Report had envisioned Bahasa Malaysia as a means of unifying all the ethnic groups in the country, Malay nationalists view the use of Bahasa Malaysia in schools as an issue of identity, not unification. Ganguly (2003) comments, “Despite the notable progress that Malays have made under the NEP [National Economic Policy], a sense of insecurity still pervades a significant section of this community. Any attempt to dilute the standing of the Malay language is consequently seen as an assault on their standing within Malaysia” (p. 253). As a result, the re-introduction of English as a medium of instruction in schools—albeit for only two subjects—was viewed by Malay nationalists as an attack on the Malay identity (Yang & Md Sidin Ahmad Ishak, 2011).

1.2.3 The teaching of science and mathematics in English (PPSMI)

The PPSMI policy was the brainchild of Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who had entrusted the Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS), a government think-tank, to study its feasibility prior to implementation (Tan, 2011). According to the Education Ministry, PPSMI was implemented “based on the government’s concern on the nation’s human capital development towards achieving the standard of a developed country, as well as an early preparation to compete in the era of globalization” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2012).

The change began gradually with Year 1 students in primary schools, as well as Form 1 and Lower Six students in secondary schools nationwide. By 2007, the policy had been fully implemented for all students in all primary and secondary schools.

However, this policy was a controversial one and members of all three main ethnic groups—Malays, Chinese, and Indians—objected to it. In fact, Asmah Haji Omar

(2012) states that 50% of the Malays were against using English to teach Science and Mathematics in schools. Kirkpatrick (2011) cites a number of reasons for these objections: first, a lack of teachers who are trained and able to teach the two subjects in English; second, lower primary students being unable to cope if they have a poor command of the English language when they enter school in Primary One; and third, a perception that the policy undermines the ethnic interests of the nationalist Malays as well as the Chinese. Asmah Haji Omar (2012) elaborates on that last point:

As a symbol, the Malay language stands for the national as well as the ethnic. With such reverence given to this symbol, replacing it with another language in the teaching of important school subjects such as science and mathematics was seen as a betrayal of the struggle for nationalism by the freedom fighters prior to independence from the British. With the expectation of achieving the status of a fully industrialised country by the year 2020, science and mathematics are taken as symbols of power. Hence, to the Malay dissenters of TSME [PPSMI], not teaching these symbols of power in Malay meant desecrating the symbol of nationalism. (p. 173)

Nevertheless, the government pushed the policy through despite the objections.

Seng (2007) explained the decision thus:

The move was founded on the conviction that Malaysia's competitiveness in the global economy depends on the level of scientific and technological knowledge of its citizens and to achieve that it is necessary for the two subjects [science and mathematics] to be taught in English, the dominant language of science in the world. (p. 222)

Six years later, after the first cohort of students who had begun studying science and mathematics in English from primary one had completed their primary schooling, the government decided to review the efficacy of PPSMI in achieving its stated goals. This was done by analysing the students' Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) results (*Bernama*, 2008). Following that, the government held some roundtable discussions with various stakeholders, including teachers, parents and students (*The Star*, 2008), and on July 9, 2009, then-Education Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, announced the Cabinet's decision to discontinue the PPSMI policy by the year 2012 (Chapman, 2009).

Again, this announcement was greeted with mixed feelings by various parties. PAGE, the Parents Action Group for English, has been one of the most vocal groups to speak up against the policy reversal, while another organisation, Gerakan Mansuhkan PPSMI (GMP), a coalition of 14 non-governmental organisations (NGOs), lauded the move.

1.3 Statement of the problem

There appears to be a tug-of-war on the issue of PPSMI. The present government is determined to reverse the policy, and while certain groups and individuals applaud this decision, others are lobbying fiercely for the policy to be reinstated—or at least, for parents and students to be given a choice (Another Parent, 2011).

The news media stands squarely in between the government and the public on this issue, as the media mediates between these two parties. For example, the media helps to represent the government, its aims, desires and plans to the people, by broadcasting news from various government representatives and spokespersons. At the same time, the various public stakeholders in the PPSMI issue also rely on the media to publicise their views, to encourage others to speak out and rally behind their cause.

Therefore, there is a need to examine whether the media accords these stakeholders equal representation, or is it mainly a mouthpiece of the government? In Malaysia, the mainstream media is sometimes dismissed as “propaganda” due to the media houses’ close ties with various government-affiliated bodies or corporations. The alternative media, however, is commonly believed to champion the citizens’ cause or present a more balanced representation of the issues. Is this true when it comes to the discourse of PPSMI?

There is a need to realise the ideologies of the media houses and determine whether the ideologies favour any one party. Journalists and media publications generally claim to be neutral and unbiased—*The Star* says its mission is to report objectively (*The Star*, 2012)—but at times the types of reports published and the manner of reporting suggests this is not so.

1.4 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study is to realise and compare the different ideologies behind, or contained within, reports from mainstream and alternative media in Malaysia on the issue of abolishing the PPSMI.

1.5 Research objectives

The two objectives of this study are:

- a) To examine whether both media houses treat the subject of PPSMI differently in their reports; and
- b) To determine the ideological position of each media house, as revealed in their respective writing styles or the content of their reports on PPSMI.

1.6 Research questions

The study aims to compare and contrast the discourse from both media houses to address the following research questions:

- a) In the intertextual analysis, the research report will investigate the following:
 - i. Do the reports exhibit a high degree of dialogicality?
 - ii. How are the various voices recontextualised in the text?
 - iii. How do the two media houses frame the various voices in the discourse in relation to each other and the reporters' voices?
 - iv. What intertextual references do the reports make to other texts?
 - v. Whose voices are included and whose voices are excluded from the reports?

- b) In the textual analysis, the research report will investigate the following:
 - i. How does the reporter construct social reality in the text through representation of social actors?
 - ii. How does the writer use transitivity to represent social actors as participants in clauses and processes?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study is significant due to the political climate of Malaysia. At present, there is a general public perception that the mainstream media is less objective or more partisan compared to the alternative media, therefore the mainstream media cannot be trusted (Adib Zalkapli, 2010). This perception is likely to be stronger among the urban white-collar workers who have greater access to high-speed Internet connections and devices that can take advantage of such connections. They are therefore able to use the

Internet to source for alternative news and are no longer obtain all their information from printed newspapers. As stated by Bakri Musa (2003), “more and more Malaysians are turning to it [the Internet] as a source of alternative news” (p. 241). However, it is possible that the public does not realise that each media house has its own ideology and that it is impossible for any media house to be completely objective or non-partisan.

In addition, there has been considerable debate regarding the issue of abolishing PPSMI ever since the Deputy Education Minister announced that the policy would be discontinued and that all schools would be reverting to the previous system of using Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction for all subjects. As the media always claims to be objective, the findings of the analysis in this study will reveal to what extent they are objective in their reporting.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section of this chapter will present an overview of the three core approaches in critical discourse analysis (hereinafter referred to as CDA), i.e. van Dijk's socio-cognitive studies approach, Wodak's discourse-historical approach, and Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. Next, the second section will present an overview of the important concepts in CDA. Finally, the third section will discuss the media.

2.2 The three core approaches in Critical Discourse Analysis

Roger Fowler, Gunther Kress, Bob Hodge and Tony Trew were the first scholars to conceptualise a new direction in discourse analysis in their 1979 book *Language and Control* (van Dijk, 2007). They termed this new branch of research 'critical linguistics' as it involved "analysing real texts and their relations to social contexts" (Threadgold, 2003). This concept was later further developed by three linguists, i.e. Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak, and Teun A. van Dijk (van Dijk, 2007) and evolved into what is now known as CDA.

While both critical linguistics and CDA are "fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 1995, p. 204), there are differences between the two schools. Threadgold (2003) has explained why critical discourse analysts reject the school of critical linguistics:

Critical linguistics was concerned to read the meanings in texts as the realisation of social processes, seeing texts as functioning ideologically and politically in relation to their contexts. This was very much an approach in which discourse was text, but there was too little emphasis on the production and interpretation of texts, a too ready assumption of the transparent relationship between textual features and social meanings and a neglect of discourse as a domain of social struggle or of the ways in which changes in discourse might be related to wider processes of social and cultural change. There was also a typical Marxist top-down view of ideology and power and an emphasis on social structure rather than social action, social reproduction rather than social transformation (Fairclough 1992). (para. 36).

In contrast, CDA analysts believe that to fully understand the meaning of texts, it is necessary to examine not just the text itself but how the text was produced and received (Fairclough, 2003), because they see discourse as a social practice (Wodak, 2001; Jørgensen & Philips, 2002). Furthermore, since meanings are made through the interplay between the text, the producer, and the receiver, “we must take account of the institutional position, interests, values, intentions, desires etc. of producers; the relations between elements at different levels in texts; and the institutional positions, knowledge, purposes, values etc. of receivers” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 10-1).

CDA is therefore inter- or multidisciplinary in its approach because it draws on elements of various social theories in its attempts to explain the relationship between discourse and society (van Dijk, 1995). As a result, there is no unitary framework for CDA (van Dijk, 2001), only a “theoretical synthesis of conceptual tools developed in different theoretical schools” (Wodak, 2006, p. 181). Nevertheless, there is a general acceptance among scholars and researchers of three core approaches to CDA (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000) and these approaches shall be discussed below.

2.2.1 Socio-Cognitive Studies (van Dijk)

Van Dijk’s approach to critical discourse analysis is a sociocognitive one, i.e. it takes into account not only the social aspect of communication and discourse, but also the cognitive aspect. He has explained his approach thus:

This means, among other things, that I am also interested in the study of mental representations and the processes of language users when they produce and comprehend discourse and participate in verbal interaction, as well as in the knowledge, ideologies and other beliefs shared by social groups. At the same time, such an approach examines the ways in which such cognitive phenomena are related to the structures of discourse, verbal interaction, communicative events and situations, as well as societal structures, such as those of domination and social inequality... (van Dijk, 2009, p. 64)

The bulk of van Dijk's early work focused on the production of racism and ethnic prejudices in discourse, whereby he was able to show that racism and ideology are both mental as well as social phenomena (van Dijk, 2009). Thus, he argues that the relation between discourse structures and social structures is not a direct one, but is "always mediated by the interface of personal and social cognition" (Wodak, 2011, p. 60).

van Dijk's recent work has been focused on setting out a methodology for analysing parliamentary debates (see, for example, van Dijk, 2000a; 2000b; 2004; 2010). However, because his framework focuses on the cognitive processes and mental representation of the participants in the discourse, his framework is not optimal for the purposes of this study, which seeks to determine, among other things, how the media constructs social reality. In doing so, the study examines social relations, identities and the voices represented in news discourse, which are not included in van Dijk's framework.

2.2.2 Discourse-Historical Approach (Wodak)

The discourse-historical approach (DHA) was conceptualised by Wodak in a 1990 study on post-war anti-semitism in Austria (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). The framework "integrates and triangulates knowledge about historical sources and the background of the political and social fields within which discursive events are embedded" (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 38). In other words, the framework seeks to interpret and unpack all the layers in a text by systematically integrating all the

background information concerning the speech event, the participants and other factors (Wodak, 2011).

The integration of background information is seen as important because extralinguistic factors such as the time and location during which the speech event takes place, the participants who are present and their status, age, background and experiences, and so on all have an influence on the production of the text (Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Fetter, 2000). Therefore, to expose implicit meanings in utterances, Wodak's framework "distinguishes between three dimensions which constitute textual meanings and structures: the topics which are spoken/written about; the discursive strategies employed; and the linguistic means that are drawn upon to realise both topics and strategies" (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008, p. 89).

The framework calls for an interdisciplinary approach to critical discourse analysis (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009), which is the main feature distinguishing it from the other approaches to CDA. Its interdisciplinary nature allows researchers to combine a variety of theories and methods in the analysis of text and discourse, as the approach is problem-oriented (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). When applied to news discourse, "DHA exposes the implicit meaning in news discourse, making the implicit explicit by consideration of the relevant historical and socio-political environment in which the news story dialog takes place" (Al Ali, 2011, p. 307).

This study chose not to employ the discourse-historical approach as the study is focused on the analysis of newspaper texts, while Wodak's approach goes beyond text analysis, involving ethnographic study and fieldwork as well (Meyer, 2001). Therefore, the methodology was inapplicable.

2.2.3 Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework

Blommert & Bulcaen (2000) state that “Fairclough’s *Language and Power* (1989) is commonly considered to be the landmark publication for the ‘start’ of CDA” (p. 454). It was Fairclough who built on Kress and Threadgold’s (1988) and Thibault’s (1991) work to come up with a theory of discourse and social change (Threadgold, 2003).

Jørgensen and Philips (2002) note that the idea of discourse as social practice is central to Fairclough’s work, as his definition of discourse is something which “both reproduces and changes knowledge, identities and social relations including power relations, and at the same time is also shaped by other social practices and structures” (p. 65). In this, he is influenced by Foucauldian theory and sees discourses as “ways of representing the world” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 124)—whether it is the inner world of thoughts, emotions, values, and beliefs, or the material world, or the social world.

Fairclough is therefore convinced that discourse analysis must include both textual and intertextual analysis, because meaning is not only derived from the text itself but is also made through the interplay between the author of the text and the receiver (Fairclough, 2003). Therefore, while he employs the use of Halliday’s (1984) systemic functional linguistics for detailed textual analysis, at the same time he also draws upon a number of social theorists like Bakhtin (1984) and Kristeva (1986) as well as Foucault (1972), Pêcheux (1982) and Althusser (1977) to “bring together a version of functional linguistics with sophisticated social and cultural theory” (Threadgold, 2003, para. 39).

The element of intertextuality is especially pertinent in the case of media texts which have been mediated and recontextualised into a new text for the consumption of the public. This is because as the media recontextualises information into a new textual environment, it is able to frame issues, represent social actors, and so on in such a way

as to represent a particular ideology to the public. This could help to support certain hegemonic structures within society.

To accommodate the necessity for both intertextual and textual analysis, Fairclough (2001) designed a three-dimensional framework for analysing texts that not only looks at the semantic properties of the text itself, but also takes into account the sociocultural practices and discourse practices that go into the production and reception (or interpretation) of the text. This framework was chosen for the present study as the study seeks to analyse media texts. Therefore, the combination of intertextual and textual analysis in Fairclough's framework will be most useful in helping the researcher to unpack the meaning in the texts and realise the ideologies embedded in them. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework will be discussed further in **Chapter 3.1 Theoretical Framework**.

2.3 Important concepts of CDA

The main aim of CDA is to bring to light power relationships (Titscher, et al., 2000) and examine how discourse has been used to construct reality and shape social practices or norms (Van Leeuwen, 1993) so as to help correct any injustice or inequality in society (Jørgensen & Philips, 2002). Therefore, the concepts of ideology, hegemony and power, and intertextuality are central in CDA. These concepts are discussed below.

2.3.1 Ideology

According to Fowler (1991), "any aspect of linguistic structure, whether phonological, syntactic, lexical, semantic, pragmatic or textual, can carry ideological significance" (p. 67). In CDA, the concept of ideology is based on Louis Althusser's theories, which were influenced by Marxist philosophy (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Teo, 2000). According to Marx and Engels (1970), since there are many participants in

a discourse, there could be many ideologies, because each participant has his own ideas, way of thinking, and an agenda of his own. However, the ruling class seeks to propagate its own ideology in order to safeguard its own interest. This is done by sending hidden messages so that recipients of the message will not realise that they are being subtly manipulated or exploited (Hodge & Kress, 1993). When the majority of the others in society accept that ideology, it becomes the dominant ideology (Downes & Miller, 1998).

The dominant ideology helps to support those in power by constructing a particular social reality, which influences members of society to act, think or speak in a certain way. This ideologically-influenced behaviour or speech is what Althusser terms “ideological practice” (1971). Ideological practices are often an unconscious product as the participants in the discourse do not realise that they are subscribing to a particular ideology or that they have invested in a distorted view of reality (van Dijk, 1998). Instead, people simply take this constructed reality for granted and accept it as the right or natural order of things. In Gramscian terms, they make “common sense” assumptions (Simpson, 1993, p. 6). Therefore, an ideology is not a view or belief, because people are often unaware of supporting or accepting the various ideologies (Fairclough, 1995a).

In line with Marxist thinking, Fairclough defines ideology as “representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation” (2003, p. 9). However, van Dijk (2011) argues that ideologies may be employed not only as tools for domination but also as a means of resisting or suppressing domination, because any group—even a suppressed group—may and often does use a specific ideology to protect its own interests and ensure its members remain united, loyal and cooperative. Therefore, van Dijk (2011) proposes a more general definition of ideology, namely “general systems of basic ideas shared by the members of a social group, ideas that will

influence their interpretation of social events and situations and control their discourse and other social practices as group members” (p. 380).

Ideologies are naturally conveyed through written or spoken texts, as texts are a product of discourse (Simpson, 1993), but they are usually expressed indirectly (van Dijk, 2011). Certain texts can be more ideologically-laden than others. For example, media texts are particularly relevant in constructing social reality because they are widely disseminated (Fowler, 1999). In addition, Erjavec and Volcic have noted that “the media try to make sense of the world for others, namely the consumers of the media products. In doing so, the media tend to shift readers from adherence to ideological positions or to cement them more firmly in their allegiance to ideological affiliations” (p. 304).

2.3.2 Hegemony and power

The concept of power in CDA is heavily influenced by Michel Foucault’s thinking. To Foucault (1980), power is not something that is held by one individual or group and exercised over others but instead, it affects everyone, for each person not only exercises power but is also affected by others’ exercise of it. However, he also discussed cases where the parties in a relationship are unequal, i.e. one party is in a position of authority over the other and is able to set the rules of behaviour for the other party and thus control the other party in certain ways. In such a case, the asymmetrical relationship produces power (Foucault, 1980).

Antonio Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is linked to this concept of power. Gramsci, a Marxist, applied the concept of power to the government, or the ruling class. According to him, rulers or those in power govern by consent and general acceptance rather than using force (Gramsci, 1971). This is due to the other groups’ acceptance of the unequal situation as a natural order of things, and agreeing that the best or most

efficacious practice is for the ruling class to rule (Danaher, Schirato & Webb, 2000). The media is usually the main conduit to disseminate these ideas (Downes & Miller, 1998; van Dijk, 1998) and once society accepts these ideas as fact or common practice, the hegemony is reproduced and sustained (McNair, 1998).

However, Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) understand hegemony as “the dominance of one particular perspective” (p. 7). From their perspective, discourses each seek to represent the world in a certain way, and as various discourses come into contact with each other, they are “engaged in a constant struggle with one another to achieve hegemony” (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 7). This is similar to Fairclough’s (1992) view of hegemony as something that is always changing as discourses negotiate with each other to reach a consensus about meaning.

2.3.3 Intertextuality

Intertextuality is “how texts draw upon, incorporate, recontextualise and dialogue with other texts” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17). A text is never stand-alone. Not only is it often a response to other texts or to a social or cultural situation or practice, it also prompts or leads to further discourse as other discourse participants react to it. Therefore, Kristeva (1986) stated that “intertextuality implies ‘the insertion of history (society) into a text and of this text into history’” (p. 39).

Fairclough (2003) further stated that “what is ‘said’ in a text is always said against the background of what is ‘unsaid’” (p. 17). Hence, even if the text does not explicitly incorporate any elements from other texts, it is still in “dialogue” with them (Fairclough, 2003, p. 17) and the intertextual element is important in order to be able to fully unpack the meaning of the text.

Intertextuality is an especially important concept and area of analysis in media discourse, where the media reports what has been said at other discursive events and

thus “two different texts, two different voices are brought into dialogue” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 48). In addition, when preparing a media text, the reporter often draws on a variety of sources, such as press releases, interviews, speeches, and so on, and reorganises the information to create a new text. Fairclough (2003) notes that incorporation of other texts into a text need not be confined to inserting direct quotes but can include paraphrases or summaries such those employed in indirect speech, and some texts may even be incorporated without attributing the source. In a media text, there is an assumption that the reporter claims to be reporting exactly what was said and done at the discursive event, but Fairclough (2003) states that “people may mistakenly, or dishonestly, or manipulatively make such claims” (p. 40). Thus it is important to consider the level of dialogicality in the report, i.e. how faithfully the reporter has chosen to represent the voices of others in the text, for example by using direct quotes instead of indirect quotes.

2.4 The media

McQuail (2003) has offered the following definition of media: “The term ‘media’ can variously identify an industrial sector, a set of technologies, a social institution, a set of firms and organisations with power in society, or an institution often referred to as ‘the press’” (p. 4). In their role as the press, the media now provides “the primary source of understanding of the world” (Talbot, 2007, p. 3). They are therefore considered powerful because they have the capacity to “capture and direct public attention; become a trusted source of information about current events; promote certain opinions; popularise certain fashions and lifestyles” (McQuail, 2003, p. 5). This capacity or potential for influence can be damaging if used for the wrong ends—for example, to support and spread certain ideologies.

The media's natural capacity to incorporate and convey ideologies is both its greatest strength and greatest weakness. It acts as "controllers of the flow of information, or 'gatekeepers' in deciding what the public will be offered as news" (Barr, 1985, p. 77). If used wisely and well, it can provide important information to the public and provide a forum for the public to discuss issues. However, if misused, it can become a tool of manipulation, especially if it were controlled by a ruling power and used to uphold the dominant hegemonic structures by dissemination of propaganda, as in the case of Nazi Germany (Barr, 1985).

This brings two issues to light: firstly, it is important that the news be impartial and truthful, so as not to mislead, misinform or wrongly influence the public, and secondly, the media should have the freedom to report according to the public interest, instead of being constrained to uphold the dominant hegemony of those in power.

This section will discuss the structure of the news report and endeavour to demonstrate why this structure is inherently ideological in nature. Following that, the discussion will cover the ideals of impartiality and truthfulness in reporting, and the concept of press freedom.

2.4.1 The structure of the news report

In the current study, "news reports" will refer specifically to "hard news", i.e. news about government actions, political developments, crime, natural disasters, and other events which must be reported in a timely manner in order to provide the public with the information as soon as possible (Gupta, 2003).

News reports are a genre of their own, crafted according to a specific writing style. The most common structure used for the body of news reports is the "inverted pyramid" structure (Nel, 1998; Greer, 1999). The name "inverted pyramid" refers to a graphical representation of the way the information is organised and presented, where

the most important information is presented first, followed by other information in order of decreasing importance. Therefore, the information is not presented in a linear chronology of events. An example of the inverted pyramid structure can be seen in Figure 2.1 below:

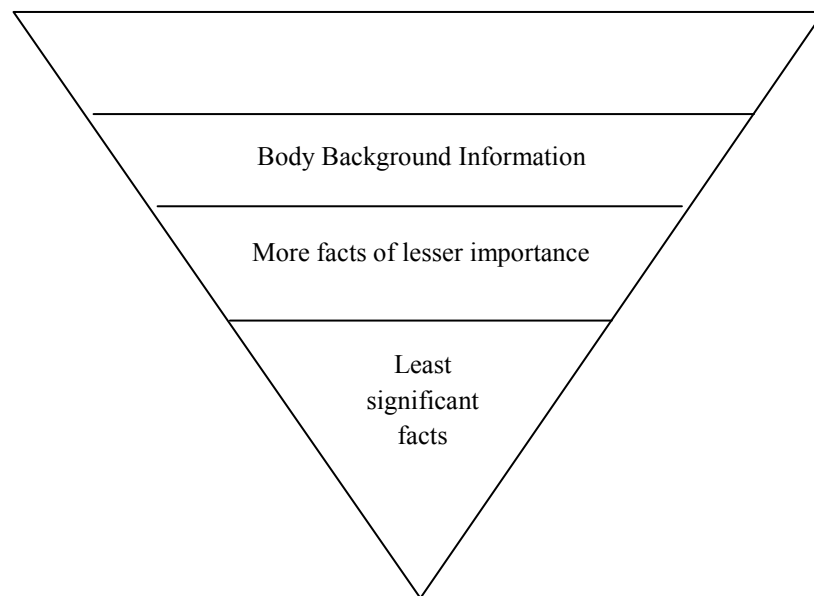


Figure 2.1 The inverted pyramid news structure (Gupta, 2003, p. 25)

The opening paragraph is called “the lead”, as seen in Figure 2.1 above. It “summarises the central action and establishes the point of the story” (Bell, 2009, p. 239). The reporter exercises a value judgement when he chooses the lead (Fox, 2001) because he is the one who determines what is most important or noteworthy and then goes on to highlight that in the lead. However, due to the impersonal nature of the report, “the text represents the incident or statement selected as ‘angle’ as inherently noteworthy” (White, 2000, p. 392). As a result, the ideological nature of the lead is obscured and readers do not realise that it is “a building block in a subjective, ideologically determined theory of the social order” (White, 2000, p. 392).

The remaining body of the news report serves to support the reporter's selection of the lead and further represent it as "natural and inevitable" (White, 2000, p. 392). This is because the body of the inverted pyramid structure functions as an orbital structure, where the headline and the lead form the nucleus, and all remaining paragraphs act as satellites orbiting this nucleus, helping to clarify, elaborate, provide additional context and so on (White, 1997). This structure, together with the impersonal authorial voice used in news reports, serves to present an illusion of objectivity on the part of the reporter or publisher (White, 2000). As a result, "the view of the social world it [the news story] presents is more likely to be read as unmediated, anonymous and mechanically determined" (White, 2000, p. 391).

Within the body of the news report, the reporter is required to directly or indirectly quote attributed sources of information to elaborate on or provide background on the lead. Again, the presence of quotes may lead the reader to perceive the report as being an objective one, because by quoting another person, the reporter is seen to distance himself from the content of his report and the issue he is covering (Cotter, 2010). The quotes represent the particular speaker's point of view and the reporter is seen to be merely conveying that view to the public. However, the speaker's quote presents his own understanding or interpretation of reality, and is therefore ideological in and of itself. As Rupar (2007) has stated, "Sources in news articles give accounts of events and, therefore, have an influence on the definition of events" (p. 601).

Furthermore, in writing the report, the reporter has the power to decide which statements to quote or whom to quote. Höglund (2008) further elaborates on this issue:

The reporter...can choose to arrange the utterances of his/her sources with information received so as to construct an argument. The reporter also has the power to decide which sources are to be considered relevant and reliable, and thus to be included in the news story. The structure of the argument indicates the reporter's evaluation of the events reported, and the linguistic choices of the reporter him/herself attitudinally. (p. 228)

Research shows that reporters do carefully choose particular quotes to convey the message they wish the public to receive. Cotter (2010) has noted that “Throughout the story, the quotes are positioned *to support the news angle* and to support the lead” (p. 147, bolded and italicised emphasis in the original). This shows that the use of quotes does not necessarily mean the news report is presenting an objective point of view.

Not only does the reporter have the power to ‘angle’ the story to the reader and shape the argument in a certain way, editors also exercise power to alter whatever the reporter has written. Carney (2002) noted that a news story may be read by three or more editors, depending on its importance, and that “the editor may challenge the story’s facts, angle, conclusion or any other larger part of it;...It is not uncommon for an editor to ask for a rewrite or simply do it themselves” (p. 64). As a result, the final printed text may reflect the bias or ideology of the reporter, the editor, or both.

The headline is written last, when the whole report has been completed, edited and laid out on the page (Carney, 2002). Headlines are usually composed by the editor, not the journalist (Reah, 1998), and are therefore written with reference to the lead. They are meant to attract the reader, which means they carry certain implications and ideological content (Bell, 1991). Nevertheless, the end result is that the headline and lead together function as an “initial summary” (van Dijk, 1986, p. 161) which “focuses the story in a particular direction” (Bell, 1994, p. 104).

Therefore, it can be said that the structure of the news report and the process of production (bringing it to print) inherently support and even encourage ideological content. The reporter, by exercising a value judgement in choosing the lead and a particular angle for the report, can represent a particular construction of social reality, or as White (1997) states, a desired social order. Alternatively, the editor(s), who writes the headline and has the power to alter the texts without consulting the reporter, could

also exert his influence to represent a construction of social reality that is different from that which the reporter originally intended.

2.4.2 Impartiality and truthfulness

Impartiality and truthfulness is especially important in print media because people are generally more trusting of published content; they presume that any factual information contained within it has been checked before publication and is therefore valid and reliable (McQuail, 2003). Indeed, the power of the media's influence becomes all the greater and therefore all the more dangerous due to this tendency for people to accept whatever they read in the news. This is because any ideology embedded in news reports is not obvious due to the impersonal and formal way reports are worded (White, 1997), and the readers could unknowingly accept the represented ideology or construction of reality because it appears so natural and reasonable.

In fact, the reporters and editors themselves may be unaware of their own ideological positions as they have accepted their own perception or construction of reality as a 'common sense' assumption (Gramsci, 1971). Hence, they may hold to the belief that they are being impartial and truthful without realising that they are conveying their own particular 'truth'. As stated by Hackett and Carroll (2006):

...news and other media genres are ideological to the extent that they construct symbolic maps of the world which favour dominant values, institutions, elites, or social relations—at the expense of other mappings of social reality. But unlike propaganda, ideology is not necessarily produced with the *intention* to dominate, manipulate or persuade. Rather, it typically involves taken-for-granted value commitments and reality judgements, assumptions which are naturalised, transformed into common sense, through the process of hegemony. (p. 31)

Thus, Barr (1985) has argued that all media is inevitably biased and that it is impossible to publish a "value-free newspaper" (p. 77). This is because the news-making or news-publishing process is conducted by a number of individuals who will naturally be influenced by their own backgrounds, opinions, and values. These people in

turn have the “capacity to select what is reported and to shape the content of news stories” (Campbell & Jamieson, 2006, p. 119). Barr (1985) added that the only real question is as to the extent of the bias, not its existence, and suggested that it is more sensible to expect a balanced representation of various groups’ interests or a presentation of a range of views than a lack of bias.

This view is starting to gain recognition among scholars and practitioners alike. For example, it has been acknowledged by the American Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ). In 1996, the Society amended its code of ethics, replacing the word “objectivity” and replacing it with “truth”, “accuracy”, and “comprehensiveness” (Mindich, 1998, p. 5).

2.4.3 Press freedom

Freedom of the press is a highly contested ideal as it is closely linked to the right of freedom of expression and freedom of speech. In the West, the idea of press freedom is mostly based on Siebert’s (1956b) libertarian theory of the press (Merrill, 2000). The libertarian theory, being based on liberalism, holds fast to the concept that the press should be free of restraint or censorship (Stein, 1966). The aim of a libertarian press is “to inform, entertain, [and] sell—but chiefly to help discover truth, and to check on government” (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1976, p. 7). In a democracy, it is believed that the press should be free so that it can fulfil its role as a ‘Fourth Estate’ to check the three branches of government, i.e. the executive, legislature, and judiciary (Asante, 1997). Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani (2009) comments that the distinguishing feature of democracy is its insistence on holding people in power accountable. A free press is able to do this by conducting investigative journalism, thereby bringing to light any mismanagement, lies, inaction and so on by those in power.

Furthermore, in a democratic society, the media plays a unique role. The media and journalists are seen as facilitators of the democratic process as they mediate between the government and its people:

If the a government is to be accountable to the people it must know what is going on; if the people are to cast their votes wisely and rationally they too must know what is going on. Information is necessary (though not of course sufficient) for a successful democracy, inasmuch as it requires the free circulation of news, opinion, debate and discussion. Hence the incorporation of freedom of expression and freedom of information in international charters like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Besley, 2000, p. 10)

The public's 'right to know' is considered so important that Fink (1988) conceptualised it as a duty the press should perform, stating, "while the freedom of expression gives the press the right to freely print the news, the people's right to know gives the press the duty to print it" (p. 11). He saw the press as "serving as a surrogate of the people", i.e. acting as representatives of the people by insisting on access to the news as well as the freedom to publish it (Fink, 1988, p. 11). This is crucial because "When the press represents and speaks on behalf of all the sections of the society, particularly the voiceless, it makes democracy a truly representative regime" (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2009, p. 9).

While the idea of freedom of expression is a sound one in theory, in practice it is inevitable that there should be some control of the media. McQuail (2003) notes that "control is more acceptable the more distant it is from actual content decisions" (p. 96); for example, rules about ownership of media corporations and licensing of channels are generally tolerated, but content censorship is largely frowned upon. This is because censorship would affect the production of content, jeopardising media impartiality and opening the door for those in power to misuse the influence of the press for their own ends—to sustain or strengthen their particular hegemony.

Unfortunately, the latest report by the United States-based advocacy group Freedom House shows that in 2011, "only 14.5 percent of the world's inhabitants lived

in countries with a Free press, while 45 percent had a Partly Free press and 40.5 percent lived in Not Free environments” (Freedom House, 2012, p. 3). In terms of countries, 66 were listed as ‘free’, 72 ‘partly free’ and 59 ‘not free’ (Freedom House, 2012). The level of freedom was measured by looking at the diversity of information available in each country, as well as the countries’ *legal environment*, i.e. laws and regulations that could affect media operations and content; the *political environment*, which includes the use of censorship and the freedom to report without fear of harassment; and the *economic environment*, primarily the identity of the stakeholders in media companies (Freedom House, 2012).

2.5 The Malaysian media

The 2011 Freedom House report ranked Malaysia’s press as ‘not free’ with a rating of 63 together with Cambodia, Jordan, Madagascar and Pakistan (Freedom House, 2012). There was hardly any improvement from the previous year, where Malaysia had been given a rating of 64 (Freedom House, 2011). This is despite the fact that when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Haji Abdul Razak first took office in 2009, he had publicly stated that he believes in “a vibrant, free and informed media...that is empowered to responsibly report what they see, without fear of consequence, and to hold governments and public officials accountable for the results they achieve or do not achieve” (Mohd Najib Abdul Razak, 2009). Unfortunately, Najib’s rhetoric has not been translated into action. In fact, in its 2010 report, the Centre for Independent Journalism, a Malaysian non-governmental organisation (NGO) noted, “the year has seen greater state control of all forms of expression be it through print, the Internet, radio or television” (Centre for Independent Journalism, 2010, p. 5).

Himmelboim and Limor (2008) have commented, “While freedom of the press appears well-established throughout the world, many regimes, especially those of a

totalitarian or only partly democratic nature, declare their support of it for propaganda purposes only, leaving no more than an empty shell in practice” (p. 237). It appears that this is true of Malaysia, where the government claims to support a free press, yet insists on the need for certain restrictive and regulatory laws.

2.5.1 Media laws and censorship in Malaysia

Although Malaysia is a parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy, many analysts consider the country an authoritarian or semi-authoritarian state (Shriver, 2002), as the government still exercises some form of control or regulation over the media (Md. Asiuzzaman, 2010). This control of the media was considered necessary by former prime minister Datuk Seri (now Tun) Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who stated that the Western form of liberal democracy was unsuitable for Malaysia, as it conflicted too much with Asian values. He considered an authoritarian government a “necessary political price” to pay in exchange for economic growth (Yao, 2001, p. 50). In practice, government control over the media is seen to be exercised in two ways: firstly, via legislation, and secondly, via the ownership of publishing houses and radio or television broadcasting companies.

The Centre for Policy Initiatives, a local non-profit reform organisation, lists the five laws most used to regulate and restrict the media as follows (Lim, 2007):

- (a) The Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA);
- (b) The Sedition Act 1948;
- (c) The Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA);
- (d) The Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA); and
- (e) The Broadcasting Act 1988 (replaced by the Communications and Multimedia Act 1988 (CMA)).

As this study's data comprises news reports from *The Star's* print edition as well as online news portal *Malaysiakini*, the two most relevant laws for this study are the PPPA and the CMA because the PPPA regulates the print media, while the CMA governs the online media. However, under section **2.5.2 The advent of online media and alternative media**, the CMA shall be discussed together with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission Act 1988, as the two are interrelated.

The PPPA requires both domestic and foreign publications to obtain a printing licence or publishing permit, renewable annually. The permit is granted by the Home Minister, who is given broad powers. For example, he "may at any time revoke or suspend a permit for any period he considers desirable" (Printing Presses & Publications Act, 1984, Section 3(3)) and has "the absolute discretion to refuse an application for a licence or permit" (Printing Presses & Publications Act, 1984, Section 12(2)). Furthermore, Section 13A(1) states that the minister's decision to grant, revoke or suspend a permit cannot be questioned in court, and Section 13B provides that the person applying for the permit or who has the permit revoked does not have a right to be heard regarding the matter. The cumulative effect of this Act is to place "enormous pressure on the press to conform to the ideology of the Government" (Lim, 2007). As a result, newspapers and other forms of print media practise self-censorship (Shriver, 2002) in order to avoid any danger of losing their publishing permits.

The CMA covers all forms of broadcasting, not just on television and radio but also over the Internet. It requires Internet providers to obtain a licence, and also regulates what is permitted to be posted on or transmitted over the Internet (Communications & Multimedia Act, 1998).

Apart from using legislation, the government also controls the media by being a major stakeholder in most major media companies (Usha Devi Rajaratnam, 2009). A

look at the newspapers reveals that for English dailies, *The Star* is published by Star Publications (Malaysia) Bhd, which is owned by the investment arm of political party Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) (Lim, 2007), one of the parties in the Barisan Nasional (BN) ruling coalition. *The New Straits Times* and *Malay Mail* are published by the NSTP Group, a government-affiliated company (Transparency International, 2008). *theSun*, a free newspaper, is published by Berjaya Media Bhd, a subsidiary of Berjaya Corp Bhd, which owned by Tan Sri Vincent Tan Chee Yioun (Koh, 2012). Vincent Tan is known to have close ties with leaders in the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), another party in the ruling coalition (Gomez, 1999). Mustafa K. Anuar (2005) suggests that this close alliance between the press and the government is caused by the PPPA: “Given the immense power that the internal security minister wields, it follows that most publishing permits have been conveniently issued to applicants who are deemed friendly to the powers-that-be” (p. 30).

The close ties between the Malaysian mainstream media and the government has meant that reporting tends to be much in favour of the government’s policies and ideology. For example, a study by de Nelson (2006) found that the Malaysian mainstream newspaper, *The New Straits Times*, generally supported the government’s stand with regard to the need for ‘tough laws’ such as the Internal Security Act. This was done by framing the Act with the need to maintain harmony and order, and protect the country against terrorists.

In addition, the mainstream media tends to give more space to government voices, with very little representation of opposition views. For example, a study by Wong (2004) on news reporting during the lead-up to the 1999 general election showed that front-page headlines in mainstream newspapers were mainly greatly supportive of BN or tended to focus on BN. His study showed that of a total of 38 articles in *The Star*, 17 were positive towards BN, while only two were positive to the opposition Barisan

Alternatif (BA) coalition. Another four were negative reports on BA, while four were neutral and the remaining articles were not related to politics. Subsequently, a survey of news published during the run-up to the 2008 general election found that the mainstream media dedicated an overwhelming majority of space to voices from the ruling Barisan Nasional party (Centre for Independent Journalism, 2008). In particular and most relevant to this present study, *The Star* was found to have dedicated 63% space to Barisan Nasional and their candidates. Yet another study on the same election analysed pre- and post-election newspaper headlines from mainstream newspapers *Utusan Malaysia* (a Bahasa Malaysia daily) and *The New Straits Times* (Azmyl Md Yusof, 2009). The researcher found that headlines from both dailies had “very little display of objectivity” (p. 75).

In addition, the mainstream media either does not report or downplays certain events and information which could be unfavourable to the government. At times the government instructs editors to highlight an issue in a certain way (Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2008). According to a report by German-based political foundation Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (2008), it is standard practice for editors of the mainstream press to check with the prime minister’s department or the home ministry before printing the news, or to wait for instructions before proceeding to break certain news.

Cases such as these have prompted commentators like Loo (2006) to state that the Malaysian mainstream media are motivated by ‘service of power’ rather than ‘service of the *rakyat* (people)’.

2.5.2 The advent of online media and alternative media

Cherian George (2005) states that when the Internet was introduced to Malaysia in the mid-1990s, it disrupted the government’s “decades-old approach to media management”, i.e. the concept of using legislative powers and ownership of media

houses to control the media (p. 906). It was, and still is, not necessary to procure a licence or permit in order to use the Internet for mass communication. In addition, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, a regulatory body set up under the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission Act 1988, published a Bill of Guarantees which included a promise to keep the Internet censorship-free (The MSC Malaysia Bill of Guarantees, 1997). This promise was made with an eye to attracting foreign investors to the 'Multimedia Super Corridor', a project which then-prime minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hoped would help bring Malaysia into developed nation status (Cherian George, 2005).

The result of the lack of censorship was a "flowering of dissenting communication on an unprecedented scale" (Cherian George, 2005, p. 907). This allowed the emergence of an alternative media, i.e. websites through which Malaysians could get a viewpoint "that would normally not see the light of day in the mainstream media" (Mustafa K. Anuar, 2000, p. 188).

Nadarajah (2000) has stated that Internet activism was spurred by the arrest of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998. "Within two or three months of the Anwar arrest in September 1998, there were over 50 sites on Anwar and issues related to Anwar" (Nadarajah, 2000, p. 27). About a year later, on November 20, 1999, *Malaysiakini* was launched as the first independent online news portal in the country (Nadarajah, 2000). The access to information allowed the people to see how the mainstream media covered issues differently from the online or alternative media, and as a result "many Malaysians for the first time felt they had been misled and began to lose faith in the official media" (Rahim Abdul Samad, 2001, p. 7).

Although the government has kept their promise not to censor the Internet, Brown (2005) noted that it has tried to take other steps in order to "counteract the medium's political impact" (para. 27). For instance, it has used laws like the Internal

Security Act (ISA) and Sedition Act to take action against political activists who have used the Internet to air their views. For example, in September 2008, about 15 *Reformasi* activists, including well-known blogger Raja Petra Kamaruddin, were arrested and detained without trial under the ISA (Brown, 2005). Another incident occurred in April 2003, when *Malaysiakini*'s offices were raided and 19 of its computers confiscated after it published a letter from a reader which the government considered potentially seditious (Kenyon & Marjoribanks, 2007).

In addition, at times the government has proposed measures that might have the effect of fettering the freedom of the Internet. One such proposal was to require bloggers to register with the government authorities in order to ensure that they would exercise responsibility in what they wrote and would not spread any “negative or malicious content” (*The Star*, 2007). However, this idea was shelved after a public outcry ensued.

Despite the government's attempts to intimidate those who produce or consume online media, alternative media sources continue to thrive in the country. In the last general election the Barisan Nasional party was dealt a blow when it did not win a two-thirds majority in Parliament, and this was generally attributed to the availability of information via the alternative media which swayed the vote (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani & Zengeni, K. T., 2010).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to critical discourse analysis. According to Fairclough (2003), the overall aim of CDA is to "analyse texts with a view to their social effects" (p. 11). Therefore, Fairclough's framework provides a method of analysing discourse—"the whole process of social interaction" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 20)—rather than simply the text itself.

Originally, Fairclough's three-dimensional framework was used to realise the close link between language and ideology, as he theorised that the link between the two has caused language "to become perhaps the primary medium of social control and power" (2001, p. 2). However, he subsequently applied his framework to analyse a specific type of discourse, i.e. media discourse. This is because the media uses language to represent the world in various ways, and therefore has the power to shape ideas and systems (Fairclough, 1995b).

In order to realise the link between language and ideology, Fairclough postulates that it is necessary to go beyond a textual study. Thus, the three dimensions of his framework refer to an analysis of the formal features of the text itself, discursive practices (ie. the participants' production and consumption of the text), and social practices or institutions that have shaped the discursive event (Fairclough, 2001). The result is an analysis that is comprehensive: it is both textual and intertextual (please refer to Figure 3.1).

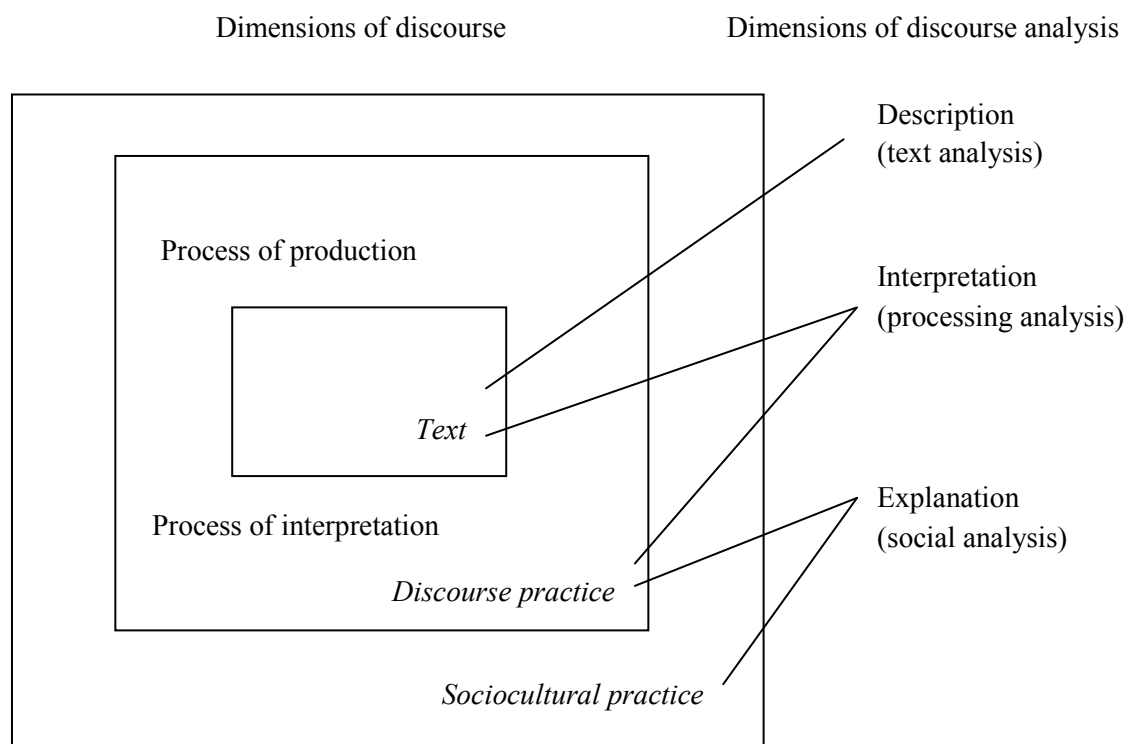


Figure 3.1 Fairclough's three-dimensional framework (2004)

Intertextual analysis is discussed in the first section of the Data Analysis (please refer to **Chapter 4.2 Intertextual Analysis**). The analysis examines the degree of dialogicality in the news reports, the use of recontextualisation and framing, and intertextuality. In addition, the analysis will identify and describe the different voices in the news reports on PPSMI. According to Fairclough (2003), "When the speech or writing or thought of another is reported, two different texts, two different voices, are brought into dialogue, and potentially two different perspectives, objectives, interests and so forth" (p. 48). Therefore, the analysis seeks to bring to light the different voices "brought into dialogue" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 48) on the issue of PPSMI.

The second section of the Data Analysis will discuss textual analysis (please refer to **Chapter 4.3 Textual Analysis**). Here, Fairclough incorporates Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter referred to as SFL) as a tool for textual analysis, because "SFL is profoundly concerned with the relationship between language and

other elements and aspects of social life, and its approach to the linguistic analysis of texts is always oriented to the social character of texts” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 5). Hence, the researcher will employ aspects of Halliday’s SFL (Halliday, 1978/1994) as a tool to assist with the analysis of various linguistic devices or linguistic forms. SFL is a way of looking at how language is used in discourse. It is divided into three broad metafunctions, namely the interpersonal, ideational and textual metafunctions.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher will focus on aspects of the ideational metafunction only. This is because, according to Bloor and Bloor (1995), this metafunction demonstrates how “language is used to organise, understand and express our perceptions of the world and of our own consciousness” (p. 9). Therefore, in employing this metafunction as an analytical tool, the study will demonstrate how the writers of the texts have used language to demonstrate their ideology, and that of the respective media houses’, therefore reflecting reality to the public.

The ideational metafunction includes both the logical and experiential functions (Halliday & Matthiesen, 2004). However, the analysis will only concentrate on the experiential function as a means to realise how the media has framed the various voices in the text. This analysis is done by using transitivity to analyse the ways in which the text frames the processes, participants and circumstances of the discourse. By doing so, the researcher seeks to unpack the linguistic means of realisations discussing PPSMI across both media.

This study will therefore undertake a textual and intertextual study of the text in order to determine how the issue of PPSMI is represented by two different media houses.

3.2 Data Description

3.2.1 Choice of data

The data sample comprises a corpus of articles taken from two sources. The first source is a news website, *Malaysiakini* which can be found at the web address malaysiakini.com, while the second is an English language daily, *The Star* newspaper. Although *The Star* also has its own website, *The Star Online* (accessible at the web address thestar.com.my), this study will only include articles from the print version.

The research chose to focus on the news reports covering the issue of reversing or abolishing PPSMI over a period of three months, June to August 2009. This is because the announcement that the government would reverse its policy of having mathematics and science subjects taught in English in national schools was made on July 8, 2009. As this was a much-anticipated announcement, there was some coverage in the media prior to it. Following the announcement, there was also a fair amount of media coverage as various parties responded to the announcement with comments and opinions of their own. Therefore, to collect a larger corpus of text and provide a more comprehensive analysis of the discourse centred on this issue, the research focuses not only on the month in which the announcement was made, but also one month prior to it and the month immediately following.

A total of 21 news reports articles were collected from *The Star*, while 20 articles were collected from *Malaysiakini*. However, of these 20 news reports, only 13 were selected for analysis because the other 7 were reprints from the national wire service, *Bernama*. The study focuses exclusively on news reports and does not include letters to the editor, columnists, or editorials. This is because to determine the ideology of the media house, one can only analyse reports generated by the media house.

3.2.2 Selection of data

The data was selected from *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*. *The Star* was selected to represent mainstream print media because it is the English daily with the largest readership in the country. Figures released by the Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia show that for the period July to December 2011, *The Star* had an average daily circulation of 287,204 in Peninsular Malaysia while its closest competitor, *The New Straits Times*, had a circulation of only 94,661 (Audit Bureau of Circulations Malaysia, 2012). Furthermore, the Nielsen Media Index placed *The Star*'s readership at 1,006,000 in 2010 compared to *The New Straits Times* which had a readership of 236,000 (as reported in *The Star*, 2011).

Malaysiakini was selected to represent the alternative media because it is the leading alternative news portal in Malaysia. Data from Effective Measures and the Malaysian Digital Association show that in February 2012, malaysiakini.com was the second most visited news website after thestar.com.my, which is *The Star*'s online portal (Malaysian Digital Association, 2012).

3.2.3 Collection of data

The data from *The Star* was collected by visiting *The Star*'s internal library located on the eighth floor of their office building at Menara Star, 15 Jalan 16/1, Phileo Damansara II, 46350 Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan. The computer provided at *The Star*'s internal library was pre-equipped with the necessary database software to search *The Star*'s digitised print archives. The archives are available to the public from 11:00am to 4:30pm every weekday for a fee of RM10 per hour, but students are offered a 50% discount on the rate.

Data from *Malaysiakini* was collected by searching the online databases or archives of the website malaysiakini.com. The full text of most *Malaysiakini* articles are

only available to viewers with a paid subscription, therefore this electronic search was carried out in the library at Sunway University, which subscribes to *Malaysiakini* for the benefit of Sunway University library members. Therefore, the researcher was able to obtain access to the *Malaysiakini* archives without purchasing a personal subscription to the website.

The electronic database search for both publications was conducted by entering the search term “PPSMI” and setting the search parameters to begin at articles published on June 1, 2009 to August 31, 2009. This electronic search enabled easy identification and collection of relevant data. Each time a relevant article was identified, a copy of it was printed. This form of search requires a computer, Internet access via a modem, and a printer. (*The Star* charges a printing fee of RM2 for every article, but again, students are offered a 50% discount.)

Once all the relevant data had been identified, the print-outs were placed in separate folders and labelled according to the respective media house. Each article was further labelled according to chronological order. For example, the earliest article from *The Star* was labelled S1, the second was labelled S2, and so on. Likewise, the earliest article from *Malaysiakini* was labelled M1, and so on. All the labelled articles from *The Star* are included under **Appendix B**, while the labelled articles from *Malaysiakini* can be found under **Appendix C**. The articles in the appendices do not have page numbers as they are printouts from electronic databases. However, each article can be located by referring to its label, and they are also arranged according to chronological order.

3.2.4 Data presentation

The data is presented as seen on the printouts. No alterations have been made, therefore any spelling or grammatical errors have been reproduced as is.

A distinction is made between nucleus and satellite articles, that is, the main news reports and other accompanying articles such as letters to the editor and op-ed or columnists' pieces. Both types of articles are considered as separate articles even when published on the same website on the same day.

This study presents only the data considered pertinent to the discussion. Therefore, some data which could fall under the various analytical systems and categories might not be presented in the Analysis chapter (**Chapter 4**).

The data extracts are labelled consecutively as Extract 1, 2, 3 and so forth. In presenting the extracts, some parts of the text may be omitted within the body of the extracts. Such omissions, if a few words or sentences within the same paragraph, will be marked by an ellipsis (...). Where the text omitted consists of one or more paragraphs, it will be marked by an ellipsis enclosed in square brackets ([...]).

The extracts are not presented according to chronological order. Instead, they are presented where they contain elements that are relevant to the discussion. A list of the extracts and their source articles has been included in **Appendix A** for reference.

Single quotation marks (' ') will be used to indicate indirect quotations from the extracts in the discussion. On the other hand, double quotation marks (" ") will be used to indicate direct quotations from the extracts. For example: *The use of the phrase 'Dr Mahathir Mohammad is "growling again" in response to the announcement' suggests...*

3.3 Analytical systems and categories

The analytical systems and categories used to analyse the data are as stated below.

3.3.1 Intertextual analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative analysis will be conducted to analyse the intertextuality of the discourse.

3.3.1.1 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis will focus on these four areas:

- (a) The degree of dialogicality;
- (b) The recontextualisation of voices;
- (c) The use of framing; and
- (d) The incorporation of intertextuality.

First, the degree of dialogicality will be analysed by examining the various voices involved in the discourse and how they have been weaved into the reports. Dialogicality refers to the idea that “each spoken utterance or written message is related to other discourse” (Gustafson, Hodgson & Tickner, 2004). This is based on Bakhtin’s theory (Bakhtin, 1984). Fairclough (2003) states that the writer has several dialogical options: “The most dialogical option would be to explicitly attribute representations to sources, to ‘voices’, and to include much of the range of voices that actually exists” (p. 46). Voices can be recontextualised and incorporated into the text in four ways, as noted by Fairclough (2003): direct reporting, indirect reporting, free indirect reporting, and a narrative report of the speech act.

To elaborate: 1) A writer may use *direct reporting* to insert quotes from people who are involved in the event or seen as experts qualified to comment on the event. In such a case, the actual words spoken are reported using quotation marks. 2) *Indirect reporting* occurs where the writer or reporter attributes a statement or question to a speaker, but summarises or paraphrases what has been said; thus there is no use of quotation marks. 3) Some reports also employ *free indirect reporting*, which is similar

to indirect reporting but without a reporting clause like “he said”. 4) A *narrative report of the speech act* is an instance where the writer notes the occurrence of the speech act but does not report its content. To sum up, a news report with a high incidence of indirect reporting would have a lower level of dialogicality as the writer is paraphrasing and summarising what the social actor says. This is because the act of summarising involves the writer making interpretations and assumptions as he recontextualises the speech act and its contents. On the other hand, a news report with a high incidence of direct reporting would have a high level of dialogicality because there is very little recontextualisation or rephrasing by the writer. As a result, the writer is seen to distance himself from whatever is being said, as he is merely presenting the views of the participant of the discourse event (Cotter, 2010). By doing so, he will give the appearance of being an objective and neutral reporter (Tuchman, 1972).

In the second section under the qualitative intertextual analysis, the recontextualisation of voices will be examined to determine how each media house has recontextualised the discourse of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who in his capacity as Education Minister chaired a press conference on July 8, 2009 to announce that the government had decided to abolish the PPSMI. Both media houses were represented at this event by their respective reporters, and subsequently published reports about the event in their respective publications. Caldas-Coulthard (2003) has noted that in writing or speaking about any social practice, the writer or speaker is already practising recontextualisation, because they are taking whatever was said or heard and putting it into a new context as they present it to the reader or listener. In terms of the media, a reporter could choose to suppress or filter certain information or statements in his reports. Van Leeuwen and Wodak (1999) “suggest that transformations due to the recontextualisation of political discourse include deletion, rearrangement (e.g., changing the order of propositions, altering emphasis), substitution (through linguistic means

such as nominalisation, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, personalisation), and addition (adding new elements to the representation of social practices)” (Busch, 2009, p. 580-1). Therefore, in examining how both media houses have recontextualised the event by reorganising the information and rewording statements with the use of indirect quotes, their ideological position can be revealed.

Thirdly, this study will determine how the media houses have framed the various issues or information in the discourse. Although there are many definitions of framing (Downs, 2002), Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira (2008) find Entman’s (1993) the most helpful:

To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described. (p. 52)

Downs (2002) adds that a frame can suggest to the reader which information is relevant and which is not, and therefore determine how the reader receives the information presented. The study will therefore analyse how the media houses have framed the issue of PPSMI by organising the information in their reports in such a way as to encourage the public to accept particular ideological positions and representations of reality.

Lastly, this study will examine the use of intertextuality in the news reports of both media houses. Intertextuality is based on the notion that the meaning of a text relies not only on the words of the text itself but also on its relations with other texts (Thibault, 1994). In addition, Fairclough (2003) also perceives intertextuality as social practice, because “what is ‘said’ in a text is always said against the background of what is ‘unsaid’—what is made explicit is always grounded in what is left implicit” (p. 17). Bazerman (2004) explained this further: “Intertextuality is not just a matter of which other texts you refer to, but how you use them, what you use them for, and ultimately how you position yourself as a writer to them to make your own statement” (p. 94).

Hiramoto and Park (2010) believe that it is crucial to take intertextuality into account when analysing media texts, because the media acts as a ‘mediator’ in deciding what is newsworthy and how to present the information to the public (Fairclough, 2003), and all mediated texts are inherently intertextual (Agha & Wortham, 1995). Therefore, this study will examine how intertextuality has been incorporated as a social or discursive practice in the news reports.

In summary, the focus of the qualitative intertextual analysis will be on the forms of reporting and the way the text is structured.

3.3.1.2 Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis will determine the distribution of voices in the text and the amount of space given to them. This is determined by counting the frequency with which they are represented in the texts. The frequency will be presented in the form of percentages. The eight voices are identified as follows:

- a) *Parents*: Parents of school-going children, whose children will be affected by the change in policy;
- b) *Schools and teachers*: Statements from schools or teachers who will be required to implement the change in policy;
- c) *Students*: Students who are affected by the change in policy;
- d) *Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists*: Some examples of these are parental groups such as PAGE (Parent Action Group for Education), school alumni associations and so on;
- e) *Local academics and researchers of educational policies and practices*: Those who are qualified to give expert views on the issue;

- f) *Opposition politicians*: Politicians from opposition parties such as the Democratic Action Party (DAP), Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) and so on; and
- g) *Barisan Nasional politicians*: This includes prime ministers (both current and former), education ministry officials, and other politicians who might or might not hold positions in government, but are members of the ruling coalition.

The focus will be on the representation of individuals, groups or organisations involved in or affected by the issue of PPSMI.

3.3.2 Textual analysis

This analysis will determine how the writer constructs social reality in two ways: the representation of social actors, and transitivity.

3.3.2.1 Social actors

Social actors are “participants in social processes” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 222). Koller (2009) postulated that an analysis of the social actors represented in the discourse is central in a CDA study because it reveals “who is part of the in-group, what degree of individuality is accounted for, and in how much detail social actors are represented” (para. 13).

Fairclough (2003) outlines seven means of representing social actors, although he recognises that van Leeuwen (1996) employs more variables. The seven variables are further discussed below.

The first variable relates to the inclusion or exclusion of social actors in the text. This signals the writer’s perception of the social actor’s significance. Social actors who are included are obviously considered more significant, while exclusion could take

place for a variety of reasons and could be done by suppressing the voices (i.e. omitting them from the text entirely) or backgrounding them (i.e. briefly mentioning them, but implying their presence in other places). Fairclough suggests that some social actors could be excluded because they are redundant or irrelevant, but at the same time, “exclusion may be politically or socially significant” (2003, p. 149).

The second variable relates to the use of pronouns or nouns to realise a social actor. Therefore, the study will examine what kind of pronouns or nouns have been used to realise the various social actors in the text. Using pronouns to refer to social actors is more personal, while using nouns is impersonal and can dehumanise the social actor. Furthermore, pronouns can reveal how the writer or the various social actors construct reality. For example, sometimes the word “you” is used not to refer directly to the reader, but to everyone other than the speaker or the writer.

The grammatical role of the social actor is the third variable. This requires the application Halliday’s SFL (1978/1994) as a tool to analyse whether the social actor is realised as a Participant in a clause, or whether he has been realised in other ways, for example within a Circumstance or as a Possessive noun or pronoun. This is significant because social actors who are realised as Participants in clauses, especially if they are, for example, the Sayer in a verbal process instead of the Receiver or Target, or the Actor in a material process instead of the Goal, could be generally more important than the others, as they are the ones who are represented as speaking or doing the actions.

The fourth variable considers whether the social actor is ‘activated’ or ‘passivated’. To be ‘activated’ means he is represented as the Actor in the various processes, actively doing, saying, thinking, and so on, while to be ‘passivated’ means he is affected by the other social actors’ actions or processes. Social actors who are activated are usually considered more important and have greater influence, therefore by analysing which social actors are activated, it is possible to determine which how the

writer constructs reality by trying to position certain social actors as influential people whose opinions should be noted.

Social actors may also be personalised or impersonalised, and this is the fifth variable. If the social actor is named, whether he is named in an individual capacity or as a specific group or community, he is personalised. However, he is deemed to be impersonalised if he is referred to by other means, for example, “the cheater”. Impersonalisation is usually negative and the implications can cause readers to view the social actor in a certain light without even realising that they are doing so. In contrast, by naming and personalising a social actor, the reporter could be implying that they are a trustworthy source of information, for example.

The sixth variable refers to the naming of social actors. In analysing the writers’ means of referring to the social actors to determine whether the social actors are named (“Dr Mahathir Mohammad”) or referred to as a class or category (“the former Prime Minister”), this will again show whether the social actors are dehumanised. Referring to a social actor by name accords some importance and respect, perhaps even authority. However, referring to a social actor by class could either accord authority, as in the example above with “the former prime minister”, or could diminish and distance (for instance, “the poor”).

The final variable is the representation of a class of social actors. A class could be represented in a specific or generic manner. For example, in the discourse of PPSMI, “students” could refer to students from a particular school, students in a particular area like the Klang Valley, students from all national schools across the country, or simply all students in general. The more specific the representation, the more noteworthy the writer deems the class of social actors.

3.3.2.2 Transitivity

Halliday's transitivity framework is included under his ideational metafunction, or, to be more specific, the experiential function. This function is concerned with "the representation of our experience of the external world (that lies about us) and of our internal world (that of our imagination" (Sofia Dildar Avi & Abdul Baseer, 2011, p. 151). These representations are structured in the form of processes, where each process is expressed by clauses with three elements: the participants in the process, the process itself (expressed by a verb or verb phrase), and the circumstances of the process (Martin, Matthiessen & Painter, 1997).

Halliday had identified six types of processes, namely the material process, mental process, verbal process, relational process, behavioural process and existential process. However, this analysis shall only focus on relational, material, mental, and verbal processes as these were the four main processes identified in the data.

The analysis will also confine itself to examining the news report headlines and exclude the body of the reports. This is because headlines in news reports are macropropositions which provide a summary of the most noteworthy information to the reader, thus acting to "define the situation and programme the reader with a preferred reading and interpretation plan" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 226). Since transitivity analysis provides "a means of discovering how certain linguistic structures of a text encode the particular worldview or ideological stance of a reader/speaker" (Iwamoto, 2007, p. 61), by using transitivity to analyse the newspaper headlines, the researcher will be able to realise how the respective media houses have constructed and represented a particular social reality to the public. The four processes used in this study are discussed in more detail below.

The relational process is concerned with 'being', i.e. determining the relations between two participants. As explained by Thetela (2001), "something is being said to

be something else; either something has a certain quality ascribed to it (attributive) or something has an identity assigned to it (identifying)” (p. 352). Therefore, there are two types of relational processes, the *attributive relational process* and the *identifying relational process*. The attributive relational process assigns an *Attribute* (i.e. characteristic or description) to the participant referred to (i.e. the grammatical subject). This participant is known as the *Carrier*. In contrast, the identifying relational process helps to “identify one entity in terms of another” (Thompson, 2004, p. 96), therefore involving two participants instead of one. The two participants are the *Token* and *Value*, where the Value defines or identifies the Token.

The second process that will be used in this study is the material process. “Material processes are processes of doing in the physical world” (Iwamoto, 2007, p. 70). Therefore, these processes involve two participants, a doer or *Actor*, and the one who is affected by the action, the *Beneficiary* (if human), or *Goal* (if an animal or thing) (Butt, Fahey, Feez, Spinks & Yallop, 2003). At times, there might be a participant who is unaffected by the process, in which case the person, animal or thing would be the *Range*. In addition, the element of *Circumstance* “provides additional information on the ‘when, where, how, and why’ of the process” (Iwamoto, 2007, p. 70).

The mental process, the third process, refers to “processes of thinking, feeling and perceiving” (Sofia Dildar Alvi & Abdul Baseer, 2011, p. 151) conducted by a participant, the *Senser*. In this process there is only one participant, and whatever is thought, felt or perceived is known as the *Phenomenon*.

Finally, the last process which will be employed in this study is the verbal process, which, as its name attests, is to do with the process of saying. Halliday (1978/1994) noted that this process shows the relationship between the participant’s ideas and how he chooses to give them form in language. This process could have two participants if one person, the *Sayer*, is addressing another (the *Receiver*), or is speaking

about another (the *Target*). However, if the Sayer is conveying some information, whatever he says is known as *Verbiage*.

In summary, these four processes of transitivity (relational, material, mental and verbal) will be used to identify the various types of participants and processes represented in the headlines of the articles from *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*. By doing so, the researcher seeks to bring to light the respective publishing houses' ideological stances.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The analysis is conducted in two sections. The first section is an intertextual analysis, followed by a textual analysis.

4.2 Intertextual analysis

The intertextual analysis in this section is conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The qualitative analysis investigates the degree of dialogicality employed by the two media houses, *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*, in their reports. In addition, it also examines the recontextualisation of voices and how the various voices in the discourse have been framed in relation to each other and the reporters' voices. Lastly, it will explore the use on intertextuality in the texts.

Following that, the quantitative analysis investigates the distribution of voices in the texts.

The study analyses extracts from *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* sequentially. All the extracts referenced are attached in Appendix A and labelled accordingly.

4.2.1 Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis examines the degree of dialogicality in the text, the reporters' recontextualisation of voices in producing the text and the use of intertextuality.

4.2.1.1 Degree of dialogicality

In this section, there are two findings of interest. The first finding shows that reporters from both media houses usually distance themselves from the report by using both direct and indirect reporting with attribution. The second finding shows that there is some inaccuracy in the reporting of the same event by both media houses, as some details of the reports differ. These findings will be discussed in more detail below.

The first finding shows that the level of dialogicality in all the reports from both media houses is fairly high. In reporting a speech event, the reporters from both media houses usually attribute their statements, either by using direct quotes in the report or by paraphrasing or summarising what an interviewee has said.

Extract 1 from *The Star*, July 9, 2009

The Government has decided to reverse the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy and revert to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools and Chinese and Tamil in vernacular schools.

More emphasis would also be placed on English, including the hiring of retired teachers, assistant teachers for bigger classes and having additional periods.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this meant that from 2012, students in Years One and Four and Forms One and Four in national primary and secondary schools would study the two subjects in Bahasa Malaysia while those in vernacular schools would be taught in their mother tongue (Chinese and Tamil).

“We want to have a ‘soft landing’ which is why we will begin only in 2012. This will allow us time to make the necessary preparations,” he told a press conference at the ministry when announcing the reversal of the ETeMS policy or better known by its Malay acronym, PPSMI.

In Extract 1 from *The Star*, above, the first three paragraphs are indirect quotes, which are then followed by an attributed quote in fourth paragraph (““We want to have a ‘soft landing’...,” he told a press conference at the ministry”). All of the quotes, indirect and direct, are attributed to Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as he is speaking at a press conference, which is also stated in paragraph four. Although the attribution is not directly given to Muhyiddin in the first paragraph, there is attribution to “The Government” whom Muhyiddin is representing, by virtue of his position as Education Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. By attributing the quote to “The Government”, the reporter emphasises Muhyiddin’s role as spokesperson for the government, giving the

statement more weight and credibility. Because the statement comes from the government, a body with power and authority, the public is more likely to pay attention to it and accept whatever is said.

Extract 2 from *The Star*, July 12, 2009

Many tertiary students are against the government's decision to revert the teaching of Maths and Science to vernacular languages and Bahasa Malaysia.

Students who had studied the subjects in Bahasa Malaysia and are now pursuing Maths and Science-related courses in English at local universities said it was a struggle as they could not understand the terms.

Benny Ong Zhu Venn, 23, a recent Multimedia University graduate said he studied both subjects in Chinese during primary school and in Bahasa Malaysia in secondary school, and did his electronics engineering course in English during university.

"Some terms in English were difficult to understand and I had to refer to a dictionary.

"I feel it is better if Maths and Science are taught in English, so it won't be so hard for us to 'catch up' in university," he said.

Biomedical engineering student Muhamad Zulkifli Muhamad Razali from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia said reference books and materials were mostly in English.

"Many of my friends have a hard time coping in university and are just memorising the notes because they are in English, but the lecturers teach in Bahasa Malaysia," he said.

[...]

Universiti Teknologi Mara accounting student, Norsyahida Adila Sopki, 22, said it took a few years for her to grasp English.

"I feel both subjects should be taught in English from primary school so that it will be an easy transition for students by the time they get to tertiary level," she said.

She added that one of her peers had to extend her engineering course in order to take up English classes and others had failed their courses as they couldn't answer their papers in English.

Taylor's University College student Christine Cheng Ka-Yan, 18, who underwent the PPSMI process at secondary school, said students who grasp concepts in English have a fighting chance to apply to top-notch foreign universities like Oxford or Cambridge, which have stringent entrance requirements and interviews.

In Extract 2 from *The Star* above, similarly the first three paragraphs are indirect quotes ("Many tertiary students are against the government's decision..."; "Students... said it was a struggle"; "Benny Ong Zhu Wenn... said he studied both subjects in Chinese") followed by a direct quote in the fourth and fifth paragraph ("Some terms in English were difficult to understand", "I feel it is better if Maths and Science are taught in English"). However, in this case there is a progression, meaning that the writer begins by quoting a general group of unnamed and unquantified number of "students", then

moves on to quote a specific student (Benny Ong). In other words, a summary of the students' opinion is presented in the first two paragraphs, and then the writer zooms in to focus on a direct quote from a student ("Benny").

The quote from Benny provides evidence of the difficulty he faced when, after learning science and mathematics in a Chinese and Bahasa Malaysia medium, he then had to switch to an English medium after secondary school. Thus, Benny endeavours to justify the need for the PPSMI policy. The direct reporting allows the reporter to distance himself from what is said, so that it does not appear that the media house supports the view that the PPSMI policy is necessary or should be continued. Instead, the reporter appears to be merely reporting feedback from the students.

In Extract 2, four individual students are quoted, namely Benny, Muhamad Zufadli Muhamad Razali, Norsyahida Adila Sopki, and Christine Cheng Ka-Yan. Two of the students are of Chinese descent (i.e. Benny and Christine) while the other two are Malay (i.e. Muhamad and Norsyahida). Furthermore, two of them are male (i.e. Benny and Muhamad) while the other two are female (i.e. Norsyahida and Christine), and two of them are from private universities (i.e. Benny is from Multimedia University, Christine is from Taylor's University College, now known as Taylor's University) while the other two are from public universities (i.e. Muhamad is from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and Norsyahida is from Universiti Teknologi Mara). This suggests that the reporter has chosen his interview subjects with care to preserve the appearance of giving equal representation to the views of both male and female students, students of different ethnic backgrounds, and students from both public and private institutions of higher education. This further provides the reader with the impression that the reporter is both neutral and objective in his reporting of the subject, as he tries to represent a diverse array of voices from among the students affected by the PPSMI policy.

Extract 3 from *The Star*, July 12, 2009

Although the Cabinet's decision to reverse the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English has sparked mixed responses, Chinese and Tamil academicians have offered their unanimous support.

The return to the old policy was lauded by the Dong Zong (United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia), Jiao Zong (United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaysia) and the National Tamil Teachers' Union, among others.

According to Dong Zong president Dr Yap Sin Tian, the policy on the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMI), has adversely affected students for the past six years.

And while he welcomed the move to use Bahasa Malaysia and one's mother tongue in the teaching of Mathematics and Science at national schools and vernacular schools, respectively, Dr Yap could not wait until 2012 for the full effect of the new ruling.

"We hope that the Government will switch the medium of instruction back to Chinese immediately so that students can pick up in their studies again," he said.

Extract 3 shows the same pattern of using several indirect quotes followed by a direct quote. In addition, similar to Extract 2 above, the indirect quotes used in the first two paragraphs are attributed to a group of people.

In the first paragraph, the group is very general ("Chinese and Tamil academicians") but in the second paragraph, the writer attributes the quote more specifically to "Dong Zong (United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia), Jiao Zong (United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaysia) and the National Tamil Teachers' Union, among others". This is followed by an indirect quote from a specific person representing the Dong Zong ("Dong Zong president Dr Yap Sin Tian"). Finally, in the fourth paragraph, the writer quotes Dr Yap directly ("We hope that the Government will switch the medium of instruction back to Chinese immediately"). Again, there is a progression from quoting a general group of people to a more defined group, and then one specific person representing the group. Here, Dr Yap is quoted in his capacity as Dong Zong president, a position of some authority. Due to his position, his statements will be seen to have more credibility.

In this extract, the reporter inserts a statement after Dr Yap's quote: "This was no surprise as PPSMI never went down well with the Chinese academicians." This

statement is unattributed and, at first glance, appears to be a summary of the Chinese academicians' response to PPSMI when the policy was first implemented in 2003. However, it can also be read as a commentary added by the reporter himself to show that the Chinese academicians have always opposed PPSMI. There are several implications here.

Firstly, if Chinese academicians oppose PPSMI, there must be a good reason. Academicians, with their learning and experience, would have seen the flaws in the policy even before it was implemented. Secondly, the government is listening to the Chinese academicians and taking their views into account. Politically, this would cause the Chinese academic community to feel valued and respected. Thirdly, the Chinese academicians' long-standing objections to PPSMI show that it is a good move on the part of the government to abolish the policy. Thus, this unattributed statement serves to support and justify the government's decision to abolish PPSMI. It may be an indication of the ideology of the media house, that when the reporter does not distance himself from the issue by using attributed direct or indirect quotes, the statement or comment inserted supports the position of the government.

Thus, in *The Star's* reporting of PPSMI, it can be seen that there is a pattern of opening the report with attributed indirect quotes. Often, these quotes are attributed to a group of people ("students", "Chinese and Tamil academicians") or an authoritative body ("The Government"). The writer then narrows down the attribution of indirect quotes to more specific people or groups of people ("Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin", "Benny Ong", "Dong Zong, Jiao Zong and the National Tamil Teachers' Union"). This is usually followed a direct quote from a specific person in a position of authority who speaks as a representative for the particular group. As a result, the high level of dialogicality gives the impression that the reporter is a neutral agent who merely reports what he has heard at the discourse event.

The discussion will now examine *Malaysiakini* reports.

Extract 4 from *Malaysiakini*, July 8, 2009

The government has admitted that the policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English has failed to meet its objectives and will be scrapped.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister, said beginning 2012, the two subjects will be taught in Bahasa Malaysia at national schools.

As for national-type schools, the subjects will be taught in the respective mother-tongues.

The policy was initiated by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2003, despite vocal protests.

Muhyiddin said the cabinet today approved the ministry's suggestion to revert to use of the Malay language and to strengthen the teaching and learning of the English language at all levels of schooling.

"This strategy was drawn up based on the study and monitoring carried out by the Education Ministry on the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English since the policy was implemented in 2003," he said at a press conference arranged to make this announcement.

In Extract 4 from *Malaysiakini*, there is also a pattern of opening with an indirect attributed quote. In this instance, the quote is from "the government", who is represented by the Education Minister, Muhyiddin. Although the third paragraph appears, on the surface, to be a non-attributed statement ("As for national-type schools, the subjects will be taught in the respective mother-tongues"), due to the flow of the text it can be seen as an extension of the indirect quote in the second paragraph ("Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister, said"). This assumption is backed up by the specific attribution to Muhyiddin in the following (fourth) paragraph ("Muhyiddin said the cabinet today approved").

Following the indirect quotes, in the fifth paragraph the writer inserts an attributed direct quote from Muhyiddin ("This strategy was drawn up based on the study and monitoring carried out by the Education Ministry..." he said at a press conference"). It can be seen that the direct quote refers to the government's basis for deciding to abolish the PPSMI, as Muhyiddin states the decision is "based on the study and monitoring carried out by the Education Ministry". This is important as it is a means of convincing the public that the decision to abolish the PPSMI is a good or

necessary one because it is backed by empirical studies. Therefore, the writer chose to include this direct quote to demonstrate Muhyiddin's assurance that the decision was made based on scientific data ("study and monitoring") in order to calm any parental fears that their school-going children might be adversely affected by the policy reversal and encourage the public to accept the government's decision.

Extract 5 from *Malaysiakini*, July 8, 2009

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said that former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad has accepted the government's decision to scrap his policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English.

Muhyiddin, who is also the education minister, said he had consulted the former premier before making the critical decision to revert to the Malay language to teach the two subjects effective 2012.

He added that he had provided Mahathir with the details of problems encountered in the six-year period when the two subjects were taught in English.

"In the three-hour discussion, my officials and I told him that we were facing problems in implementing his policy... and he accepted our views," he told a press conference in Putrajaya.

"In the three-hour discussion, my officials and I told him that we were facing problems in implementing his policy... and he accepted our views," he told a press conference in Putrajaya.

Extract 5 from *Malaysiakini* again opens with indirect attributed quotes to Muhyiddin in the first three paragraphs and a direct quote in the fourth paragraph ("In the three-hour discussion...he accepted our views," he told a press conference in Putrajaya"). The PPSMI policy was implemented by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2003. Therefore, the government is showing that they accorded Mahathir due respect in consulting him before deciding to reverse the policy. Furthermore, the direct quote from Muhyiddin stating that Mahathir "accepted our views" is used to show the public that there is no dissention even from the person who first conceived the PPSMI policy. After listening to the problems with PPSMI, Muhyiddin claims that Mahathir understood the difficulties in implementation and seconded the reversal. This gives greater weight to the government's decision to reverse the PPSMI policy, as they have support from Mahathir to reverse his own policy in the interests of the people.

In short, the finding demonstrates that the news reports from both media houses usually begin with indirect quotes and a summary or paraphrase of the most important item discussed at the discursive event. This is followed by one or two other indirect quotes, leading to a direct attributed quote. The use of attributed quotes, whether direct or indirect, allows the reporter to distance himself from the subject matter and the discourse event. Thus, the high level of dialogicality could imply a level of neutrality and objectivity as the reporter is being faithful to report only what he has heard or seen (Fairclough, 2003:49).

Moving on to the second finding of interest, the analysis reveals that there are inaccuracies in the report from both publications as direct quotes from the same person made at the same event are worded differently. This is shown by conducting a side-by-side comparison and analysis of reports based on the press conference called by Muhyiddin to announce the government's decision to abolish the PPSMI.

Extract 6 from *The Star*, 9 July 2009:

“It [the decision] was based on empirical studies and other specialist reviews,” he said.

Based on studies conducted in 2008, he said, the ministry found that only a small percentage of teachers fully used English to teach the two subjects.

“On average, the percentage of those using English during Mathematics and Science periods was around 53% to 58%,” he said, adding that only a small number of teachers were proficient.

Muhyiddin said studies carried out by local universities found that students' mastery level of English during the entire policy was around 3% while the level among rural students was low.

Extract 7 from *Malaysiakini*, 8 July 2009:

“This strategy was drawn up based on the study and monitoring carried out by the Education Ministry on the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English since the policy was implemented in 2003,” he said at a press conference arranged to make this announcement.

[...]

He said the government made the decision after scrutinising the findings of studies and surveys carried out on the teaching and learning of the two subjects in English. These have shown that implementation has left a lot to be desired.

Muhyiddin also said not all teachers have taught the two subjects fully in English, and that they have used a combination of English and Bahasa Malaysia.

“On average, English usage is between 53 and 58 percent of the total time allotted for science and mathematics,” he said.

He also revealed that only a small group of mathematics and science teachers in secondary and primary schools who took the English- language Proficiency Level Evaluation test last year had attained the required standard.

He said the percentage of students who scored grade A, B, and C for science in the UPSR last year had dropped from 85.1 percent to 82.5 percent in urban schools and from 83.2 percent to 79.7 percent in rural schools.

And for mathematics, the performance of urban schools dropped from 84.8 percent to 80.9 percent while the performance for rural students dropped from 80.9 percent to 77 percent.

Here, a very interesting finding concerns the use of a direct quote from Muhyiddin. *The Star* quotes: ““On average, the percentage of those using English during Mathematics and Science periods was around 53% to 58%,” he said”. Compare this to *Malaysiakini*’s quote: ““On average, English usage is between 53 and 58 percent of the total time allotted for science and mathematics,” he said.” It can be seen that despite both reporters using direct reporting, the two quotes are not exactly the same. This raises interesting questions of the accuracy of attributed direct quotes, which are generally expected to be the actual words used by the person quoted (Baynham, 1996, p. 64). Although studies have shown that in general, direct reporting rarely reproduces the exact wording (Collins 2001, p. 2), readers still expect the media to report accurately. As stated by Leech and Short (2007, p. 257): “If he *reports* in *direct* speech he is claiming to *report* faithfully (a) what was stated and (b) the exact form of words which were used to utter that statement.”

Therefore, the inaccuracies raise three questions: First, which of the quotes is an accurate reiteration of what Muhyiddin said, or are both of them inaccurate? Second,

when the reporter changed the wording of the direct quote, did he convey the speaker's original intended meaning, or has he inadvertently conveyed his own interpretation of what he thought he heard? Third, are these kinds of reporting inaccuracies a frequent occurrence in Malaysian print media—and if they are, how far can the public trust the media's reports to be true and accurate depictions of what was actually said and done at a particular event?

Thus, the inaccuracies seen here give rise to ambiguity. Despite the high level of dialogicality that is achieved by using a direct quote, the inaccuracies suggest that the reporter may not be completely objective in his report as what he believed he heard is not what was actually said; the intent of the speaker or the discursive content has been filtered through the reporter's own background knowledge, assumptions and ideologies.

On the other hand, it is also possible that the press conference might have been held in the national language (i.e. Bahasa Malaysia). This is because the press conference was organised by the Ministry of Education and the country's national language is often used at official events of this nature. As a result, the inaccuracies in the reporting of Muhyiddin's direct quote could then be caused by an inaccurate translation of the quote into English by either or both reporters. In the present case, the researcher was unable to verify whether the original press conference announcement was made in Bahasa Malaysia or English. Therefore, the reason for the inaccuracies remains inconclusive.

4.2.1.2 Recontextualisation of voices

A closer look at the texts reveals the third finding, namely that there is a great deal of recontextualisation in the texts. This is because reporters do not report what is said in chronological order, but rather choose one statement or idea to focus on and make it the "lead". In the structure of news reports, the "lead" is the first sentence and its purpose is to point the reader "to what the writer feels is the essential point or news

angle of the story” (Fox, 2001, p.15). As such, this involves “value judgements” on the part of the reporter (Fox, 2001, p.15). Therefore, the reporter rearranges the order of the discourse, recontextualising it according to what he thinks or believes (or what his editor thinks or believes) is the most significant point that the reader ought to know.

This can be seen in Extract 8 from *The Star* and Extract 9 from *Malaysiakini*. Both news reports cover the same press conference held by Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to announce the government’s decision to reverse the PPSMI educational policy. However, their leads are very different, as can be seen in the extracts below:

Extract 8 from *The Star*, 9 July 2009:

The government has decided to reverse the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy and revert to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools and Chinese and Tamil in vernacular schools.

Extract 9 from *Malaysiakini*, 8 July 2009:

The government has admitted that the policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English has failed to meet its objectives and will be scrapped.

The difference in the two leads above shows the reporters interpreting what they have heard and exercising their own judgement about the importance of the various information presented during the discourse event. *The Star* chose to present the announcement of the policy reversal using a strong take-charge tone that comes across with authority and reinforces the hegemonic position of the government as one who holds the power to make decisions and implement them. There is no hesitation, no equivocation and no room for negotiation in stating “The Government has decided to reverse [the policy]”.

However, *Malaysiakini* presents a different interpretation of the discourse event, couching the news of the policy reversal in softer tones, highlighting the policy’s failure rather than the government’s decision to reverse it. By saying, “The Government has

admitted that the policy [...] failed to meet its objectives”, the reporter paints a picture of a government that is very human, a government that is not infallible but just as capable of making mistakes as any of us. This has the effect of equalising the power relations between government and citizens, as the government is not approaching the issue from a position of strength. Therefore, it could be said that the the *Malaysiakini* lead implies that the government is weak.

Where *Malaysiakini* highlights PPSMI’s failure in the lead, *The Star* does not mention anything about the reason for abolishing the policy until the 14th paragraph, where the reporter presents an indirect quote from Muhyiddin (“He stressed that the reason for the reversal in policy was due to objective considerations and not political ones.”). This is followed up by a direct quote (““It was based on empirical studies and other specialist reviews,” he said”). Again, the reporter portrays the government from a position of strength and power, as having made a considered decision based on concrete evidence (“empirical studies and other specialist reviews”). There is no suggestion of weakness or failure, unlike the message conveyed by *Malaysiakini*’s lead. Instead, the overall impression given by *The Star* to the reader is one of competent and responsible governance, because the decision was made in the best interests of the citizens in mind, not politically motivated (“the reversal in policy was due to objective considerations and not political ones”).

Malaysiakini also makes reference to “studies”, in the 11th paragraph (“He said the government made the decision after scrutinising the findings of studies and surveys carried out on the teaching and learning of the two subjects in English. These have shown that implementation has left a lot to be desired”). Because the reporter is using indirect reporting here, it is unclear whether the second sentence about the policy’s implementation is a paraphrase of what the minister had said, or a comment inserted by the reporter to summarise his understanding or interpretation of the minister’s words.

Nevertheless, it continues to carry the theme of the government's 'failure', because poor implementation of an educational policy is a bad reflection on the Education Ministry. The implication is that the Education Ministry is at fault and could not implement the policy successfully in schools across the country.

Extract 10 from *The Star*, 9 July 2009:

Based on studies conducted in 2008, he said, the ministry found that only a small percentage of teachers fully used English to teach the two subjects.
"On average, the percentage of those using English during Mathematics and Science periods was around 53% to 58%," he said, adding that only a small number of teachers were proficient.

Extract 11 from *Malaysiakini*, 8 July 2009:

Muhyiddin also said not all teachers have taught the two subjects fully in English, and that they have used a combination of English and Bahasa Malaysia.
"On average, English usage is between 53 and 58 percent of the total time allotted for science and mathematics," he said.

A further incongruity is revealed in the examination of both direct quotes as referenced in the earlier discussion on dialogicality (4.2.1.1). In the extract above, although both are direct quotes from Muhyiddin, they are worded differently. The meaning of both quotes is not similar either, as *The Star* represents the percentages as 'the percentage of teachers who used English to teach science and mathematics' ("53% to 58%"), while *Malaysiakini* refers to "total time allotted for science and mathematics". The confusion suggests that in recontextualising the discourse event, one or both reporters have relied on their own interpretation of what was said, and possibly interpreted the minister's meaning incorrectly. This means that inaccurate information has been presented to the public, and the media as mediator has distorted or corrupted the message.

Thus, the third finding shows that the recontextualisation of the discourse event reveals the ideology of both media houses. In recontextualising the announcement of the government's decision to abolish PPSMI, *The Star* portrays the government as being decisive, in the position of power and authority, and making the best choices for its

citizens. In contrast, *Malaysiakini* reduces the power of the government, portraying it as an entity that makes mistakes, did not carefully consider all aspects before rolling out the new policy, and then failed to correctly or successfully implement it.

In conclusion, the finding in this section shows that reporters from both media houses recontextualise the same discourse event in different ways. *The Star*'s report minimises the failure of the policy, instead focusing on the government's position of power and its authoritative decision to abolish the PPSMI. It casts the government in a more positive light, as well as reinforcing the government's hegemonic position. In contrast, *Malaysiakini*'s report emphasises the failure of the PPSMI and the government's admission of said failure, thus undermining the government's position of power and authority. As a result, the ideological position of both media houses is clearly revealed.

4.2.1.3 Framing

The fourth finding relates to framing. For the purposes of this discussion, the analysis will refer to Extract 1 and Extract 4 which were already discussed under section **4.2.1.1 (Degree of Dialogicality)**. These extracts are analysed for both degree of dialogicality and framing because they are reports of the press conference where the government announced its decision to abolish the PPSMI. This is the main discourse event that sparked the resulting discourse on PPSMI in the media, and reporters from both media houses were present at this event. Thus it is useful to refer to these two extracts in conducting a comparison of the reports from both media houses.

Extract 1 from *The Star*, July 9, 2009

The Government has decided to reverse the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy and revert to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools and Chinese and Tamil in vernacular schools.

More emphasis would also be placed on English, including the hiring of retired teachers, assistant teachers for bigger classes and having additional periods.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this meant that from 2012, students in Years One and Four and Forms One and Four in national primary and secondary schools would study the two subjects in Bahasa Malaysia while those in vernacular schools would be taught in their mother tongue (Chinese and Tamil).

“We want to have a ‘soft landing’ which is why we will begin only in 2012. This will allow us time to make the necessary preparations,” he told a press conference at the ministry when announcing the reversal of the ETeMS policy or better known by its Malay acronym, PPSMI.

In *The Star*'s report in Extract 1, the decision to reverse the PPSMI is framed with “more emphasis would also be placed on English”. One could infer that the government is assuring the citizens of its continued commitment to help the younger generation master the English language. Presumably the government has anticipated that many parents would be concerned about their childrens' future, therefore the reporter uses this frame to reassure parents.

Further reassurance is provided by another frame, that of a “soft landing” and taking “time to make the necessary preparations”, followed by a reiteration to “do whatever we can to make it as soft as possible”. This represents the government or Education Ministry as a careful, caring entity which is very considerate of the students' needs, and is framed with a direct quote from Muhyiddin (“It was quite sudden when the PPSMI was introduced previously”), a way of distancing the current administration from the one which introduced the PPSMI in 2003, to show that they will be careful to do things differently, and therefore will have fewer problems in the process. Thus the framing leads the reader to view the present administration led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak in a more positive light compared to the previous one led by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad. This frame is interesting because at the time of this news report, Datuk Seri Najib had only been prime minister for about three months, having taken office on April 3, 2009 (the announcement about the PPSMI was made on July 8, 2009).

The contrast provided by this frame would help to generate support for the new prime minister and his administration.

Malaysiakini, however, frames the announcement differently.

Extract 4 from *Malaysiakini*, July 8, 2009

The government has admitted that the policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English has failed to meet its objectives and will be scrapped.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister, said beginning 2012, the two subjects will be taught in Bahasa Malaysia at national schools.

As for national-type schools, the subjects will be taught in the respective mother-tongues.

The policy was initiated by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohammad in 2003, despite vocal protests.

Muhyiddin said the cabinet today approved the ministry's suggestion to revert to use of the Malay language and to strengthen the teaching and learning of the English language at all levels of schooling.

"This strategy was drawn up based on the study and monitoring carried out by the Education Ministry on the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English since the policy was implemented in 2003," he said at a press conference arranged to make this announcement.

The announcement to reverse the policy in Extract 4 is framed with a statement that the PPSMI was implemented in 2003 "despite vocal protests". This non-attributed statement does not have the same effect of distancing the current administration from the actions of the earlier one, which was afforded from Muhyiddin's direct quote in *The Star*. Instead, the frame leads the reader to an unfavourable interpretation: it implies that there were problems with the policy from the beginning, as certain quarters had strong objections to it, yet the government pushed the policy through regardless of the warnings and misgivings. The reader is not told who protested or what formed the basis for these protests, but the mention of "vocal protests" implies that the failure of the policy should not come as a surprise, as the government had implemented the policy without first taking all angles and aspects of the situation into consideration. While the statement is made in the guise of giving the reader some background about the policy, in actuality it undermines the government's strength and position of power.

In addition, it is interesting to note that in Extract 4, the reporter frames an attributive quote within another attributive quote ("Muhyiddin said the cabinet today

approved the ministry’s suggestion”). This frame within a frame represents the cabinet as a figurehead that merely rubberstamps the ministry’s decisions. The report does not state that the cabinet debated on the issue or queried the ministry about the decision, only that it “approved”, like blindly signing off on a document prepared by someone else.

To summarise, the finding in this section shows that the reporters also use framing to very different effect. *The Star*’s report frames the government as a paternalistic entity, caring for the people, aware of the parents’ fears, reassuring them that this decision is in their children’s best interests. However, *Malaysiakini*’s report frames the government as a dictatorial entity implementing policies without taking into account negative feedback from others, and the cabinet as a mere figurehead that approved the Education Ministry’s proposal to abolish the PPSMI.

4.2.1.4 Intertextuality

The fifth finding relates to the use of or reference made to outside texts in the reports of the discourse event. As stated above, both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* quote Muhyiddin as saying that the government’s decision to reverse the policy was based on “studies”. Below are the two extracts, juxtaposed one after the other for ease of comparison:

Extract 12 from *The Star*, 9 July 2009:

“It [the decision] was based on empirical studies and other specialist reviews,” he said.

Based on studies conducted in 2008, he said, the ministry found that only a small percentage of teachers fully used English to teach the two subjects.

“On average, the percentage of those using English during Mathematics and Science periods was around 53% to 58%,” he said, adding that only a small number of teachers were proficient.

Muhyiddin said studies carried out by local universities found that students’ mastery level of English during the entire policy was around 3% while the level among rural students was low.

Extract 13 from *Malaysiakini*, 8 July 2009:

“This strategy was drawn up based on the study and monitoring carried out by the Education Ministry on the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English since the policy was implemented in 2003,” he said at a press conference arranged to make this announcement.

[...]

He said the government made the decision after scrutinising the findings of studies and surveys carried out on the teaching and learning of the two subjects in English. These have shown that implementation has left a lot to be desired.

Muhyiddin also said not all teachers have taught the two subjects fully in English, and that they have used a combination of English and Bahasa Malaysia.

“On average, English usage is between 53 and 58 percent of the total time allotted for science and mathematics,” he said.

He also revealed that only a small group of mathematics and science teachers in secondary and primary schools who took the English- language Proficiency Level Evaluation test last year had attained the required standard.

He said the percentage of students who scored grade A, B, and C for science in the UPSR last year had dropped from 85.1 percent to 82.5 percent in urban schools and from 83.2 percent to 79.7 percent in rural schools.

And for mathematics, the performance of urban schools dropped from 84.8 percent to 80.9 percent while the performance for rural students dropped from 89 percent to 77 percent.

The finding here relates to the use of statistics. *The Star* is sparse on provision of these statistics from outside studies, only mentioning the “53% to 58%” of teachers and later, the 3% “mastery level of English”. On the other hand, *Malaysiakini* elaborates on the results of the studies at length, quoting Muhyiddin not only on the 53% to 58% but also on the results of the teachers’ English language Proficiency Level Education Test (“only a small group... had retained the required standard”), percentages of UPSR scores (“dropped from 85.1 percent to 82.5 percent”) and performance of urban compared to rural schools (“performance of urban schools dropped from 84.8 percent to 80.9 percent while the performance for rural students dropped from 89 percent to 77 percent”).

As stated by Sharma, Kumar and Chaudhary (2009), the purpose of statistics “is to take suitable and intelligent decisions in the face of uncertainty” (p. 4). Thus, the use of statistics in a report lends a certain legitimacy to the government’s decision as it suggests that the decision is based on quantifiable data. However, there are two problems with the statistics quoted in these reports: firstly, there is little to no

attribution. The reader is left in the dark as to who or which organisation conducted these studies. This is important because if the government is basing its decision on the result of the studies, the data must be reliable and accurate. Secondly, no mention is made of the scope or time-frame of the studies. The reader is encouraged to infer that the studies collated data from all schools and students nationwide and have been ongoing from the time the policy was implemented in 2003, but it is unclear whether this is really the case.

Not only that, a closer look at the statistics will help to unravel the government's rhetoric. For example, the government, represented by Muhyiddin, claims that the policy was not successful in reaching its objective. However, if the teachers are not proficient in English and unable to teach science and mathematics in the language, it hardly follows that the policy is undesirable or a failure—it can be implied that the failure rests with the Education Ministry, who is responsible to train teachers and recruit qualified candidates who have the required skillset for the subjects they are to teach. Similarly, a drop in test scores does not automatically correlate to a failure of the policy as it could be attributed to a number of other issues such as changes in the syllabus. Thus, these “studies” that are quoted are hardly a strong basis for the abolishment of PPSMI.

4.2.2 Quantitative analysis

Seven voices were identified in the news reports of both media, namely the voices of the parents, schools and teachers, students, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists, local academicians and researchers, and opposition politicians and Barisan Nasional politicians. A quantitative analysis of the representation of voices in the news reports from both media houses yielded results as displayed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Percentage of voices represented in the news reports from both media houses

Stakeholders	<i>The Star</i> (21 articles)	<i>Malaysiakini</i> (13 articles)
Parents	14.3%	15.4%
Schools and teachers	9.5%	23.1%
Students	14.3%	7.7% ⁰
Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists	28.6%	38.5%
Local academicians and researchers	9.5%	7.7%
Opposition politicians	9.5%	38.5%
Barisan Nasional politicians	71.4%	69.2%

The above findings show that both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* gave the most amount of space and representation to Barisan Nasional (BN) politicians. This is significant as the BN coalition forms the government, thus this means that government voices are represented 71% of the time in *The Star* compared to 69.2% in *Malaysiakini*, a difference of only 2.2%.

This high representation of government voices in both publications arises largely from attributed quotes to Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in his capacity as Education Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, and also “the Government” who, in the discourse of PPSMI, is usually represented by Muhyiddin. However, this high incidence of government voices can be partially explained by the genre of news reports whereby the reporter, in writing “follow-up reports” on the issue, will usually reiterate an earlier statement that was uttered at the pivotal discursive event which brought the issue to light in the press and sparked the current debate. Such repeating of quotes is done to provide some background for the reader. Some examples from the data are provided in the extracts below, with the relevant portions underlined:

Extract 14 from *The Star*, 12 July 2009:

Meanwhile, National Collaborative Parent-Teacher Association of Malaysia president Assoc Prof Datuk Mohd Ali Hassan said that the decision was a win-win situation.

According to him, those who opposed PPSMI would welcome the Cabinet's decision, while those for it would be happy with the new measures to improve English. "There was always going to be problems as all teachers were trained to instruct in Malay or their mother tongues before PPSMI," he said.

[...]

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had announced on Wednesday that students would have access to the best teachers in their formative years and all schools would significantly increase the amount of English language hours per week.

Extract 15 from *Malaysiakini*, 8 July 2009:

Mahathir said he was sad that the policy had been abolished and it would impair students from seeking scientific knowledge.

On Muhyiddin's claim that data collected showed the policy had failed to meet its objectives, former premier defended the policy and blamed the implementers for the shortcomings.

Extract 16 from *Malaysiakini*, 9 July 2009:

Displeased with the government's decision to scrap the language switch policy, its architect Dr Mahathir Mohamad is seeking the public's opinion on the matter.

The internet savvy octogenarian has started a poll on his blog, which requires visitors to click on either 'yes' or 'no' to express their stand.

[...]

Yesterday, Mahathir said although the government had sought his views on the matter, it was not reflected in the decision.

The former premier also denied Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's statement that he was 'consulted'.

Extract 17 from *Malaysiakini*, 11 July 2009:

The frequent changes to Malaysia's education policies according to the country's political mood have undoubtedly compromised the quality of education and failed to meet the needs of the present generation of students, said experts.

The educationists argued that the constant changes in policies have also resulted in a drain on taxpayers money with the need to buy new textbooks and to retrain teachers.

[...]

On Wednesday, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister, announced the government's decision to reverse the teaching of math and science from English to Bahasa Malaysia.

In addition, although a high representation of BN voices in both publications would seem to indicate a hegemonic propagation of the government's ideology, it is pertinent to note that in the data from *Malaysiakini*, this is not so. *Malaysiakini's* reports show that in 44.4% of the instances where BN voices were represented, the particular

voice was that of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his is a dissenting voice. In other words, Mahathir was against the government's decision to revert the PPSMI policy (see Extract 15 and 16 above). This is an interesting finding because BN members generally do not publicly oppose official government policies, and in fact, BN members of parliament are not even allowed to vote for any opposition motions in parliament (Looi, 2006).

In fact, only one of *The Star's* 21 reports mentions Mahathir's dissenting voice. See Extract 18 below:

Extract 18 from *The Star*, 12 July 2009:

Dr Mahathir in his blog (www.chedet.co.cc) said he was not surprised over the disappointment and even anger towards the Government's decision on the teaching of Mathematics and Science.

"Seems to me like the Government is not listening to the voice of the people," he said.

He asked visitors to his blog to vote whether they supported or opposed the decision to teach Mathematics and Science in Bahasa Malaysia, adding that he would pass on the views to the Government. As of 10pm on Saturday, 64,000 had voted, with 86% (55,089) opposed to the move and the rest supportive of Bahasa.

From Extract 18 above, it can be seen that only three paragraphs were devoted to Mahathir's views, and the information was taken from Mahathir's blog. It appears that *The Star's* reporters did not interview Mahathir personally on the issue, which is unusual as he was behind the concept and implementation of PPSMI during his tenure as Prime Minister in 2003. As a prominent statesman and the person behind the PPSMI policy, surely his views on the issue would be pertinent.

As a result, the high incidence of representation of BN voices in *The Star* does suggest that *The Star* frames the issue of PPSMI from the point of view from the government. To have 71.4% of the news reports representing news and views from government politicians suggests that *The Star*, as a social agent mediating a social event (Fairclough, 2003, p. 31) is largely in support of the government's position.

However, the same cannot be said of *Malaysiakini* because 44.4% of the 69.2% instances where BN voices were represented in the reports, the voice was a dissenting one that opposed the government's decisions. Therefore, the findings suggest that *Malaysiakini* provides a more balanced view of the issue as it incorporates dissenting voices even from within BN's own ranks.

While both publications give the largest amount of space to BN politicians, they differ when it comes to the least represented voices. *The Star* has the lowest representation of voices from three groups, which are schools and teachers, local academicians and researchers, and opposition politicians. All three groups were only accorded space 9.5% of the time across the 21 texts. On the other hand, *Malaysiakini* has the lowest representation of voices from two groups, students and local academicians and researchers, at 7.7% each.

These findings show that both publications do not adequately represent the social actors who are directly affected by the government's decisions and policies. In the present case, the government's reversal of the PPSMI policy directly impacts students and teachers. Students will experience the new policy affecting the medium of instruction in their science and mathematics classes, while teachers are expected to implement the new policy in their classrooms. It seems logical to expect that groups who are directly affected would have a larger stake in the issue at hand, and one might even say that they have a right to be heard on the issue. Unfortunately, the low representation of schools and teachers groups in *The Star* (9.5% for schools and teachers, 14.3% for students) and *Malaysiakini* (23.1% for schools and teachers, 7.7% for students) show that neither publication adequately represents the main stakeholders nor provides sufficient means for their voices to be heard.

Another interesting finding is in relation to opposition voices. A comparison of the two publications shows that opposition politicians are one of the three groups in *The*

Star which receive the lowest representation (9.5%), whereas in *Malaysiakini*, opposition voices receive the second-highest representation at 38.5% (along with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists). In fact, the difference between the space given to BN voices and opposition voices is 61.9% in *The Star*, compared to 30.7% in *Malaysiakini*. Moreover, *Malaysiakini* also chose to highlight a dissenting BN voice, i.e. the voice of Dr Mahathir Mohamad who did not support the reversal of the PPSMI policy. This clearly shows that *Malaysiakini* provides a much fairer distribution of voices, and suggests that its reporting is more balanced and fair compared to *The Star*, because it endeavours to represent views from both sides of the political divide on the issue of PPSMI. It also suggests that *The Star* may suppress opposition voices in favour of BN or government voices, thus supporting the government's dominant ideology and its hegemonic position.

To sum up, the quantitative analysis reveals that *Malaysiakini* provides a much more balanced representation of voices in its reports on the PPSMI policy compared to *The Star*. *The Star*'s reports show heavy representation of the government's voice with very little space given to the opposition's. On the other hand, while government voices enjoy the highest representation among others in *Malaysiakini*, opposition voices are second-highest.

4.3 Textual analysis

The textual analysis in this section is solely qualitative and is conducted to investigate how the two media houses, *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*, construct social reality in the texts through representation of social actors and the use of transitivity.

4.3.1 Social Actors

The analysis in this section examines how the various social actors have been represented in the text. There are several social actors directly involved in the discourse of PPSMI.

The three primary social actors, the ones most directly involved, would be the Education Ministry and the government, students, and teachers. This is because it is the Education Ministry and the government's duty to formulate educational policies and using their political will and influence to ensure those policies are implemented in schools around the country. Teachers are responsible to carry out these policies – in fact, in many ways the success or failure of the policies rests in their hands. Students' lives are directly affected by such decisions.

Other social actors who are also involved in the discourse but in a less direct manner are parents, and researchers or consultants. For example, parents have a vested interest as they want their children to have a good education, because education is seen as the passport to a better, more successful life in the future (Goy & Low, 2000, p.2). Finally, researchers study the efficacy and ramifications of such policies before, during and after implementation. They are in a position to advise the government on these matters due to their expertise and wide experience in the field.

The analysis of social actors is divided into two parts. The first half of the study looks at the polarisation that occurs between Us vs Them, while the second half of the study examines the reality of Power vs Helplessness. This analysis will re-examine Extracts 1, 2, 3 and 4 which were previously analysed under section **4.2.1.1 (Degree of Dialogicality)**. These extracts are analysed again for social actors because Extract 1 and 4 are extracted from the report of the government's announcement to abolish PPSMI, which is central in the discourse of PPSMI, while Extracts 2 and 3 show a representation of students' and academicians' voices respectively.

4.3.1.1 Us vs Them

In the discourse on PPSMI, the media acts as a mediator to convey the government's decisions and the motivation behind the said decisions to the public. Conversely, the media also reports on various social actors' responses to the government's decision. Some of these responses are positive, while others are negative. The nature of the reporting positions both parties (the government and the public) in an 'us vs them' position, namely the government is situated on one side while the public is on the other.

Most reports from *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* that cover the discourse on PPSMI only focus on certain social actors. This method of reporting further brings out the idea of 'us vs them', as whole reports are focused on specific social actors who are either for or against the PPSMI policy. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Extract 1 from *The Star*, July 9, 2009

The Government has decided to reverse the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy and revert to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools and Chinese and Tamil in vernacular schools.

More emphasis would also be placed on English, including the hiring of retired teachers, assistant teachers for bigger classes and having additional periods.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this meant that from 2012, students in Years One and Four and Forms One and Four in national primary and secondary schools would study the two subjects in Bahasa Malaysia while those in vernacular schools would be taught in their mother tongue (Chinese and Tamil).

"We want to have a 'soft landing' which is why we will begin only in 2012. This will allow us time to make the necessary preparations," he told a press conference at the ministry when announcing the reversal of the ETeMS policy or better known by its Malay acronym, PPSMI.

In the above announcement of the government's decision to abolish the PPSMI, Muhyiddin as the government's spokesperson is the main social actor. He is activated and foregrounded while other social actors (teachers and students) remain backgrounded and passivated. This can be seen from the attributed direct and indirect quotes, where Muhyiddin is quoted extensively in the article while the teachers and students are

mentioned or referred to, but their voices are not heard. As a result, the report creates an ‘us vs them’ atmosphere due to only representing one social actor’s point of view.

The reporter begins by referring to the government as a class or group, a general noun (“The Government”) but in the third paragraph the government is personalised when Muhyiddin is referred to by name as the government’s spokesperson. Muhyiddin’s role as the government’s representative is further demonstrated by the use of a first person plural pronoun in a direct quote attributed to him (“We want to have a ‘soft landing’”). In addition, he is titled (“Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin”) while the other social actors are impersonalised and simply referred to as a homogenous category, using general nouns (“retired teachers, assistant teachers”; “students in Years One and Four and Forms One and Four in national primary and secondary schools”; “those [students] in vernacular schools”). This emphasises the importance of Muhyiddin in his position as the government’s representative making the announcement about the reversal of the policy. In contrast, the use of a broad category in referring to students and teachers implies that they are less important. Furthermore, the verbal process where Muhyiddin states what will happen in 2012 further emphasises Muhyiddin’s importance and the students’ and teachers’ relative unimportance (“Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this meant that from 2012, students in Years One and Four and Forms One and Four in national primary and secondary schools would study the two subjects in Bahasa Malaysia while those in vernacular schools would be taught in their mother tongue”). In this attributed indirect quote, Muhyiddin is titled and realised as the Sayer. The students are the Target, and Muhyiddin makes an announcement about what they are going to do in the future (“from 2012, students...would study”; “those in vernacular schools would be taught”). Again, this creates an ‘Us vs Them’ atmosphere as Muhyiddin is seen to be in the position of making things happen (Fairclough, 2003, p. 145), while the students are on

the opposite side, being affected by the government's decision but not given a voice so that they can offer a response to it.

Extract 2 from *The Star*, July 12, 2009

Many tertiary students are against the government's decision to revert the teaching of Maths and Science to vernacular languages and Bahasa Malaysia.

Students who had studied the subjects in Bahasa Malaysia and are now pursuing Maths and Science-related courses in English at local universities said it was a struggle as they could not understand the terms.

Benny Ong Zhu Venn, 23, a recent Multimedia University graduate said he studied both subjects in Chinese during primary school and in Bahasa Malaysia in secondary school, and did his electronics engineering course in English during university.

"Some terms in English were difficult to understand and I had to refer to a dictionary.

"I feel it is better if Maths and Science are taught in English, so it won't be so hard for us to 'catch up' in university," he said.

Biomedical engineering student Muhamad Zulkifli Muhamad Razali from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia said reference books and materials were mostly in English.

"Many of my friends have a hard time coping in university and are just memorising the notes because they are in English, but the lecturers teach in Bahasa Malaysia," he said.

[...]

Universiti Teknologi Mara accounting student, Norsyahida Adila Sopki, 22, said it took a few years for her to grasp English.

"I feel both subjects should be taught in English from primary school so that it will be an easy transition for students by the time they get to tertiary level," she said.

She added that one of her peers had to extend her engineering course in order to take up English classes and others had failed their courses as they couldn't answer their papers in English.

Taylor's University College student Christine Cheng Ka-Yan, 18, who underwent the PPSMI process at secondary school, said students who grasp concepts in English have a fighting chance to apply to top-notch foreign universities like Oxford or Cambridge, which have stringent entrance requirements and interviews.

In Extract 2, the focus is on students as the main social actors, with attributed quotes from four students (Benny Ong Zhu Venn, Muhamad Zulfadli Muhamad Razali, Norsyahida Adila Sopki, and Christine Cheng Ka-Yan). In this report, it is the government and Education Ministry who are backgrounded and passivated. They are mentioned once in the first paragraph ("the government's decision") but are not directly referred to again. The students are foregrounded and activated, giving their views about the usefulness of the PPSMI policy or its necessity. The four students all expressed support for the PPSMI policy, which opposes the government's decision to abolish said

policy. Therefore, the effect of foregrounding and activating the students while backgrounding and passivating the government is to highlight the issues on one side only.

In addition, although the report begins by referring to the students as a broad category or group (“many tertiary students”), it then narrows this group down more specifically to “students who had studied the subjects in Bahasa Malaysia and are now pursuing Maths and Science-related courses in English at local universities”. By the third paragraph the reporter refers to one specific student (“Benny Ong Zhu Venn”) and the homogenous group becomes personalised, with three other students quoted and referred to by name after Benny (“Muhamad Zulfadli Muhamad Razali”; “Norsyahida Adila Sopki”; “Christine Cheng Ka-Yan”). The personalisation of the students gives more credibility to their words as the reader is able to identify with them when they speak of their or their friends’ personal experience (“Some terms in English were difficult to understand and I had to refer to a dictionary”; “Many of my friends have a hard time coping in university and are just memorising the notes because they are in English, but the lecturers teach in Bahasa Malaysia”; “Norsyahida Adila Sopki, 22, said it took a few years for her to grasp English”). In contrast, the government is referred to as a noun and a faceless collective entity (“the government’s decision”).

The effect of this report is to create an atmosphere of ‘Us vs Them’, whereby the students are pitted against the government. This is because the students quoted in this report oppose the abolishment of the PPSMI policy, while the government’s opposing viewpoint is not represented at all because the government is backgrounded and passivated.

Extract 3 from *The Star*, July 12, 2009

Although the Cabinet's decision to reverse the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English has sparked mixed responses, Chinese and Tamil academicians have offered their unanimous support.

The return to the old policy was lauded by the Dong Zong (United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia), Jiao Zong (United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaysia) and the National Tamil Teachers' Union, among others.

According to Dong Zong president Dr Yap Sin Tian, the policy on the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMI), has adversely affected students for the past six years.

And while he welcomed the move to use Bahasa Malaysia and one's mother tongue in the teaching of Mathematics and Science at national schools and vernacular schools, respectively, Dr Yap could not wait until 2012 for the full effect of the new ruling.

"We hope that the Government will switch the medium of instruction back to Chinese immediately so that students can pick up in their studies again," he said.

This was no surprise as PPSMI never went down well with the Chinese academicians.

In Extract 3, the main social actors, the Chinese and Tamil academicians, are foregrounded and activated, while the government or the Education Ministry is backgrounded and passivated, only referred to in passing ("the Cabinet's decision to reverse the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English"; "We hope that the government will switch the medium of instruction back to Chinese immediately"). In this extract, the Chinese and Tamil academicians are in favour of the government's decision to abolish the PPSMI, while there are no direct or indirect quotes from the government.

Although the report opens with a generic reference to a class of people ("Chinese and Tamil academicians"), in the second paragraph the reporter personalises them by referring to specific groups of Chinese and Tamil academicians, as represented by the respective professional bodies or associations ("the Dong Zong (United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia), Jiao Zong (United Chinese School Teachers Association of Malaysia) and the National Tamil Teachers' Union, among others"). In the third paragraph, the reporter further personalises them by quoting a specific person ("Dr Yap Sin Tian") who is titled ("Dr"; "Dong Zong president"). As a titled person, Dr Yap purports to speak on behalf of all the association's members,

using a first person plural pronoun (“We hope that the Government will switch the medium of instruction back to Chinese immediately”). In contrast, the government is referred to as a group or category and realised as a noun (“the Cabinet”; “the Government”). The effect is to highlight the association’s viewpoints on the issue of PPSMI and emphasise the importance of its viewpoints, as the spokesperson of the association is seen as someone qualified and experienced to comment on the issue by virtue of his title and position (“Dong Zong president”). Again, this creates the atmosphere of ‘Us vs Them’ by only focusing on the point of view of one group of social actors involved in the discourse.

In conclusion, it appears that, in the reporting of *The Star*, there are only two sides to the PPSMI issue: those who are for the PPSMI and those who are against it. In Extract 1 above, the government was foregrounded and activated, being in favour of abolishing the PPSMI; in Extract 2 above, the students (Benny, Muhamad, Norsyahida, and Christine) were foregrounded and activated, being against the abolishment of the PPSMI; and in Extract 3, the Chinese and Tamil academicians are foregrounded and activated, being again in favour of putting aside the PPSMI. The nature of the reports, which foreground and activate social actors who only sit on one side of the issue, creates a strong “Us vs Them” atmosphere.

The analysis will now examine extracts from *Malaysiakini*.

Extract 4 from *Malaysiakini*, July 8, 2009

The government has admitted that the policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English has failed to meet its objectives and will be scrapped.

Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister, said beginning 2012, the two subjects will be taught in Bahasa Malaysia at national schools.

As for national-type schools, the subjects will be taught in the respective mother-tongues.

The policy was initiated by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 2003, despite vocal protests.

Muhyiddin said the cabinet today approved the ministry's suggestion to revert to use of the Malay language and to strengthen the teaching and learning of the English language at all levels of schooling.

"This strategy was drawn up based on the study and monitoring carried out by the Education Ministry on the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English since the policy was implemented in 2003," he said at a press conference arranged to make this announcement.

In Extract 4, three social actors are foregrounded and activated ("the government"; "Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin"; "the Education Ministry"). These three social actors are represented by one person, Muhyiddin, as he is both the deputy prime minister and the education minister. They are all entities or people with power to make decisions affecting the nation. Teachers and students, as social actors, are excluded, i.e. they are backgrounded and passivated to such an extent that they are not explicitly mentioned and can only be inferred from the text. For example, "the two subjects will be taught in Bahasa Malaysia at national schools" implies the presence of teachers and students but they are excluded from the text and not directly mentioned or referred to.

In the extract, the text begins by referring to the government as a collective group, a nameless, faceless noun. However, the government is realised as a Participant, namely the Sayer in a verbal process ("The government has admitted that the policy of teaching Science and Mathematics in English has failed to meet its objectives and will be scrapped"). It is the sole Participant in the clause, as there is no Recipient or Target. Therefore, the importance of the government is emphasised. This becomes further evident in the second paragraph when "the government" is given a more personalised

representation by naming Muhyiddin as the government's spokesperson. Because Muhyiddin is titled ("Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister"), the importance placed on Muhyiddin is all the greater in the light of the exclusion of the other social actors, suggesting that the teachers and students are not as important as he is. This helps to create a strong 'Us vs Them' atmosphere due to the lack of inclusion of social actors other than Muhyiddin, the government and the education ministry.

Extract 19 from *Malaysiakini*, 9 July 2009

Displeased with the government's decision to scrap the language switch policy, it's architect Dr Mahathir Mohamad is seeking the public's opinion on the matter.

The internet savvy octogenarian has started a poll on his blog, which requires visitors to click on either 'yes' or 'no' to express their stand.

Incidentally, Mahathir's blog Che Det—named after his nickname in Kedah—is one of the most popular blogs in the country, drawing millions of visitors.

"I am not surprised over the disappointment and even anger towards the government's decision on the teaching of maths and science," he said in his latest posting.

"Seems to me like the government is not listening to the voice of the people," he added.

In view of this, the 84-year-old former premier felt that a blog poll might enlighten the government as to the opinions of the people.

After explaining to visitors what the poll is about, Mahathir added: I will then try to let the government know your decision."

In Extract 19, the main social actor is Mahathir, who is foregrounded and activated. While he gives his opinions on the government's move to abolish PPSMI ("seems to me like the government is not listening to the voice of the people"), the government is backgrounded and passivated, only referred to in passing but not given a voice. Mahathir is realised as a Participant in three different types of Processes: 1) As a Senser in a mental process, giving an opinion about the government's decision ("Displeased with the government's decision to scrap the language policy"); 2) As a Sayer speaking out against the government's decision, with the government as the Target ("Seems to me like the government is not listening to the voice of the people," he added"); 3) As the Actor in two material processes, taking action to challenge the

government's decision ("Dr Mahathir Mohamad is seeking the public's opinion on the matter"; "the internet savvy octogenarian has started a poll on his blog"). This high level of representation of Mahathir in different process types emphasises Mahathir's active opposition of the government's position on the PPSMI.

In addition, Mahathir is titled ("Dr", "former premier") and personalised (referred to by name). Although he is impersonalised once as "the internet savvy octogenarian", the effect of this impersonal representation is a positive one, implying that despite his age ("octogenarian"), he has kept up with the times and is up-to-date in his use or knowledge of technology. In contrast, the government is simply referred to as an impersonal noun, representing it as a nameless, faceless entity which obscures its importance. The combined effect is to emphasise the importance of Mahathir's opinion due to his position as former prime minister. Furthermore, the reporter implies that, despite no longer holding office in the government, Mahathir continues to retain a strong influence within the country, which further highlights his (Mahathir's) importance. An attributive relational process is used to suggest Mahathir's continued influence, where Mahathir's blog is the Carrier and the Attribute describes the popularity of his blog ("Incidentally, Mahathir's blog...is one of the most popular blogs in the country"). The reporter further mentions the number of people who read Mahathir's blog ("millions of visitors"), because the more people who visit the blog, the larger the audience reading Mahathir's written views will be.

The effect of this report is to generate an impression of 'Us vs Them', because while there are two main social actors (the government and Mahathir) on opposite sides of the PPSMI issue, only one social actor's voice is represented in this report. Not only is Mahathir represented as being against the government's decision to reverse the PPSMI, he is seen to be actively taking steps to challenge the government on the issue

by inviting the public to respond to a poll on his blog, while the government's voice is not heard.

Extract 20 from *Malaysiakini*, 15 July 2009

Malaysians in Sabah and Sarawak are unhappy with the anticipated disruptions to the teaching of maths and science in schools from 2012. They also want to know why mother tongue education should be confined only to Tamil, Malay and Chinese.

Many prominent individuals in Malaysian Borneo expressed concern over the matter and gave their take on the subject.

Among them were Borneo Heritage Foundation (BHF) chair Jeffery Kitingan, state tourism, culture and environment minister Masidi Manjun, Kian Kok Chinese secondary school principal Lim Chian, former science advisor to the chief minister, Tham Nyip Shen, and Kota Kinabalu MP Hiew King Cheu.

"The majority which includes Malaysians in Sabah and Sarawak should have been consulted," said Jeffrey.

"If there was to be a change, an option should have been given whether to continue with the present system of teaching the two subjects in English or switch back to the respective mother tongues."

He said that many urban schools in Sabah and especially in Sarawak have adjusted well to the teaching of maths and science in English. The students are from various ethnic backgrounds, come from lower and middle class families.

In the case of rural schools, continued Jeffrey, "the children should at least be given the choice of opting for mother tongue education in Dusun, Bajau, Iban, Bidayuh and other languages widely used in Malaysian Borneo".

"We do not have enough qualified teachers to teach students maths and science in English especially in the rural areas. This is a fact," said tourism minister Masidi, a Dusun from Ranau.

[...]

Jeffery, a Harvard scholar, predicts that "the proposed switch will be disruptive as it's too abrupt".

[...]

Kian Kok Chinese Private Secondary School in Kota Kinabalu appears to speak for all private schools, including the Chinese, in Malaysian Borneo when it confirmed that the teaching of maths and science will continue as usual in English after 2012.

[...]

Lim [Chian] said the school's decision is purely motivated by concerns over the welfare of the students and their future "which would be rather bleak without the English language".

[...]

Tham Tham Nyip Shen, also a former deputy chief minister and ex-deputy president of Sapp (Sabah Peoples Progressive Party), stressed on his own experience where he had his primary education in Chinese and secondary education in English.

"I entered secondary school not speaking a word of English," said Tham. "Yet four years later i.e. including one year spent in bridge class, I was the only one in Form 3 at my school in Keningau to score distinctions in both math and science."

[...]

Kota Kinabalu MP Hiew laments the billions wasted in switching to the English language for the teaching of maths and science. He sees even more billions being wasted on the switch back to the mother tongues from 2012 for the teaching of both subjects.

"English should be just a subject at the primary school level....At the secondary level, English should also be the medium of instruction in government-aided schools and private schools, while national-type schools can have the choice of using both English and Malay to teach a subject."

In Extract 20, there are five social actors who are foregrounded and activated (“Jeffrey Kitingan”; “Masidi Manjun”; “Lim Chian”; “Tham Nyip Shen”; “Hiew King Cheu”). Several social actors are mentioned but their voices are not represented, including “urban schools in Sabah and especially Sarawak”; “students...from various ethnic backgrounds [in urban schools in Sabah and Sarawak]; “rural schools”; “the children [from rural schools]”; “teachers”; “the students [of Kian Kok Chinese Private Secondary School]”; “government-aided schools”; “national-type schools”), causing them to be backgrounded and passivated. However, the most significant backgrounded and passivated voice is that of the government. Significantly, the government’s voice is excluded and is not mentioned at all, even though it is clear that all the foregrounded social actors are discussing the government’s decision to abolish the PPSMI. For example, Jeffrey is quoted as saying, “The majority which includes Malaysians in Sabah and Sarawak should have been consulted”, but he does not specify who should have consulted them. Similarly, he is again directly quoted as saying, “If there was to be a change, an option should have been given whether to continue with the present system”, but again there is no mention of who should give the option to the schools. Towards the end of the extract, Hiew is indirectly quoted as saying he “laments the billions wasted in switching to the English language for the teaching of maths and science”, yet again there is no mention of who is wasting these billions or who is requiring the language switch.

Fairclough (2003) notes that “there are many motivations for exclusion, such as redundancy or irrelevance, but exclusion may be politically or socially significant” (p. 149). In Extract 20, the suppression of the government as a social actor may be politically significant, as all the social actors quoted in the extract are aligning themselves against the government’s stand on the issue. The use of agentless passive clauses in the activated social actors’ direct and indirect quotes creates a strong sense of

‘Us vs Them’, with the ‘them’ being an entity which the social actors are reluctant to even name.

Furthermore, in Extract 20, although the first paragraph refers to a broad category of people (“Malaysians in Sabah and Sarawak”), the second paragraph narrows down this collective category to a more specific one (“many prominent individuals in Malaysian Borneo”), and in the third paragraph this group of people becomes personalised when the five activated social actors are referred to by name. They are also titled (“Borneo Heritage Foundation (BHF) chair Jeffery Kitingan”; “state tourism, culture and environment minister Masidi Manjun”; “Kian Kok Chinese secondary school principal Lim Chian”; “former science advisor to the chief minister, Tham Nyip Shen”; “Kota Kinabalu MP Hiew King Cheu”). The effect of this is to emphasise the importance and credibility of their views. For instance, Jeffrey is quoted as if he is speaking on behalf of all the Sabahans and Sarawakians (““The majority which includes Malaysians in Sabah and Sarawak should have been consulted,” said Jeffrey”) and he also acts as a voice or representative of both states’ urban schools (“he said that many urban schools in Sabah and especially in Sarawak have adjusted well to the teaching of maths and science in English”) as well as the rural schools (“In the case of rural schools, continued Jeffrey, “the children should at least be given the choice of opting for mother tongue education”). Lim, on the other hand, “appears to speak for all private schools...in Malaysian Borneo”. Since the government, as one of the major social actors is not mentioned at all, the effect is to create a very strong atmosphere of ‘Us vs them’, as these personalised and titled social actors are criticising and commenting on the decision of a social actor who is completely unrepresented in this text.

The analysis shows that both publications, *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*, usually focus each report on a specific social actor or group of social actors that stand on one particular side of the PPSMI issue—either for the policy reversal, or against it. The

effect of this style of reporting is to create a polarisation between the various social actors, giving rise to a strong suggestion of ‘Us vs Them’.

4.3.1.2 Power vs Helplessness

The findings show that where *The Star* represents social actors other than the government, they are portrayed as helpless, only able to respond or react to the government’s policies and decisions. In contrast, the government is portrayed as the entity with power to make decisions and make things happen. On the other hand, *Malaysiakini* represents social actors other than the government as being strong, confident and outspoken in criticising the government’s decisions and calling for change.

Extract 1 from *The Star*, July 9, 2009

The Government has decided to reverse the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy and revert to Bahasa Malaysia in national schools and Chinese and Tamil in vernacular schools.

More emphasis would also be placed on English, including the hiring of retired teachers, assistant teachers for bigger classes and having additional periods.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this meant that from 2012, students in Years One and Four and Forms One and Four in national primary and secondary schools would study the two subjects in Bahasa Malaysia while those in vernacular schools would be taught in their mother tongue (Chinese and Tamil).

“We want to have a ‘soft landing’ which is why we will begin only in 2012. This will allow us time to make the necessary preparations,” he told a press conference at the ministry when announcing the reversal of the ETeMS policy or better known by its Malay acronym, PPSMI.

In Extract 1 above, the government or Muhyiddin, its representative, is the Actor in the processes as he makes the announcement of the policy reversal (“The government has decided to reverse the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy”). Students are only referred to in passing and are passivated (“Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this meant that from 2012, students in Years One and Four and Forms One and Four in national primary and secondary schools would study the two subjects in Bahasa Malaysia”; “Some members of the Cabinet made an observation that those in Form Four may be affected”; “The PPSMI policy was implemented in

phases, beginning with Year One, Form One and Lower Six students in 2003”; “students’ mastery level of English during the entire policy was around 3%”). Similarly, teachers are mentioned only to demonstrate the failure of the policy and explain why it should be abolished (“the ministry found that only a small percentage of teachers fully used English to teach the two subjects”; “only a small number of teachers were proficient [in using English to teach science and mathematics]”). In this article, the students and teachers are referred to as a generic class or category, which shows that they are generally considered less important.

Furthermore, Muhyiddin, representing the government, is realised as a Participant in three types of processes: 1) As a Sayer, announcing the government’s decision and how that decision will be implemented, using the reporting verbs “said” and “told” (“Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said...”; “he [Muhyiddin] told a press conference”); 2) As a Senser in two mental processes, having come to a decision about the future of the PPSMI (“The Government has decided to reverse the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English policy”), and also having evaluated the best way to implement the decision (“We want to have a ‘soft landing’); 3) As the Actor in future tense material processes, explaining how decision to reverse the PPSMI will be implemented (“we will begin only in 2012”; “This will allow us time to make the necessary preparations”). This high level of representation of Muhyiddin as a Participant in different process types emphasises his importance as the person with power to make decisions and ensure that they are carried out in the future.

Extract 21 from *The Star*, July 9, 2009

The hiring of 13,933 teachers and additional teaching time for English in both primary and secondary schools are among the measures being taken by the Government to strengthen the teaching and learning of English.

Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said this includes “importing” 1,000 teachers from overseas, hiring 600 retired teachers and an additional 12,333 teachers from teacher training institutes, and public and private higher education institutions.

“Schools in rural and remote areas will get the best teachers,” he said when announcing a reversal of the Teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (ETeMS or better known by its Malay acronym, PPSMI) policy which was implemented in 2003.

Muhyiddin, who is Education Minister, said the ministry would also provide assistant teachers with a grade of DG41 for large classes with more than 35 students in Years One and Two to increase the contact time between teachers and students.

[...]

To expose students to scientific terms, elements of science and technology will be absorbed into the learning of English, he added.

Other initiatives include having an English Day at school and a summer camp during the holidays.

“We believe this new approach will strengthen Bahasa Malaysia and English proficiency, and increase the capability of students to master science and technology, which is important for the country’s future,” he said.

This is repeated in Extract 21. Again, the government and Muhyiddin as its representative is the main social actor, while teachers and students are passivated (“The hiring of 13,933 teachers”; ““importing” 1,000 teachers from overseas, hiring 600 retired teachers and an additional 12,333 teachers from teacher training institutes”; “Schools in rural and remote areas will get the best teachers”; “the ministry would also provide assistant teachers”). In this text, students are mostly excluded by backgrounding, having to be inferred in most places. For example, in stating the time allocation for English at various levels, it is inferred that the students will be the Beneficiary of these processes, but the students are not explicitly mentioned. Similarly, while Muhyiddin lays out all the government’s plans and initiatives to help students master the language, only twice are the students mentioned (“To expose students to scientific terms, elements of science and technology will be absorbed into the teaching of English”; “We believe this new approach will strengthen Bahasa Malaysia and English proficiency, and increase the capability of students to master science and technology”).

The backgrounding of students and teachers, and portraying them as a passivated generic class, enforces the government's position of power. The government is the one who makes decisions which affect others. Others, namely the students and teachers, have no say in the matter. They are the Beneficiaries of the processes. The teachers are expected to accept and obey directives, while the students simply go through the system and experience the effect of the various policies being implemented.

Extract 2 from *The Star*, July 12, 2009

Many tertiary students are against the government's decision to revert the teaching of Maths and Science to vernacular languages and Bahasa Malaysia.

Students who had studied the subjects in Bahasa Malaysia and are now pursuing Maths and Science-related courses in English at local universities said it was a struggle as they could not understand the terms.

Benny Ong Zhu Venn, 23, a recent Multimedia University graduate said he studied both subjects in Chinese during primary school and in Bahasa Malaysia in secondary school, and did his electronics engineering course in English during university.

"Some terms in English were difficult to understand and I had to refer to a dictionary.

"I feel it is better if Maths and Science are taught in English, so it won't be so hard for us to 'catch up' in university," he said.

Biomedical engineering student Muhamad Zulkifli Muhamad Razali from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia said reference books and materials were mostly in English.

"Many of my friends have a hard time coping in university and are just memorising the notes because they are in English, but the lecturers teach in Bahasa Malaysia," he said.

[...]

Universiti Teknologi Mara accounting student, Norsyahida Adila Sopki, 22, said it took a few years for her to grasp English.

"I feel both subjects should be taught in English from primary school so that it will be an easy transition for students by the time they get to tertiary level," she said.

She added that one of her peers had to extend her engineering course in order to take up English classes and others had failed their courses as they couldn't answer their papers in English.

Taylor's University College student Christine Cheng Ka-Yan, 18, who underwent the PPSMI process at secondary school, said students who grasp concepts in English have a fighting chance to apply to top-notch foreign universities like Oxford or Cambridge, which have stringent entrance requirements and interviews.

Although Extract 2 above has already been discussed under **4.3.1.1 Us vs Them**, it is pertinent to this discussion as well because this report is one of the few that shows the students being foregrounded and activated. This can be seen from the way they are realised as Participants in verbal processes with direct or indirect quotes ("Benny Ong

Zhu Venn, 23, a recent Multimedia University graduate said”; “Biomedical engineering student Muhamad Zulkifli Muhamad Razali said”; “Universiti Teknologi Mara accounting student, Norsyahida Adila Sopki, 22, said”; “Taylor’s University College student Christine Cheng Ka-Yan, 18...said”). However, although they are activated, they are not seen to be in the position of making things happen because they are only giving their opinion or feelings about the PPSMI (“I feel it is better if Maths and Science are taught in English”; “I feel both subjects should be taught in English”). Instead, they are simply responding to the government’s announcement that the PPSMI will be abolished. As a result, they are portrayed as powerless to effect change. The backgrounding of the government in this extract could suggest having made the decision, the government does not wish to engage in dialogue or negotiations over the issue. As a result, there are no comments or quotes from the government, only from the students. The effect is to portray the students as helpless while the government is in a position of power.

Extract 22 from *The Star*, July 12, 2009

When June Ho first heard that students in Year One and Form One in 2003 would be studying Maths and Science in English, she seriously considered having her daughter repeat Form One.

“That was how happy I was when they made the announcement about teaching Science and Maths in English,” she said.

Now that the English for the Teaching of Science and Maths in English (ETeMS, or better known by its Malay acronym PPSMI) policy has been reversed, Ho is even more upset that her Year Two son will have to switc to learning the two subjects completely in Bahasa Malaysia when he enters Form One in 2013.

“The decision is extremely disappointing. I think that parents should have a say in this matter through each school’s PTA (Parent-Teacher Association),” she said.

[...]

SK Seri Hartamas PTA committee member Ruhana Hashim predicts that many parents who can afford it will send their children to international schools or abroad.

“International schools will mushroom, or parents will take their children out and send them to neighbouring countries.

“Money will flow out and these kids will be less loyal to the country in the end,” she said.

Haili Abdul Jamil, who has two children in Years One and Two, is one of those parents who is seriously considering this option.

In Extract 22, parents are foregrounded and activated, while the government is backgrounded and passivated. Parents are the main social actors and Participants in processes, as they are quoted both directly and indirectly. They are personalised and referred to by name (“June Ho”; “Ruhana Hashim”; “Haili Abdul Jamil”). In contrast, the government is referred to obliquely but not mentioned by name (“That was how happy I was when they made the announcement”; “The decision is extremely disappointing”). This omission is significant. The use of the pronoun “they” to refer to the government implies a shared knowledge, i.e. that everyone would know who “they” are, so the Participant in the verbal process does not need to define or specify whom she is referring to. Taken together with “made the announcement”, it shows that this “they” is a powerful entity, able to make things happen simply by speaking (or ‘announcing’). This further explains why there was no necessity of naming the “they”, because powerful entities are also well-known, prominent entities and therefore she could only be referring to the government. No one else possesses the same power.

Similarly, June is quoted as saying, “The decision is extremely disappointing,” and this agentless clause does not reveal the identity of the social actor who made the decision. Again, it can be inferred that whoever hears this statement would recognise whom she is referring to, because only one entity has the power to make decisions. Thus the parents are seen as helpless in the face of the government’s decision, and this is reinforced by Ruhana’s and Haili’s suggestion of ‘sending children “to international schools or abroad”’. Because the parents are powerless to change the government’s mind, they either have to live with the decision or find a way around it, and the only option they can think of is to remove their children from the national school system entirely. Therefore, it can be seen that the parents are portrayed as helpless in the face of the government’s power.

To sum up, *The Star*'s reports consistently represent the government as the one with power, thus perpetuating an ideology of hegemonic dominance and strength. In contrast, other social actors, especially those directly affected by the decision to abolish the PPSMI (i.e. teachers, students and parents) are represented as powerless, having no choice but to abide by the government's policies and decisions. Although they are given a voice in the news reports, they are always seen as reacting or responding to the government's decisions after the decision has been made or announced, and there is never any indication that they might have the opportunity to change the government's mind or at least cause it to rethink its decision. As a result, there is a strong theme of Power vs Helplessness in the reports of *The Star*.

The analysis will now study extracts from *Malaysiakini*.

Extract 19 from *Malaysiakini*, 9 July 2009

Displeased with the government's decision to scrap the language switch policy, its architect Dr Mahathir Mohamad is seeking the public's opinion on the matter.

The internet savvy octogenarian has started a poll on his blog, which requires visitors to click on either 'yes' or 'no' to express their stand.

Incidentally, Mahathir's blog Che Det—named after his nickname in Kedah—is one of the most popular blogs in the country, drawing millions of visitors.

"I am not surprised over the disappointment and even anger towards the government's decision on the teaching of maths and science," he said in his latest posting.

"Seems to me like the government is not listening to the voice of the people," he added.

In view of this, the 84-year-old former premier felt that a blog poll might enlighten the government as to the opinions of the people.

After explaining to visitors what the poll is about, Mahathir added: I will then try to let the government know your decision."

Extract 19 has been discussed under **4.3.1.1 Us vs Them**, but is also relevant to this discussion. This is because the main social actor in this extract ("Dr Mahathir Mohamad") is against the government's decision to abolish the PPSMI. As discussed in the earlier section, Mahathir is personalised, activated and foregrounded, but what is interesting is how he is represented as a Participant in material processes. He "is seeking the public's opinion on the matter"; "has started a poll on his blog"; "will then try to let

the government know” the public’s opinion’ after getting the poll results. Here Mahathir is seen to be actively doing something to try to get the government to change its mind. He is not represented as powerless or merely accepting of the government’s decision to abolish PPSMI.

On the other hand, it can be argued that Mahathir is certainly not powerless, as he is an experienced and respected statesman, the former prime minister of the country and well-known enough that he might have some influence on the government. Therefore, the study shall consider Extract 23 below.

Extract 23 from *Malaysiakini*, 11 July 2009

The frequent changes to Malaysia’s education policies according to the country’s political mood have undoubtedly compromised the quality of education and failed to meet the needs of the present generation of students, said experts.

The educationists argued that the constant changes in policies have also resulted in a drain on taxpayers money with the need to buy new textbooks and to retrain teachers.

In addition to causing a financial burden to parents who are not eligible for the ‘free textbook loan scheme’, the changes have also created deep uncertainty in the employment market.

“When Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) became premier, he reduced the number of English periods and as a whole, the importance of the English language (in schools),” said former National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) deputy secretary-general S Sundralingam.

[...]

Voicing similar thoughts is former NUTP secretary-general N Sivasubramaniam.

“The quality of education in the country should not be compromised and it should be able to take care of the needs of our future generations irrespective of their social standings.

“There should be a consistency in outlining the education policies of the country that should match the modern requirements of our society,” said Sivasubramaniam.

In Extract 23, the two main social actors are S Sundralingam and N Sivasubramaniam, who are criticising the government’s historical record with regard to changing education policies. It is not clear from the extract whether they are for or against the PPSMI, but it can be implied that they do not support the government’s decision to abolish the policy, as it would be another change that adds to “the frequent changes”.

Sundralingam and Sivasubramaniam are both activated and foregrounded, while the government is backgrounded and passivated. In fact, apart from the reference to Mahathir's education policies ("When Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) became premier, he reduced the number of English periods"), the government is not mentioned at all, and has to be inferred instead.

The report's lead refers to a general group or category of "experts", which is impersonal, but the second paragraph is more specific, referring to "educationists", and by the fourth paragraph, Sundralingam is personalised (referred to by name) as well as titled ("former National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) deputy secretary-general"). Sivasubramaniam is also personalised and titled ("former NUTP secretary-general"). The framing of both Sundralingam and Sivasubramaniam as "experts" and "educationists", in addition to the titulation, implies that they are important and will encourage the reader to give their views greater weight.

What is most interesting is the indirect and direct quotes that the reporter attributes to them, as participants in clauses. In the lead, an indirect quote is given, attributed to "experts", with the use of a negative verb modified by an open-class adverb showing modality ("The frequent changes to Malaysia's education policies...have undoubtedly compromised the quality of education"). Following that, in the second paragraph, the "educationists" are Sayers in a verbal process, with the strong reporting verb "argued" ("The educationists argued that the constant changes in policies have also resulted in a drain on taxpayers money"). Further down, Sivasubramaniam is the Sayer in a verbal clause where he says "The quality of education should not be compromised". The modal verb "should" indicates not only a reasonable expectation on the people's part that the government would do its utmost to uphold a high standard of education in schools, but that the government has an *obligation* to do so (Downing & Locke, 1992). The two social actors are represented as coming from a very strong position, as they are

‘arguing’ with the government, criticising its decisions, and telling it what to do (“the quality of education in the country should not be compromised”). They are not represented as powerless even though they acknowledge that they are at the mercy of the government (as it has “undoubtedly compromised the quality of education”; “resulted in a drain on taxpayers money”; ‘caused “a financial burden to parents””; “created deep uncertainty in the employment market”; “reduced the number of English periods and as a whole, the importance of the English language (in schools)”). In fact, by naming all these effects, it can be argued that the two social actors are in fact undermining the government’s position of power. This is because they are listing all the mistakes and bad or wrong policy decisions the government has made in the past.

On the other hand, again it may be said that it would be easier for these two social actors to speak out so strongly against the government, as their experience and titles imbue them with a certain authority. Unfortunately, *Malaysiakini* did not focus any of its reports on students or parents as the main social actors. Therefore, the researcher was unable to perform a full comparative analysis on this particular theme ‘Power vs Helplessness’.

To sum up, preliminary findings indicate that *Malaysiakini* does not portray the government from a position of power and strength. Unlike *The Star*, *Malaysiakini* does not support the government’s hegemony. Instead, it portrays dissenting voices from a position of strength and confidence. However, unlike *The Star*, *Malaysiakini* did not have any reports that focused mainly on students or parents as social actors, therefore the results in this section of the analysis remain inconclusive.

4.3.2 Transitivity

This section will analyse how transitivity in headlines demonstrates the ideology of the respective media house. Transitivity, in Hallidayian terms, is the “transmission of ideas “representing ‘processes’ or ‘experiences’: actions, events, processes of consciousness and relations” (Halliday, 1985, p. 53). It is used to analyse how a text represents reality (Fowler, 1986, p. 138).

4.3.2.1 Relational processes

Relational processes “relate a participant to its identity or description” (Butt, et al., 2003, p. 58). There are two types of relational processes: the first is the attributive relational process, where there are two participants, the *Carrier* and the *Attribute*, of which the participant referred to (i.e. the grammatical subject) is the *Carrier* and the characteristic or description is the *Attribute*. The second is the identifying relational process, which helps to “identify one entity in terms of another” (Thompson, 2004, p. 96), where the two participants are identified as the *Value* and the *Token*. As a general rule, if the verb is in the active voice, the Token will come first in the clause, followed by the Value after the verb. The converse is true when the verb is in the passive voice (Butt, et al., 2000).

The following are headlines from *The Star*:

- a) It is Bahasa again (July 9, 2009)
- b) Is there a need to revert? (July 12, 2009)
- c) PPSMI [is] not good for rural kids (July 19, 2009)

These headlines are all attributive relational processes. In all the three headlines, the attributes are clearly seen. However, in both (a) and (b), the carriers are unclear, which creates ambiguity.

In (a), the carrier is referred to as “it” and is not specified. The reader would not understand what the attribute is referring to unless he is familiar with the issue of

PPSMI, as the education minister had earlier announced that the cabinet would come to a decision on the future of the PPSMI policy in July (*The Star*, 2009). Therefore, the ambiguity of the carrier presupposes some background knowledge on the reader's part and expects that the reader is anticipating the announcement. However, even if the reader is not aware of the PPSMI debate, by looking at the attribute ("Bahasa again") the reader may be able to infer that this headline is referring to a government decision. This is because Bahasa Malaysia is the national language, and it is the government who commonly has the authority and power to make policy decisions about the use of the national language in various public spheres or social institutions. Therefore, the unspecified carrier recognises and supports the government's hegemony in the matter of making decisions that affect the people.

In (b), the process begins with the verb *to be* ("Is") and is an interrogative sentence (i.e. a question) instead of a declarative sentence (i.e. a statement). The use of an interrogative sentence with the attribute "a need to revert" suggests that the reporter is querying the government's decision. In addition, there is also a sense of inviting debate and encouraging the public to provide feedback on the government's decision. On the other hand, the attribute itself is not clear, for "revert" means "to return to a former state" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2010) but the headline does not inform readers what that former state might be. There is no mention of PPSMI and much is left to the inference of the reader, which as in (a) above would depend greatly on the reader's background knowledge and awareness of the issue. Therefore, although on the surface, the implication of inviting the public to debate the necessity of abolishing the PPSMI may be seen as challenging the government's ideological position, the ambiguity of the attribute makes the challenge weak, removing its bite, so to speak. As a result, on the whole the government's hegemony remains unassailed.

In (c), both the carrier (“PPSMI”) and the attribute (“not good for rural kids”) are clearly stated. The verb *to be* is missing from the original, but can be inferred. In this headline, it can be seen that the attribute is negative (“not good”), which could be seen as a justification for the government’s decision to abolish the PPSMI.

Thus the findings show that in *The Star*’s use of relational processes in headlines, when the announcement is favourable to the government, both carrier and attribute are clearly stated, as in (c). However, when the government’s announcement could be unfavourably received, such as the decision to revert to Bahasa Malaysia in the teaching of science and mathematics, the carrier is unspecified or ambiguous. Similarly, a question that is unfavourable to the government’s position is given an ambiguous attribute with an unspecified carrier. Therefore, it can be concluded that *The Star* is highly supportive of the government’s ideology and hegemonic position.

The data from *Malaysiakini* did not contain any headlines using relational processes, therefore the study was unable to conduct a comparative analysis with *Malaysiakini* in this area.

4.3.2.2 Material processes

Material processes involve the use of a verb, or physical actions (Thompson, 2004). The doer of the process is the *Actor*, while the other participant who is receiving the process or affected by the process is the *Beneficiary* (if human), or *Goal* (if an animal or thing) (Butt, et al., 2003). A third possible participant is the *Range*, a person, animal or thing that is not affected by the process.

The following are headlines from *The Star*:

- a) Striking a balance (July 12, 2009)
- b) Addressing fears and concerns of parents (July 12, 2009)
- c) Reeling from the reversal (July 12, 2009)
- d) Cabinet to study feedback on the switch (July 15, 2009)

e) Hotline for views on PPSMI closed (July 18, 2009)

The actor is only defined in (d), where the Cabinet is the actor and the goal is “to study feedback on the switch”. This portrays the cabinet in a positive light, as it suggests the cabinet is willing to revisit its decision on the future of PPSMI and take the views of the public into account. It suggests that the cabinet is neither unreasonable nor inflexible and cares about what the people think. The Cabinet is a collective agent with power, as it is the decision-making arm of the government and determines policies. Thus its decision to take into account the public’s feedback is an important one. The suggestion is implicit that such feedback has the potential to influence the Cabinet’s ultimate decision about the PPSMI policy, if only because the Cabinet has allowed it to be so.

In (a), (b), (c) and (e), the actor is not defined. However, it can be inferred that the actor for (a), (b) and (e) is the government, while for (c) the actor is the public. This will be explained below.

In the case of headlines (a), (b) and (e), only the goal (“a balance”; “fears and concerns”; “hotline for views on PPSMI”) is stated. However, the discourse on PPSMI, it is well understood that the government is the actor because it is the government who has the power of decision-making. Therefore, this strengthens the hegemony of the ruling government because it portrays the government as the one who affects outcomes. It is the government who seeks to ‘strike a balance’ in (a), suggesting that the government strives to be fair to all parties involved. Similarly, in (b) it is the government who wishes to reassure parents (the beneficiary of the process), showing that it is not indifferent to concerns of the other social actors involved in the discourse. The hegemony is strongest in (e), which shows that the government is indeed the one with all the power: it is not bound to solicit or consider feedback from the public, and it can at any time cut off this line of communication.

The unidentified actor in (c) is clearly not the government, as the verb “reeling” indicates someone who was taken by surprise, stunned and dismayed. This could not be the government, because the government is the one wielding power. It is the public, or in this case the parents and students, who as actors are left “reeling” from policy decisions, because they have no say in the decisions and can only respond or react to the government’s announcements. The definition of “reel” given by the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (2005) is “to move in a very unsteady way, for example because you...have been hit”. It is a strong verb that indicates the decision was unwelcome. The effect of this headline is to reinforce the government’s hegemonic position as the one with power to make decisions that affect the people.

To sum up, headlines in *The Star* using material processes are seen to portray the government in a positive light and support its hegemonic position as being the one with the power to make decisions.

Consider instead the following headlines from *Malaysiakini*:

- (f) Language-switch policy scrapped (July 8, 2009)
- (g) Dr M turns up the heat with online poll (July 9, 2009)
- (h) End our ‘flip-flop’ attitude to education (July 11, 2009)
- (i) Language switch: Gov’t bars parents-teachers meet (August 8, 2009)
- (j) Science & Maths: Students can continue in English (August 9, 2009)

The actor is undefined in (f) and (h). In (f), as in (a), (b) and (e) above, the actor can be extrapolated to be the government. This is because the government in its role of policymakers are the only ones who can institute or ‘scrap’ a policy. The verb “scrapped” used here has negative connotations of throwing something away. The implication is to suggest that the PPSMI policy was a big mistake or big failure that needs to be thrown out like rubbish. This undermines the hegemonic position of the government because it portrays the government as having made a big mistake with PPSMI, which they now have to discard.

However, in (h) the actor can be interpreted as being one of the other social actors like parents, students or activists. This is because the statement is made to sound like a material process but instead of some action taking place, it is urging another (unnamed) participant to take action, with the goal being “our ‘flip-flop’ attitude” and the range being “to education”. Therefore, the actor could not be the government because the government has the power to take action, so it would not need to make a statement like this. As a result, it can be seen that this headline is a call to the government to have more streamlined and long-term educational policies instead of implementing and then reversing policies every few years. The use of the possessive pronoun “our” is significant, as it is an inclusive pronoun. If the actor were able to conduct the material process himself, he would not need to call for others to take action. Therefore, the implications of using an inclusive pronoun in this headline suggest that the reporter does not want to point fingers at the government or use an accusatory tone. The (unnamed) actor is included as being part of the problem and the effect is to suggest that he is willing to work together with the government to improve the situation for the betterment of the country. As a result, headline (h) does not portray the government to be in a dominant position of power because it suggests that people can work together with the government to bring change—it is not only the government who has the power to effect change.

In (g), (i) and (j) the actors are defined as “Dr M” (Mahathir), “Gov’t” (the government) and “Students” respectively. In (g), the idiomatic material process “turn up the heat” combined with the range (“online poll”) implies that the online poll or its results could be very uncomfortable for another unnamed participant. Without any further information, however, there is no way for the reader to be able to connect this to the PPSMI issue unless he has been following the chain of events in *Malaysiakini* reports prior to this. In actual fact, Mahathir disagreed with the government’s decision

to abolish the PPSMI and he opened a poll on his blog for the public to vote on the issue and have their say. However, this is not made clear in the headline.

In (i), both the actor (“gov’t”, or the government) and the goal (“parents-teachers meet”) are clearly stated. The use of the word “bar” in the material process indicates an exercise of power as the government has stopped the meeting from going forward. Although there is again, as in (g), no explicit connection with the PPSMI issue, the juxtaposition of the government as the entity with power, next to parents and teachers, who obviously are in a more disadvantageous position, almost suggests that the government is misusing its power and authority, and perhaps even suppressing free speech or freedom of expression in refusing to allow the parent-teacher meeting to take place. As a result, this headline undermines the government’s hegemonic position, portraying the government as a bully.

In (j), again both the actor (“students”) and the range (“in English”) are clearly stated, while a modal verb (“can continue”) is used for the material process. Downing & Locke (1992) state that the modal verb “can” “lends itself to various pragmatic interpretations by inference” (p. 394), listing *willingness*, *command* and *potential usability* as possible interpretations. In this headline, the modal verb “can” is used to express command, as the statement is made by the government, who is an entity with power. The government is allowing students the opportunity, or the option, to continue their studies in English if they wish to do so. The use of the modal verb conjures a tone of offering a concession, whereby the government is trying to placate the public by allowing students who have been studying science and mathematics in English to continue using the same language medium instead of having to switch to Bahasa Malaysia midway through their primary or secondary schooling. The effect is to show the government backing down from its earlier decision (i.e. to have all students switch

back to the Bahasa Malaysia medium of instruction). This again undermines the government's hegemonic position.

In summary, headlines in *Malaysiakini* which use material processes generally undermine the government's hegemonic position and portray the government in a less favourable light.

4.3.2.3 Mental processes

Mental processes refer to an "inner world of cognition, perception, inclination or liking/disliking" (Butt, et al., 2003, p. 55). The one who is thinking is known as the *Senser*, while whatever is thought or perceived is known as the *Phenomenon*.

Below are two headlines from *The Star*:

- a) Mixed views on policy (July 12, 2009)
- b) Divided over decision (July 12, 2009)

In both (a) and (b), the senser is absent and not mentioned. In (a), the verb "views" points to a mental cognitive process, whereby the unnamed senser has formed certain opinions about the phenomenon ("policy"). Similarly in (b), the word "divided" suggests a mental cognitive process where the senser is not sure whether to agree or disagree with the phenomenon ("decision").

Due to the nature of the discourse, it is clear that the government's hegemonic position gives it power to make decisions on the issue of PPSMI, while other participants are only able to react or respond to this decision. As the government has already made its decision (the phenomenon in (b)) and announced the policy change (the phenomenon in (a)), it is therefore safe to deduce that both mental processes in (a) and (b) refer to the public's response to the government's decision on PPSMI. This is deduced by considering the government's power of decision-making and the public's role of having no choice but to accept or respond to the decision after the decision has been made and announced.

Hence, these two headlines in *The Star* portray the government as being the one in a dominant position with the power to make decisions, while other participants in the process can only react or respond to the decision after it is made. The effect is to support and reinforce the government's hegemony.

There is only one headline in *Malaysiakini* with a mental process:

(c) Borneo forum okays bilingual policy approach (August 19, 2009)

In this headline, the senser ("Borneo forum") is clearly mentioned, and the phenomenon is "bilingual policy approach". The informal verb "okays" suggests a mental cognitive process which involves weighing the pros and cons of the issue and then coming to a decision in favour of the said issue. As stated above in the discussion of headlines (a) and (b), the government is the one with the power to make policy decisions, therefore headline (c) refers to a participant's response to the government's latest policy (i.e. allowing students who have been studying mathematics and science in English to continue using English as the medium of instruction until they complete their high school education. However, in (c) the senser appears to be in a position of strength, approving the government's decision (saying it is "okay", or acceptable) instead of merely responding to it. Therefore, this headline undermines the government's hegemonic position for it is implied that the government's new policy requires the approval of the senser.

4.3.2.4 Verbal processes

In verbal processes, a *sayer* makes the statement or commits the speech act. The sayer might be speaking to a *receiver*, or might be speaking about another participant, who is the *target*. Alternatively, if the sayer is conveying some information, whatever he says is known as *verbiage*.

The following are headlines in *The Star* that use verbal processes:

(a) PAS: Stop teaching Science and Maths in English (June 8, 2009)

- (b) Just take a look at Philippines and Japan, says Zulkifli (July 12, 2009)
- (c) Decision to revert stands, says Muhyiddin (July 17, 2009)
- (d) Warning to teachers (August 20, 2009)

The sayer is clearly stated in (a), (b), and (c), but not mentioned in (d). In (a), although there is no verb to indicate a verbal process, the use of a colon (“:”) indicates that PAS (the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, one of the parties in the Pakatan Rakyat opposition coalition) is the sayer, but the receiver is not stated. The headline is worded as an imperative sentence, sounding like a command or order to the unnamed receiver. However, this is a little strange as PAS, not being one of the parties in the ruling Barisan Nasional government, does not have the power or authority to demand that schools should stop teaching science and mathematics in English. As a result, the headline could be a subtle means of mocking the party and attempting to portray them as a group which is not to be taken seriously. The end result is to support the government’s hegemony and portray the opposition as a powerless entity who is ‘all talk, no action’.

In (b), Zulkifli is clearly mentioned as the sayer, and again he uses an imperative, but the receiver is not stated. In fact, it is unclear who Zulkifli is, for he is not one of the more prominent politicians such as the Prime Minister or other ministers in the cabinet. However, in the body of the report he is identified as a Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) member, i.e. one of the opposition party members, and he is in favour of the government’s decision to abolish the PPSMI. Therefore, by naming him in the headline, it could be surmised that *The Star* has chosen to highlight him as an example to the public that even opposition party members agree with the government’s decision to do away with PPSMI. This upholds the government’s ideology and hegemony and again attempts to undermine the opposition.

The next two headlines are from *Malaysiakini*:

(e) Muhyiddin: Mahathir accepts the decision (July 8, 2009)

(f) ...smouldering Dr M hints otherwise (July 8, 2009)

The sayer is very clear in both (e) and (f). In (a), Muhyiddin is the sayer, while the target is Mahathir. Although there is no verb to indicate a verbal process, the use of a colon (“:”) indicates that Muhyiddin is making a statement. With this statement, he aims to show that Mahathir is in favour of the government’s decision to reverse the PPSMI policy. If Mahathir is seen to support the government’s move, this would strengthen the government’s policy on this issue, especially since it was Mahathir’s administration that implemented the policy in 2003. To have the author of the policy agree that the policy is flawed and should be reversed would be a strong indication that the government is doing the right thing by abolishing the PPSMI.

In (b), Mahathir (referred to by his commonly known moniker, “Dr M”) is the sayer, using the reporting verb “hints” which has undertones of slyness or covertness. “Otherwise” is the verbiage, and this only makes sense if read together with (a), namely that Mahathir did not accept the government’s decision after all. The use of the adjective “smouldering” suggests that Mahathir is angry, perhaps at being misrepresented by Muhyiddin or possibly because the government is reversing a policy that he himself fought for and pushed through when he was Prime Minister.

4.3.2.5 Conclusion

The findings from the transitivity analysis show that across the board, *The Star*’s headlines reveal the newspaper’s support for the government’s dominant ideology, as it attempts to uphold the Barisan Nasional’s hegemonic position. On the other hand, *Malaysiakini*’s headlines constantly seek to challenge the government’s hegemony and do not portray the government as being in a position of power and dominance.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Overview

This research aims to compare and contrast the ideologies embedded in the news reports from both media houses, as represented in the discourse of PPSMI. The study analyses data from *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* on the discourse of PPSMI, specifically the government's announcement of its decision to abolish the PPSMI and the various responses to the announcement or discussions arising from the announcement, as portrayed by the two publications. *The Star* was selected as a representative of mainstream media and *Malaysiakini* was selected as a representative of alternative media. The data spans a period of three months, from June to August 2009 and comprises 21 news reports from *The Star* and 13 from *Malaysiakini*.

The analysis of the data is carried out using Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional framework for critical discourse analysis. Therefore, the analysis is presented in two parts, intertextually and textually. The intertextual analysis comprises a qualitative and quantitative analysis, whereas the textual analysis is a qualitative one only.

In the qualitative intertextual analysis, the study examines the level of dialogicality in the reports, how the reporters have recontextualised the various voices in the discourse, the frames used, and the inclusion of intertextuality in the texts.

From a quantitative perspective, the study investigates the distribution of voices in the texts to determine whether the reporters give equal representation to the various social actors in the discourse.

Finally, the textual analysis investigates how the reporters construct social reality in the representation of social actors as well as the use of transitivity in headlines.

5.2 Discussion

The analysis reveals five significant findings. The findings and their implications are discussed below in the order of importance, from least important to most important.

5.2.1 Significant findings

The first significant finding shows that reporters generally present their reports from only one point of view, or one particular stand on the issue. For example, in the reports announcing the government's decision to abolish the PPSMI, both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* only afforded representation to the government's voice, while other social actors like students, teachers and parents of school-going children were backgrounded and passivated.

Similarly, in subsequent reports on the issue, the reporters focused on specific social actors. *Malaysiakini* produced two reports which focused exclusively on Mahathir's response (on July 8 and 9, 2009), and Mahathir's voice is a dissenting one as he does not support the government's decision to reverse the policy. Similarly, a report from *The Star* on July 12, 2009 focused on four undergraduate students' views and responses to the PPSMI, where all four students were in favour of retaining the policy, while another report on the same day represented the views of Chinese and Tamil academicians from the Dong Zong, Jiao Zong and National Tamil Teachers' Union, who were all supportive of the government's decision to abolish the PPSMI. In all the above reports, the social actors who were foregrounded and activated were either for or

against the PPSMI, while the other voices who took the opposing side were backgrounded and passivated.

The effect of this style of reporting is two-fold. First, it creates a social reality of 'Us vs Them', where it is very clear that there are two sides to this issue of PPSMI, and if one is not for the decision, then one must be against it. This is because all the voices represented in the reports are either in favour of the government's decision to abolish the PPSMI, or oppose it; not a single social actor was seen to offer a balanced or neutral view on the issue. Second, this style of reporting may not offer an impression of objectivity or neutrality on the part of the media house if the reader does not realise the discourse of PPSMI as a whole series of reports. In other words, if the reader were to read only one report on the issue, he would only receive one point of view, which is a partisan view (i.e. either for or against the abolishment of PPSMI). However, if the reports are read together as a whole, it can be seen that both media houses appear to give the impression of objectivity and neutrality by representing a range of voices from both sides of the divide, although *Malaysiakini* highlights more dissenting voices compared to *The Star*.

Related to the first significant finding, the second significant finding concerns the distribution of voices in the texts. The quantitative analysis (see **Chapter 4.2.2 Quantitative Analysis**) found that while Barisan Nasional or government voices enjoyed the largest amount of representation in both reports, voices from the opposition were underrepresented in *The Star* as they had the lowest representation, along with schools and teachers, and local academicians and researchers. In addition, although Barisan Nasional voices were represented 69.2% in *Malaysiakini*, one of these voices (Mahathir's voice) was a dissenting voice, comprising 44.4% of the 69.2%. Therefore, this clearly shows that *Malaysiakini* provides a much more balanced representation of voices in its reports on the issue of PPSMI compared to *The Star*. In fact, *The Star* did

not feature an interview or any direct quotes from Mahathir on this issue, which is unusual since PPSMI was conceptualised and implemented by Mahathir during his tenure as Prime Minister. The exclusion of Mahathir's voice, which was vocal in its opposition of the government's decision, together with the low representation of opposition politician's voices, suggests that *The Star* does indeed support the government's dominant ideology and seek to uphold the government's hegemonic position. In contrast, *Malaysiakini* appears to offer a more balanced coverage of the issue, according various stakeholders a more proportionate representation in the news.

The third significant finding arises from the media houses' use of transitivity in headlines, as discussed under Section **4.3.2 Transitivity**. The analysis revealed that *The Star's* headlines all contained macropropositions supporting the government's hegemony and seeking to uphold the dominant ideology, while *Malaysiakini's* headlines tend to undermine the government's position of dominance and power and challenge its hegemony. This is shown through the use of four processes (relational, material, mental and verbal).

Next, the fourth significant finding concerns a pattern of reporting observed in *The Star's* reports, first discussed under **Chapter 4.2.1.1 Degree of Dialogicality** and again under representation of social actors in **Chapter 4.3 Textual Analysis**. It is found that *The Star* usually opens its reports with an attributed indirect quote as the lead, and the attribution is given to a general or generic group of people. However, by the second or third paragraph, the attribution is narrowed down to a more specific group, and subsequently the reporter inserts a direct quote by a specific person who acts as a spokesperson for the group. An example of this is seen from *The Star's* report on July 12, 2009, which opens with an attributed indirect quote from "many tertiary students", which in the second paragraph is narrowed down to "Students who had studied the subjects in Bahasa Malaysia and are now pursuing Maths and Science-related courses in

English at local universities”, and then a direct quote is offered from one particular student, Benny Ong Zhu Venn, in the third paragraph. Similarly, in another report on the same date, the reporter begins by referring to the voice of “Chinese and Tamil academicians”, but in the second paragraph the indirect quote is attributed to the Dong Zong, Jiao Zong and National Tamil Teachers’ Union, and following that, the third paragraph offers a direct quote from Dong Zong president Dr Yap Sin Tian.

This finding is significant as, to the best of this researcher’s knowledge, it has not been reported in any of the related literature on media discourse in Malaysia. The progression from general to specific voices in the text suggests that there may be over-generalisation on the part of the writer at times, and this over-generalisation is used to attribute a stand or point of view to entire groups or categories of people. For example, in the July 12, 2009 report referred to above, the writer quotes four students who were interviewed for the report (Benny Ong Zhu Venn, Muhamad Zulkifli Muhamad Razali, Norsyahida Adila Sopki, and Christine Cheng Ka-Yan). It is not stated what kind of criteria the reporter used in his selection of these four students, yet he implies that they are the spokespeople for all the students who studied science and mathematics in Bahasa Malaysia in school and are now taking science- or mathematics-related courses in local institutions of higher education.

This pattern of reporting, or reporting style, reveals the ideology of the reporter and, by association, the media house, as it suggests that the reporter first decides on a specific angle and then deliberately selects specific interviewees who will support his angle. For instance, there is no way of knowing how many students the reporter actually interviewed for this report; it could be that there were other students who agreed that the PPSMI should be abolished, but their views were not included. Instead, all four students who were quoted in the report were against the abolishment of the policy, and they are represented as speaking for all other students in similar positions (“Students who had

studied the subjects in Bahasa Malaysia and are now pursuing Maths and Science-related courses in English at local universities said it was a struggle as they could not understand the terms”).

Finally, the fifth significant finding is with regard to the accuracies of the news reports. In a comparative analysis of reports from *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* covering Muhyiddin’s press conference on July 8, 2009 to announce the government’s decision on the future of the PPSMI policy, it was found that both reports present direct quotes from Muhyiddin which are worded differently. This was discussed in **Chapter 4.2.1.1 Degree of Dialogicality** and also **4.2.1.2 Recontextualisation of voices** and is significant because, to the best of this researcher’s knowledge, it is also a new finding which has not been reported by other researchers working with media discourse. In addition, the inaccuracy suggests that the reporters may consciously or unconsciously interpret what they hear through a filter of their experience, background knowledge of the situation, expectations, values, beliefs, and so on. Therefore, what they think they heard may not be what they actually heard. As a result, the message presented to the public may not be what the original speaker intended. It might be distorted in the process of passing through the mediating agents of the reporter, his editor, and the publishing house.

5.2.2 Implications

The implication of the findings indicate that, while *The Star* may try to position itself as an objective and neutral party in its reports on the issue, it is in fact biased in favour of the government and assists in propagating the government’s dominant ideology. This is despite *The Star*’s mission statement which states, among other things, “To provide relevant, accurate and reliable information fairly and objectively; To be the voice and conscience of the people” (*The Star*, n.d.). The findings show that *The Star*

does not live up to its mission. While it does present reports that support either side of the issue, voices that oppose the government's stand are accorded very little space and in some cases even excluded. This is similar to Wong's (2004) findings and suggests that the mainstream media have not changed their ways even after eight years.

Moreover, *The Star's* reporting style of positioning a small group of people as representatives of the viewpoint of large generic groups is indicative of over-generalisation and deliberate agenda-setting. The effect is to represent a particular social reality to the public, where the government's hegemony is upheld. If the public should accept this social reality, the hegemony will be sustained in future social and discursive practices (McNair, 1998).

In general, the findings are strongly in line with literature on the ideological positions of mainstream media, which are usually aligned on the side of the dominant ruling powers (McQuail, 2003). Kenyon & Marjoribanks (2007) have noted that "mainstream media coverage of government policies is usually uncritical, while political opponents face limited reporting, particularly over calls for political reform" (p. 108). Studies by Mustafa K. Anuar (2000) and Azmyl Md Yusof (2009) have proven this to be true, and the present study adds to the body of literature on the subject.

This study also demonstrated that the headlines of *The Star* are ideological in nature as they presented an ideology of upholding the government's hegemony. This echoes White's (1997) contention, and it is therefore safe to say that the same angle will be reflected in the text because the headline is a semantic macroproposition that provides a summary of the story (White, 1997). Unfortunately, readers may not be aware of the ideology because of the way the writer inserts direct quotes and writes in an impersonal, seemingly objective manner (Cotter, 2010). Therefore, the concern is that, following the Gramscian concept of ideology, these newspaper reports could lead to the public accepting the newspaper's ideology as a 'common-sense assumption'

(Gramsci, 1971). If this ideology is accepted by the majority, it will become the dominant ideology (Downes & Miller, 1998).

On the other side of the coin, *Malaysiakini* is fairer in its representation of stakeholders' voices and views and it does not appear to favour either the government or the opposition's ideological position. It is, however, seen to be constantly undermining the government's hegemony, so perhaps by implication *Malaysiakini* could be said to hold an ideology that is opposing or resisting the government's domination (van Dijk, 2011). This is because, as Barr (1985) stated, it is impossible to publish a "value-free newspaper" (p. 77). Indeed, *Malaysiakini* editor and co-founder Steven Gan has been acknowledged that the news portal is "pro-opposition by default" (as quoted in Brown, 2005). Steele (2009) stated that *Malaysiakini's* ideology is "doing good journalism" (p. 108) and her study found that *Malaysiakini's* reporting "poses a challenge to the authoritarianism of the Barisan Nasional" (p. 108), thus challenging the dominant hegemony. In essence, what *Malaysiakini* is doing is to present a different way of "representing the world" (Fairclough, 1995b, p.12). In Fairclough's (1992) view, hegemony is always changing, so perhaps with *Malaysiakini* and other alternative media attempting to oppose the government's domination, a new hegemony might emerge from this discourse over time.

Malaysiakini does not favour the same reporting style or pattern which was observed in *The Star*, that of over-generalising and using a small group of people to represent the opinions of the whole. Therefore, it can be concluded that overall, *Malaysiakini's* reporting is more neutral or balanced than *The Star's*. This finding is supported by other literature on the alternative media. A study by Wong (2004) on press coverage of the Malaysian 1994 general elections found that unlike mainstream print media, *Malaysiakini* had published letters to the editor which held both negative and positive views on political parties across the spectrum, whereas letters to the editor

published in mainstream newspapers *The Star*, *The New Straits Times* and *The Sun* were overwhelmingly positive toward the ruling Barisan Nasional. This shows that *Malaysiakini* is more supportive of the public's 'right to know' and is performing their "duty to print" relevant information (Fink, 1988, p.11). In fact, the alternative media's willingness to give voice to social actors whose voices would be suppressed or framed negatively in the mainstream media is widely credited as having had a role in defeating Barisan Nasional's two-third majority in the last general election (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani & Zengeni, K. T., 2010). This has led Tumbler (2001) to comment that *Malaysiakini* has "gained increasing importance both as an arena for battling out political confrontations and as a locus for pushing government accountability" (p. 21).

With Internet penetration reaching 81% across the country and rising (*Sin Chew Jit Poh*, 2011), it appears likely that more and more citizens might turn to the alternative media for what is perceived as a more objective or balanced form of reporting, which the mainstream media does not provide. However, from the discussion above, it is clear that both media houses have their own ideologies. *The Star*'s ideology is to support the government's stand and sustain the government's hegemony, while *Malaysiakini*'s ideology is to resist the dominant hegemony and undermine the government's ideology. These ideologies may not be obvious. Therefore, it is likely that news reports by the alternative media are not as objective as one might believe. However, the alternative media do serve to offer an 'alternative' viewpoint which the public might otherwise never have the opportunity to see. Therefore, in this researcher's view, in the present political climate, the alternative media provide a good counter-balance to the pro-government mainstream media.

5.3 Limitations

As the scope of this study is limited to the comparison and analysis of one English language newspaper and one English language news website only, the findings of this study cannot be generalised to apply to all news websites and newspapers, or to local news websites and newspaper reports in other languages.

Furthermore, the scope of this study is limited to the issue of PPSMI as presented in news reports over a period of three months (June to August 2009). As a result, the findings may not be indicative of all the news discourse on PPSMI in the local print or online media.

5.4 Suggestions for future research

Due to the limitations of the study, more comparative research needs to be conducted on the reporting of *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* on other issues (apart from PPSMI) to determine whether *The Star* supports the government's hegemonic position and assists in propagating the government's dominant ideology over other issues. In the same way, more comparative research will also be helpful to examine whether *Malaysiakini* is as balanced in its reporting as was found in this study on their reporting on the PPSMI issue.

In addition, in this study *The Star* is selected as a representative of mainstream media, while *Malaysiakini* is selected as a representative of alternative media. However, the respective media houses' positions cannot be seen as indicative of all the local mainstream or alternative media. Therefore, more inclusive research of other media houses is needed in order to determine if the alternative media houses in Malaysia offer a more balanced representation of views on various issues compared to the mainstream media.