REFUGEE REPRESENTATION IN MALAYSIA:
A STUDY OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS AND PERSONAL NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the representation of refugees living in Malaysia from two perspectives. Firstly, this study analysed representations of refugees in Malaysian media discourse by the significant Other in Malaysia, namely elite political voices and the Malaysian press. Secondly, the perspective of the refugee or the Self was explored through narrative analysis of refugee in-depth interviews. The analysis of the media texts revealed representations of the refugee along two binaries. First, the refugee as either an illegal immigrant or a recognised refugee. Second, the refugee as a social, political and security threat or a victim. The government voices frequently represented refugees negatively to legitimise keeping them out or managed as illegals. The alternative voices represented refugees as victims to foreground the government's violation of international law and human rights.

Three common identity themes emerged from the thematic analysis of refugee narratives: the refugee as homo sacer (the bare life), victim and the idealised Self. The refugee narratives were filled with stories that highlighted their victimisation and helplessness as they embraced, resisted or re-represented the existing representations assigned to them by the elite voices. Positioning analysis on the narratives of long-term refugees revealed that representations of refugees in wider discourse often left them with little room to negotiate a sense of Self despite living in Malaysia like a Malaysian. Despite feeling a sense of belonging to Malaysia, they struggled to manage problematic situations involving the local people and authorities because of particular identity claims they had to take up either by choice or out of necessity.

This study hopes to provide insight into the complexity in representing refugees as well as to give refugees a space for actively responding to representations that involve them. Through

future work from this study, it is hoped that a wider audience will come to understand how disempowering discourses and simplistic representations of refugees can often have damaging and long-lasting effects on the daily lives of this vulnerable group.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini berminat menyelidik representasi orang pelarian dari dua perspektif yang tertentu. Pertama, kajian ini menganalisis representasi orang-orang pelarian dalam wacana media Malaysia oleh Orang yang terpenting di Malaysia, iaitu suara-suara politik elit dan wakil-wakil akhbar Malaysia. Kedua, perspektif orang-orang pelarian atau Diri diterokai melalui analisis naratif wawancana mendalam orang-orang pelarian. Teks-teks media dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan wacana kritis (van Leeuwen 2008, Reisigl & Wodak 2009). Naratif-naratif orang pelarian dianalisis dengan dua kaedah. Pertama, satu analisis tematik semua wawancara orang-orang pelarian dibuat untuk menyelidik tema-tema sepunya berkaitan tuntutan identiti orang-orang pelarian membuat dan bagaimana mereka memberi respons kepada representasi-representasi mengenai mereka. Kedua, naratif-naratif yang terpilih dianalisis menggunakan rangka posisioning (positioning) naratif-dalam-interaksi (1997, 2004).

Analisis teks-teks media menunjukkan representasi orang-orang pelarian sepanjang dua binary. Pertama, orang pelarian sama ada sebagai seorang imigran haram atau seorang orang pelarian yang diiktiraf. Kedua, orang pelarian sebagai ancaman sosial, politik dan keselamatan atau seorang mangsa. Suara-suara kerajaan kerap merepresentasikan orang-orang pelarian secara negatif untuk melegitimasikan kegiatan menghalang kemasukan orang pelarian atau kegiatan mengawal mereka sebagai imigran haram. Suara-suara alternatif merepresentasikan orang pelarian sebagai mangsa untuk menekankan pelanggaran undang-undang antarabangsa dan hak-hak manusia oleh pihak kerajaan.

Tiga tema identiti sepunya muncul dari analisis tematik naratif-naratif orang pelarian: orang pelarian sebagai homo sacer (hidup belaka), mangsa dan Diri ideal. Naratif-naratif orang pelarian dipenuhi cerita-cerita yang menonjolkan kemangsaan dan ketidakupayaan mereka selaku mereka menerima, menentang ataupun merepresentasi semula semua representasi yang ada yang telah diberi kepada mereka oleh suara-suara elit. Analisis positioning naratif-naratif orang pelarian jangka panjang menunjukkan bahawa representasi-representasi orang pelarian di dalam wacana yang lebih luas memberi mereka ruang yang sempit untuk merundingkan identiti diri walaupun sudah tinggal di Malaysia sebagai warga Malaysia. Walaupun mereka menpunyai rasa kepunyaan terhadap Malaysia, mereka bersusah payah untuk mengendalikan situasi-situasi bermasalah berkaitan orang-orang tempatan dan pihak berkuasa kerana tuntutan identiti tertentu yang mereka terpaksa menerima sama ada secara pilihan atau keperluan.

Kajian ini harap dapat memberi tinjauan mendalam mengenai kerumitan merepresentasikan orang-orang pelarian dan juga untuk memberi orang-orang pelarian ruang untuk memberi respons kepada semua representasi yang melibatkan mereka dengan aktif. Melalui lebih kajian dalam masa depan, saya berharap lebih banyak orang dapat memahami bagaimana wacana yang tidak memberi kuasa dan representasi yang terlalu simplistik boleh memberi kesan-kesan yang merosakkan dan berjangka panjang ke atas kehidupan harian kumpulan lemah ini.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Commonly used abbreviations:

ASRs   :   asylum seekers and refugees

CDA   :   critical discourse analysis

DHA   :   Discourse-Historical Approach

Transcription symbols:

[:   Left bracket indicates the onset of speakers' overlapping talk

]   :   Right bracket indicates the end of the overlapping talk

=   :   Equal sign indicates no break or gap

…   :   Indicates a brief interval or pause between utterances (< 1 second)

(.)   :   Indicates a longer interval or pause (> 1 second)

__   :   Underlined words indicate point of stress via pitch or amplitude

WORD   :   Upper case indicates more significant stress

-            :   Dash indicates a cut-off

(italics)   :   Indicates translated text in English

(( ))   :   Double parentheses contain transcriber's descriptions

(h)   :   H in parentheses indicates plosiveness associated with laughter,
                        crying, breathlessness, etc.

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis presents an investigation of the representation of refugees in Malaysia through the analysis of media texts and the personal narratives of refugees. Section 1.0 presents the research problem, while section 1.1 presents the research aim and objectives. In section 1.2, a brief overview of research done in this area is discussed to introduce the gap this research aims to fill. Section 1.3 presents the scope of the study, while section 1.5 presents the theoretical framework that guides this study. Sections 1.5 and 1.6 present the significance and limitations of the study respectively. Sections 1.8 and 1.9 provide the contextual background of the study through a brief description of aspects of the socio-political landscape that affects refugees (1.8) and the Malaysian press (1.9). The final section (1.10) presents an outline of the entire thesis.

1.1 Background and Research Problem

When you walk the streets of downtown Kuala Lumpur, near Kotaraya, or Chinatown or near the shopping district of Jalan Bukit Bintang, they are there. When you sit down at the table with your bowl of noodles and cup of *kopi* at the local hawker centres, they take your orders. Sometimes, the ones who clear your table are the children. In cramped spaces above commercial shop lots or in low-cost flats in the less affluent parts of Kuala Lumpur, up to 20 families could be living together in a small space. These faceless and silent people are sometimes mistaken for foreign migrant workers but their predicament is far more complex than that.

Refugees and asylum seekers currently make up part of Malaysia's multicultural and multi-ethnic society, even though they may not be noticed much. They work in the lowest paying jobs and occupy some of the most unsafe spaces in urban and rural areas. Refugees

and asylum seekers first started coming to Malaysia from Vietnam during the Indo-China crisis in the mid-1970s. In November 2014, the UNHCR reported that the registered refugee and asylum population in Malaysia was about 150,460 (UNHCR Malaysia, n.d.). The United Nations defines a refugee according to the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol as a person

> who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.
> (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2010)

A related term is *asylum seeker*, who is "someone who says he or she is a refugee, but whose claim has not yet been definitively evaluated" (UNHCR, n.d.-a), while a *refugee* is someone, who has already had their claims accepted and refugee status officially recognised by the UNHCR. Making a distinction between refugees and asylum seekers relies on the outcome of asylum procedures in countries processing asylum seekers.

Asylum seekers and refugees in Malaysia find themselves in a unique albeit challenging position. Because the Malaysian state has yet to ratify the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the asylum population remain 'illegal' in the eyes of the law. Consequently, migrants are recognised either as documented or legal migrants (who are able to hold work permits) or undocumented or illegal migrants. Unfortunately for the asylum population, they fall into the second category (Kaur, 2007a). This legal situation has two implications for asylum seekers and refugees. Firstly, they are vulnerable to raids, arrest and detention by security authorities because of their illegal status. Secondly, because Malaysia has no legal obligation towards refugees, they cannot be resettled in Malaysia. Instead, they languish

in Malaysia waiting for resettlement places in Western countries. Fortunate refugees may only wait 2-3 years to be resettled but many are left waiting 10 years or more. There are also no local integration structures in place for the asylum population. In the meantime, they have to live lives of uncertainty in Malaysia as 'illegals' and outsiders to the local community.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The lack of formal recognition of asylum seekers and refugees in Malaysia and the conflation of this group into the illegal migrant category has interesting implications for the study of the discourse surrounding asylum seekers and refugees. Refugees, in particular, have to negotiate a kind of dual existence, legal and illegal. As refugees recognised by the UNHCR, they are legal under international law, yet at the time, illegal under the local Malaysian laws because Malaysia does not recognise refugees. With this in mind, the aim of this study is to investigate the construction of refugee representation and identity in Malaysian discourse. The focus of this study is on refugees and not asylum seekers. However, there are sections in this thesis where both refugees and asylum seekers are mentioned together and this will be noted in those sections. This study explores the representation of refugees living in Malaysia in two specific ways. Firstly, this study analyses past and current representations of refugees in Malaysian media discourse by the significant Other in Malaysia, namely elite political voices and the Malaysian press. Secondly, the perspective of the refugee or the Self will be analysed through his or her personal narratives. These personal narratives allow them to speak about what it is like to be a refugee in Malaysia and respond to representations of themselves present in the existing meta discourses.

Also of interest is the refugees' construction of identity within the larger socio-cultural and political context in Malaysia. Identity certainly matters and Norton (1997) describes

identity as referring not only to "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space" (p. 410) but also how people understand their possibilities for the future.

The research objectives are:

1. To investigate how refugees are represented in public discourse.

2. To examine how refugee identities are created and sustained through personal narratives.

3. To explore how refugees position themselves in relation to themselves and others.

The following research questions correspond to the research objectives:

1.1. Who are the dominant voices representing refugees in the media texts?

1.2. How do these voices construct and legitimate particular representations of refugees?

1.3. Are representations of refugees in public discourse contested? If so, how is the contestation of representations achieved?

2.1 How do refugees represent themselves and their lived experiences in narratives?

2.2 What are the themes that emerge as part of the master narrative of the refugee experience in Malaysia?

2.3 What discursive strategies are used to create and sustain refugee identity?

3.1 How do refugees position themselves in relation to themselves and others?

    3.1. How are characters positioned in relation to one another within narrated events (the story)?

    3.2. How does the speaker position himself or herself in relation to the audience or interlocutors being addressed (the telling)?

3.3. How do narrators position themselves to themselves vis-à-vis master or dominant narratives of a culture or local context? (the self)

1.3   Research gap

Based on a search undertaken in this study of previous research, four gaps were identified in the literature (refer to Chapter 2 for detailed discussion). First, there is a lack of studies on refugee representation and identity conducted on the Asian region. Most studies on refugees in Asia have been limited to state policies and larger socio-political developments affecting refugees and research on the discourses surrounding refugees in this region are scarce. Studies carried out in the West have generally focused on written and spoken media and political discourses, i.e. what is said in mainstream newspapers and by political leaders. These studies can be categorised under two themes, which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The first is the use of discourse to construct 'new racism' (Barker, 1981), which is the mitigation and justification of racist behaviour by a majority group . The second relates to the practices of those in power to legitimise the exclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants.

Second, studies on refugees in transit remains scarce. It was observed that majority of the studies have been conducted among refugees already resettled in European and North American regions. Third, there was the scarcity of studies conducted on refugee representation in countries that are non-signatories to the UNHCR Refugee Convention. Most of the research in this area come from UNCHR signatories, such as European and North American countries and Australia. Fourth, there is a lack of studies that foregrounds the voices of refugees alongside both elite and non-elite voices when it comes to refugee representation and identity. Most studies do not include the ASR' own perspective about themselves.

To address these gaps, this study explores the representation of refugees in Malaysia through an analysis of media texts in the public space as well as personal narratives by

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refugees. By framing this study through the critical discourse analysis lens, the hegemony of voices of the elite voices are challenged by giving the refugee respondents a space to talk about the situation in which they live, which may not always align with the representations seen in public discourse. Therefore, the decision to use both types of data sets – media texts and personal narratives – in this study is intentional, so as to obtain a more complete view of the representation of refugees in Malaysia.

1.4   Locating the field

The analysis of the representation of refugees from both public and personal perspectives was informed by the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009) from critical discourse analysis. Within the DHA, the notion of *fields of action* – defined as various functions and socially institutionalised actions of discursive practices - is useful for studying a discourse topic from several perspectives.

To study the public perspective on the representation of refugees, this study examines media representations found in mainstream and alternative newspapers as well as representations by elite voices. This perspective is then complemented by the personal perspective, which is presented through the analysis of personal narratives by refugees. Refugee respondents are recruited from refugees living in urban areas in the Klang Valley, which include Kuala Lumpur and urban areas in the state of Selangor.

1.5   Theoretical framework

As mentioned above, this study is guided by critical discourse approach. Viewing discourse as language use as a form of social practice, CDA maintains that discourse is dialectically related, i.e. both "socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 258). In the context of the study, discourses on refugees

are considered to be a product of society and dominant discourses and these discourses influence the perception and representation of refugees. The critical discourse analytic lens is useful for uncovering unequal power relations and ideological practices within society that give rise to particular social conditions (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 8).

1.5.1 Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

In the Discourse-Historical Approach (henceforth DHA) by Reisigl and Wodak (2009), discourse is viewed as a complex bundle of linguistics or semiotic acts that are context-dependent and manifested within and across social fields of action. The relationship between discursive practices and social fields of action is dialectical as both constitute and are constituted by each other. These discourses are realised through texts and genres and the DHA orientates its analysis around three dimensions: (i) content or topics of discourses, (ii) discursive strategies, and (iii) linguistic means and realisations. The five step analytical framework to examining discourse involves the analysis of five discursive strategies: (i) nomination, (ii) predication, (iii) argumentation, (iv) perspectivation, and (v) intensification or mitigation.

This study also draws on Van Leeuwen's categorisation of the linguistic strategies involved in the representation of social actors as an analytical tool for examining the media data set (1996, 2008). The representation of refugees in media texts is analysed by means of activation, passivation, aggregation, collectivisation, appraisement, personalisation, etc. According to Van Leeuwen (2008), *recontextualisation* occurs when discourse or knowledge produced through texts are embedded into new content and "serve the contextually defined purpose" (p. 6). He posits that through recontextualisation, certain aspects of social practice, such as participants or social actors, actions, presentation styles, performance modes, and locations, are intentionally represented through the manipulation of language.

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1.5.2 Narrative analysis

Since the recent 'narrative turn' in the social sciences, increasing attention has been given to the study of narratives as a way of understanding human nature and the world. Narratives are any kind of texts in a "storied form" (Riessman, 2005) and many scholars claim that human life is storied and identity is narratively constructed. Rosenwald and Ochberg argued that stories are not only "a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities are fashioned" (1992, p. 1). Thus, the analysis of narrative or storytelling is a useful way of exploring the construction of identities because it privileges subjectivity and positionality (Riessman, 2001). Narratives allow the speakers or authors to present their lives and experiences the way they interpret or 're-imagine' them rather than on actual reality, thus giving researchers an insight to how identities are constructed in the individual's past, present, future as well as historical, cultural, political and social contexts.

Hatoss (2012, p. 50) advocated the use of positioning as an appropriate analytical concept in the study of identity in narrative because it aims to capture both the narrated event (the story) as well as the narrating event (the interview). This study agrees with De Fina's argument (2009) that narratives in interviews should be considered as interactional sites rather than the homogeneous, unnaturally occurring events they have come to be known as, mainly due to the influence of Labov and Walezky's narrative model (1967). Although narratives are elicited in interviews, this does not mean that they are artificial tellings presented without any social objective (De Fina, 2009, p. 237). Apart from analysing the content of narratives, it is also essential to also analyse the way narratives are shaped by the speakers and involved interlocutors as well as by the different contexts in which the telling is embedded. The narrative account in an interview is told in response to a particular question and is always recipient oriented (p. 240).

Schegloff (1997a) observed that the conditions of the production of narratives greatly affect the structure of the narratives themselves. This may result in a narrative told in different narrative formats, shaped by negotiations between the speaker and interlocutors as a sense making process. Therefore, narrative accounts in interviews are not always neat, coherent and orderly but incomplete and constantly undergoing negotiation.

De Fina (2012) points out that a reliance on the canonical story as a model for analysing narrative accounts may overlook the narrative and interactional resources interlocutors draw on to construct and shape a particular narrative (p. 253) . In doing so, we may miss seeing the reasons for the emergence of particular accounts and what they tell us about the speaker's identity. With this in mind, this study analysed the data using the positioning analysis framework on narrative by Michael Bamberg (1997, 2004b; 2004c; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008).

The positioning analysis framework focuses on the concept of *positioning* for understanding how identities are not only created but also how existing ones are taken up by speakers through 'narrating-in-interaction' (Bamberg, 2004b). 'Positions' here means the "identity-relevant effects of the way speakers order conversational devices and discursive activities" (Korobov & Bamberg, 2007, p. 256) and emerge as part of the delivery or performance of a narrative. Bamberg introduces three levels of positioning that can be analysed to understand how identities emerge vis-à-vis master or meta narratives.

Positioning level 1 analyses how characters are linguistically established and how they relate to one another within narratives to bring about the 'story' or the narrated event. *Voicing* and *evaluation* are relevant to this analysis level and is drawn from Bakhtin's idea of 'voice' as recognisable social positions or roles that characters perform (1981).

Positioning level 2 moves the focus onto how identities emerge through the interaction between interlocutors involved in the 'telling' of the story. It poses questions pertaining

to why a story is told from a particular perspective or in a particular point in the interaction, as well as how interlocutors accomplish the story interactively. The latter, or the 'how', involves the sequential turn taking of interlocutors and is analysed using techniques from conversational analysis (Sacks, 1995; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1982, 1997b), which are adapted for the purposes of studying interaction in narrative. The narrator's telling of a story in a particular way is inevitably influenced by the interaction with interlocutors.

Finally, **positioning level 3** looks at how speakers create 'a sense of (them as) selves', which is built on the story and interaction levels to answer the question, 'Who am I?' (Bamberg, 2004b, p. 336). In other words, it is only when speakers have developed 'subject positions' can they go on to develop a sense of continuity and self. Through this process, they are positioning themselves vis-à-vis social positions or roles and wider cultural discourses, by either resisting (distancing) or embracing (aligning) them or displaying neutrality towards them.

1.6   Significance of the study

According to UNHCR's latest report on the global trends for asylum populations (2014), one third of the world's asylum population or 3.5 million currently reside in the Asia Pacific, making this region the top destination for asylum seekers and refugees seeking refuge. UNHCR also reported that Malaysia recorded the sixth highest number of asylum seeker arrivals in 2013 and was the top destination for asylum seekers in the entire Asia Pacific region (p. 28), further supporting this study's argument that Malaysia is a significant destination country and an important research site with regards to refugees. Thus, Malaysia is a strategic research site in this area but yet there is an obvious lack of significant and extensive research. This study aims to contribute to this gap in two main ways. First, the study provides critical analysis about how refugees are represented in the

Malaysian context amidst the dual legal systems that regulate and affect them. Second, this study contributes to research about how refugees – particularly refugees in transit – construct representations of and identities for themselves. The uncertainty and temporality of these refugees' local situation results in unique challenges for them and this study is interested in exploring the effects of this unique situation on their construction and negotiation of their own identities.

1.7   Limitations of the study

The news articles collected for textual analysis are sourced from the individual new portals' online archives and general keyword searches through online search engines. Therefore, the coverage of articles relating to refugees is limited by the completeness of the new portals' archiving system. There was a difficulty in obtaining news articles from before the 1990s and as such, the data set includes news articles after this period, namely between 2003-2012.

Respondents for the second part of the study were recruited through refugee networks and organisations in the Klang Valley. These consist of refugees living in urban areas and not those in detention camps and working in rural areas. As this part of the study focused on narrative and aims to obtain a detailed account of refugee experience, the number of interviews (i.e. respondents) included into the study was limited to no more than 20. Thus, the study will not be making broad generalisations or conclusions of the refugee experience in Malaysia.

1.8   Contextual background: Socio-political landscape

This section discusses the socio-political landscape, which forms the background to the study. This includes a brief description of the asylum population and social and

political issues that affect refugees in Malaysia as well as other contextual information relevant to the study.

1.8.1 Asylum population in Malaysia

As of November 2014, the UNHCR reported that the asylum population registered with UNHCR in Malaysia, including refugees and asylum seekers, is some 150,460 (see Table 1.1 below). 70% are men, while 30% are women. There are some 32,710 children under the age of 18. There are also a large number of unregistered persons of concern to UNHCR and refugee communities themselves estimate this number to be about 100,000.

Table 1.1: Refugee figures in Malaysia, 2014

Refugees and Asylum Seekers	150,460
Myanmar	139,200
- Chins	50,620
- Rohingyas	40,070
- Myanmar Muslims	12,160
- Other ethnicities	7,440
Sri Lanka	4,200
Pakistan	1,200
Somali	1,120
Syria	970
Iraq	860
Iran	580
Palestine	450

Afghanistan	390
Yemen	350
Sudan	140

Source: United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Malaysia (n.d.)

1.8.2 Reasons for seeking asylum

The reasons for refugees and asylum seekers seeking asylum outside their home countries are varied. Taking the case of refugees from Myanmar as an example, the three most common reasons people seek refuge from the country is persecution, forced labour and portery[1]. The persecution of minority groups in Myanmar is widespread and includes political targets seen to be opposing the military junta government, Christians and Muslims, and minority ethnic groups such as the Chins, Kachins, Mons and Rakhines. The junta government consists of those from the Myanmar majority (used to be known as Burmese), who are predominantly Buddhist. At its most simplistic, those persecuted would be anyone not belonging to the majority group and non-Buddhists.

Another reason commonly cited for fleeing Myanmar is forced labour. To support its military construction, the junta government would obtain forced labourers from civilians homes, often compelling at least one or two usually men from each home to work at the construction sites for long hours without any salary. Portery is another commonly cited reason and this practice is employed by the junta government during combat, where civilians are forced to carry combat equipment during battles and often form the front line as a human shield for the soldiers. Portery is extremely risky and lethal for those selected and more often than not would result in the civilians' deaths.

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[1] Based on the researcher's conversations with refugees living in the Klang Valley and social workers, who work among refugees in the Klang Valley area.

The Somali refugees currently present in Malaysia cite the ongoing civil war in Somalia as the main reason for fleeing the country (see footnote 1 above). They also explain that Malaysia is a natural destination of choice for Somali refugees not only because of the presence of the UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur but also because Malaysia is a Muslim country, which makes it culturally easier for them to adapt.

Many refugees fleeing the country employ human smugglers also known as 'agents' to smuggle them across borders, often into India, Thailand and Malaysia. The journey to Malaysia would often involve boat rides across borders (e.g. from Yangon to the border town of Kawthaung and then on rivers into Malaysian waters) and then car rides in the backseats or car boots to farms, jungles or specific bases in North Malaysia before refugees make their way to the UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur to have their asylum claims heard. While waiting to receive their refugee status, they live in makeshift camps in jungles and the outskirts of urban areas and in cramped spaces in urban low-cost residential spaces.

1.8.3   Legislation affecting the asylum population in Malaysia

This sub-section describes both international and national legislation that directly impact the asylum population in Malaysia.

1.8.3.1 International commitments and cooperation with UNHCR

Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and to date has no established system or legal structure to oversee the protection of refugees. Although it does not provide protection against *refoulement* (expulsion), it usually does not deport individuals recognised as persons of concern by the UNHCR. Malaysia has, however, signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child

(CRC) and is obligated under Article 22 of the CRC to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to refugees. It is also a signatory of the UN Conventions and was a member of the UN Human Rights Council, serving a three-year term from 19 June 2010 to 18 June 2013.

Malaysian laws distinguish between only two kinds of migrant – 'legal' migrants, who have official work permits and 'illegal' migrants, who arrive in Malaysia without any documents (Kaur, 2007a). As there are no legislative or administrative provisions in place for dealing with the situation of refugees and asylum seekers in Malaysia, the Malaysian government granted the UNHCR permission to conduct all activities related to refugees namely the reception, registration, documentation and refugee status determination (UNHCR, n.d.-b).

The government first sought the UNHCR's intervention and assistance in dealing with refugees in 1975 when the first Vietnamese boats started to arrive on Malaysian shores during the Indochinese Refugee Crisis in the 1970s. This cooperation continued on throughout the duration of the Comprehensive Plan of Action for Indochinese Refugees 1989-1997. Hedman (2008, p. 368) notes that since the Comprehensive Plan of Action came to a formal end in 2001, the Malaysian government has not entered into any written agreements with the UNHCR, preferring instead to work on the basis of arbitrary 'general understandings'. The relationship between the Malaysian government and the UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur over the last 37 years has been fraught with tension interspersed with periods of ad hoc cooperation.

The UNHCR office deals with all matters pertaining to asylum protection and assistance including the reception, registration, documentation and status determination of asylum-seekers and refugees.

1.8.3.2 Malaysian immigration laws

As mentioned above, Malaysian law only recognises documented, or 'legal' migrants, and undocumented, or 'illegal' migrants. This means the status 'refugee' does not exist in Malaysian law and even those officially recognised by the UNHCR as refugees do not have any rights under the law. As such, refugees and asylum seekers are included into the illegal migrant category along with other illegal foreign workers and immigrants. This group of migrants are regulated under three main legislations, i.e. the Immigration Act 1959, the Immigration Act 1963, the Employment Act 1955, the Employment Act 1998, and the Penal Code. Of the three, the Immigration Act is the key legislation under which refugees and asylum seekers often find themselves being regulated and it falls under the jurisdiction of the Department of Immigration, which is in turn under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The act is enforced through Articles 6 and 51. Article 6 states the grounds for legal entry and that anyone entering the country illegally will be severely punished, while Article 15 defines the punishable offence of illegal entry as "unlawful entry or presence in the country" and adds overstaying to the offence.

Amendments made to the act in 1997 and 2002 ensured harsher penalties for immigration offences, including up to a five year jail sentence, a MYR10,000 fine and whipping of not more than six strokes (Kaur, 2006). The amendments also granted the police and immigration authorities greater power to arrest and detain indefinitely pending deportation any undocumented persons regardless whether they were illegal migrants or asylum seekers. The revised Act also considered assisting or harbouring any undocumented persons a crime punishable by fines, imprisonment and even judicial caning (Hedman, 2008).

Despite the lack of legal structures and formal protection for refugees and asylum seekers, those who are officially recognised by the UNHCR receive a basic 'de facto

status' at the national level. Recognised under international law, this allows them limited protection from the enforcement of immigration authorities in Malaysia but as noted in the mission report jointly published by the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) in 2008, there still exists a great degree of ambiguity in how authorities should conduct themselves with regards to refugees and asylum seekers, especially since the revisions made to the Immigration Act in 2002 (FIDH-SUARAM, 2008, p. 9).

Persons seeking asylum may register themselves at the UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur to secure an interview to determine their refugee status. During the interview, the applicant's case is assessed against criterion set down in the 1951 Convention and if the applicant receives a positive decision, the UNHCR may recognise them as a person requiring temporary protection (in which case, they receive a temporary protection card) or as a refugee (in which case, they receive a refugee card). Refugees then continue residing in Malaysia while they wait for resettlement in a third country.

In principle, UNHCR card-holders are expected to be protected from arrest, detention and prosecution, a privilege that derives from a 2005 written directive from the Attorney General stating it would refrain from prosecuting any UNCHR documentation holders (FIDH-SUARAM, 2008, p. 9). However, there have been numerous reports from human rights organisations over the years on crackdowns and arrests of refugees holding UNHCR documents[2], evidence that the fate of refugees depends on the arbitrary discretion of enforcing bodies.

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[2] See, for example, 'Crackdown on migrants, refugees in Malaysia', Aliran.com, 26 February 2012, retrieved on 14 June 2012, http://aliran.com/8320.html; 'Arrest of 33 refugees in Alor Star', Aliran.com, 6 March 2012, retrieved on 14 June 2012, http://aliran.com/8467.html and 'Concern over arrested Myanmarese', The Sun Daily, 10 October 2011, retrieved 14 June 2012, http://www.thesundaily.my/news/171354.

1.8.4 Malaysia's treatment of refugees

1.8.4.1 International ranking and reputation

The U.S. Committee on Refugees and Immigrants produces an inventory every year that rates countries according to their treatment of refugees. In 2009, Malaysia was placed in the worst category ('F' grade) for three of the four performance indicators: *refoulement* (expulsion), detention/access to courts and the right to earn a livelihood (United States Committee on Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), 2009). It scored a D for freedom of movement and residence indicators. The recent deal planned between Malaysia and Myanmar to deport detainees from both countries back to their home countries, many of whom include Myanmar refugees seeking refuge in Malaysia, is another example of Malaysia's lack of commitment to *non-refoulement* with regard to refugees.

1.8.4.2 Ikatan Relawan Rakyat (People's Volunteer Corps)

The emergence and increasingly powerful presence of the paramilitary civilian 'volunteer' vigilante corps, Ikatan Relawan Rakyat (People's Volunteer Corps) or RELA for short, has greatly impacted the lives of refugees living in Malaysia. Established under government emergency powers in 1972 with origins from Neighbourhood Watch practices and the Home Guard volunteer force employed several times in Malaysian history during periods of crisis, RELA's objective at the time was to "help maintain security in the country and the well-being of its people" (Hedman, 2008, p. 375). In 2005, RELA's powers were expanded under Section 2 of the (Essential Powers) Emergency Act 1964 with the consent of the Yang Di Pertuan Agong (RELA, n.d.). This granted the corps the right to bear arms and to detain and enter premises without warrants. Worryingly were the expansion of powers to monitor and tackle 'illegal immigrants', which includes

refugees and asylum seekers. This included a RM80 reward for each undocumented immigrant RELA members were able to apprehend (Hedman, 2008, p. 375).

1.8.4.3 Refoulement (expulsion) and detention

Malaysia does not provide protection from *refoulement* as it frequently manages ASR as illegal migrants. As such, they are also vulnerable to the countrywide immigration dragnets enforced by the police and immigration departments, which almost always result in arrest and deportation.

1.9 The Malaysian Press

As part of this study, the representation of refugees in media texts is analysed. As such, it is necessary to provide some background information regarding the Malaysian press to better frame the discussion of the findings from the analysis of media texts. This background section is divided in a description of press freedom (1.8.1) and media ownership and regulation (1.8.2).

1.9.1 Press Freedom

The Worldwide Press Freedom Index published annually by the *Reporters sans frontiers* (RSF) ranked Malaysia at 147 out of 180 countries in 2014 and placed it in the 'difficult situation' category. Table 1.2 and Figure 1.1, both obtained from *Reporters sans frontier, www.rsf.org*, show Malaysia's ranking according to the Press Freedom Index over the last 12 years and Malaysia has almost always consistently ranked in the bottom third, i.e. countries with limited press freedom. In 2014, Malaysia was ranked at an all-

time low, following the lowest drop in ranking in the previous year. In 2013, RSF attributed this drop to 'access to information' 'becoming more and more limited' (2013).

Table 1.2: Malaysia's ranking on World Press Freedom Index, 2002-2014

Year	Malaysia's Ranking	Total no. of countries
2002	141	139
2003	131	166
2004	132	167
2005	124	167
2006	92	168
2007	113	169
2008	122	173
2009	104	175
2010	110	178
2011-2012	122	179
2013	145	179
2014	147	180
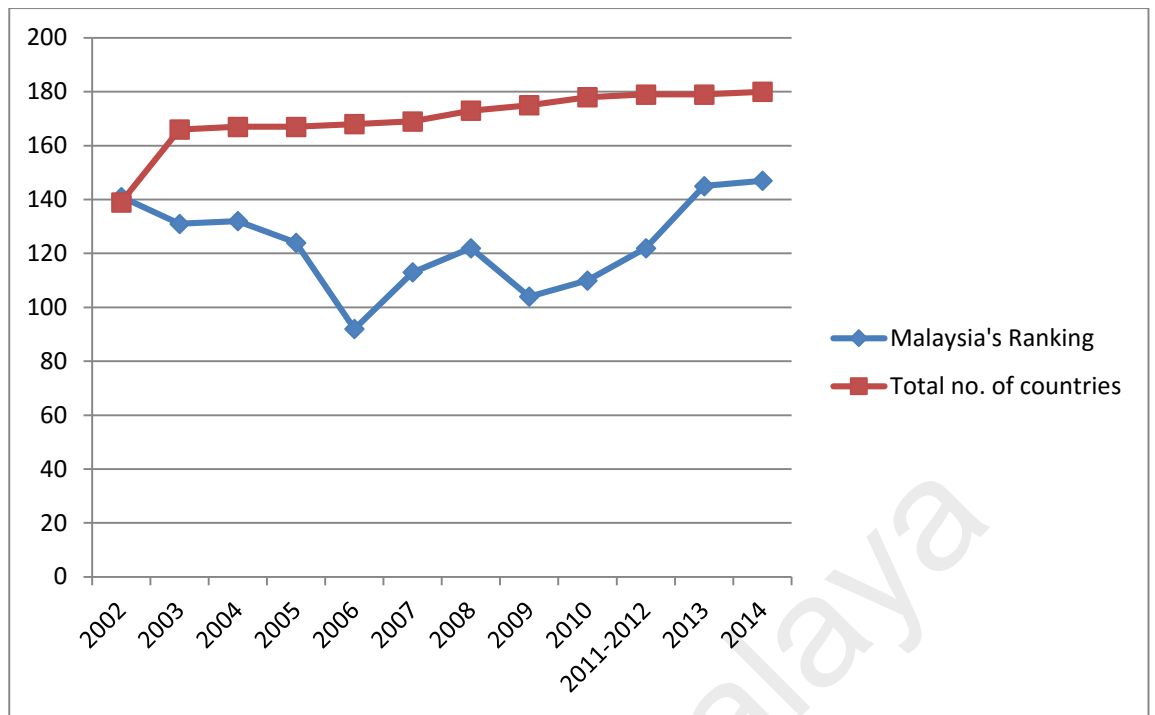
Figure 1.1: Malaysia's ranking on the World Press Freedom Index, 2002-2014

Source: Reporters sans frontier, www.rsf.org

1.9.2 Ownership and regulation

The media in Malaysia is regulated by three government ministries, the Ministry of Information (MOI), the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) and the Ministry of Energy, Water and Communication (MEWC). Under the MOI are government broadcast media including two national radio stations (Radio Television Malaysia or RTM) and several other national and regional radio networks. The MEWC regulates all private television and radio networks, while satellite television is regulated by the MOHA. The MOHA also regulates the print media. Print newspapers and magazines are required to apply annually for a licence from the MOHA and these licenses can be withdrawn if the media are seen to be violating any national policies or posing a threat to national security, a decision left to the ministry's discretion (see more below). The main languages used in the media are Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil.

The mainstream media is heavily influenced and controlled by the ruling party, Barisan Nasional (hereafter BN) as most local newspaper are either owned by coalition parties under BN, such United Malays National Organization (UMNO), Malaysia Chinese Association (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), or companies that have strong links to BN. Table 1.3 compiles a list of the companies and individuals that control or own media companies in Malaysia (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2005; Mustafa K. Anuar, 2005).

Table 1.3: List of media owners in Malaysia

Owner	Media	Remarks
Media Prima	Newspapers: (English) New Straits Times, New Sunday Times, Malay Mail, Sunday Mail; (Malay) Berita Harian, Berita Minggu and Harian Metro TV stations: TV3, 8TV, Channel 9 and NTV7	Media Prima is closely linked to UMNO and owns the New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd, which publishes the English and Malay newspapers. All owned by Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Berhad (TV3)
Huaren Management Sdn Bhd	Newspapers: (English) The Star, Sunday Star; (Chinese) Nanyang Siang Pau, China Press Radio station: STARfm	An investment arm of MCA, the BN component party
Utusan Melayu (M) Bhd	Malay newspapers: Utusan Malaysia, Mingguan Malaysia, Utusan Melayu and Kosmo! Magazines: Mastika, Wanita, Mangga and URTV	Closely linked to UMNO

Ministry of Information	TV1, TV2 and all government radio stations	
Tiong Hiew King of Sin Chew Media Corp Bhd	Chinese newspapers: Sin Chew Daily, Guang Mind Ribao	Closely linked to the Sarawak ruling party
Lau Hui Kiang	Chinese newspaper: Oriental Daily	Sarawakian timber tycoon Lau was given permission by Mahathir to operate Oriental Daily as a way of checking the growing influence of Tiong in the Chinese community (Gomez, 2004, p. 482)
Ananda Krishnan	Satellite TV: Astro Telecommunications: Maxis Communications Berhad	Ananda is a close ally to former PM, Mahathir Mohamed
Datin Indirani S. Vellu (wife of current MIC president, Samy Vellu)	Tamil newspaper: Tamil Nesan	(Ramanathan, 1992)
MIC members	Tamil newspapers: Malaysia Nanban, Tamii Osai and Thinamani	(Ramanathan, 1992)
Vincent Tan and Tong Kooi Ong	Newspapers: The Sun (a free paper), The Edge (weekly) and Asia Inc.	Tan and Tong jointly own Nexnews Bhd that owns the newspapers. They are both close allies of former PM, Mahathir Mohamad)

Restrictions and limitations are imposed on the media by Malaysian legislative through numerous Acts but the key legislations are the Printing and Publications Act (PPPA), the Official Secrets Act (OSA) and the Sedition Act. Other Acts have also been used by the government party to regulate and influence the media, such as the Broadcasting Act, the Imported Publication Act and the BERNAMA Act (for details on the restrictions imposed by these acts, read Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2005).

Alongside the mainstream media is the fast growing alternative media that caters to more specific target audiences and operates on much smaller budgets. These include printed and online publications of opposition parties (e.g. Harakah by PAS, Rocket by DAP), social organisations (e.g. Aliran, SUARAM) and social and civil activists. There are also several news websites (e.g. Malaysiakini, The Malaysian Insider, Free Malaysia Today and The Malaysia Chronicle) that report and comment on a range of national issues as well as stories considered more controversial. The languages used here are Malay and English.

Since the genesis of the Internet in Malaysia, there has been no known filtering system or laws to actively censor internet content and the government had promised no censorship the Internet when it launched the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), an information-technology development project, in August 1995. A provision in the Communication and Multimedia Act (1998) that explicitly stated that nothing in the act "shall be construed as permitting the censorship of the internet" (Government of Malaysia, 1998). Authorities have been known to use other national laws to take specific action to control online content and restrict the circulation of certain information but the Internet was largely unregulated until the government made amendments to the Evidence Act 1950, which was gazetted on 31 July 2012. Under the title "Presumption of fact in publication", Section 114A empowers law enforcement authorities to hold an individual accountable for publishing seditious, libellous, or defamatory content on the Internet

(Government of Malaysia, 2012). In essence, the amendment implies that any individuals accused of publishing seditious content would be considered guilty of the offence until proven innocent. At the time of writing, there has been an active online campaign by social organisations and civil society called 'Stop 114A' to protest against the amendment of the Act, which they claim will infringe on people's right to freedom of expression and stifle public discussion of political and social issues affecting the country.

The media in Malaysia has long had a close relationship with the state, a situation that has existed since the British colonial era. During the early years of independence, the media was regarded by the Malaysian government as having a vital role to play in the nation's development process. After independence, this close relationship was further reified and legitimised by the government, who viewed the media as a tool for national unity and nation-building. Gunaratne (2005) argued that this practice was present in many former British colonies in Asia, who 'found it politically expedient to continue the British tradition [of coercive and autocratic institutions in the government] in the face of adverse criticism' (p. 34). Media freedom was restricted through amendments to Article 10(1) of the Federal Constitution relating to freedom of speech, assembly and association and the legislating of the Internal Security Act 1960 and Official Secret Act 1972. Regulatory tools for the media include key legislations such as the Printing and Publications Act (PPPA), the Official Secrets Act (OSA) and the Sedition Act. Other Acts that have also been used by the government party to regulate and influence the media are the Broadcasting Act, the Imported Publication Act and the BERNAMA Act (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2005). Print newspapers and magazines are required to apply annually for a licence from the Ministry of Home Affairs and these licenses can be withdrawn if the media are seen to be violating any national policies or posing a threat to national security, a decision left to the ministry's discretion.

The mainstream media is heavily influenced and controlled by the ruling party, Barisan Nasional (BN) as most local newspapers are either owned by coalition parties under BN or companies that have strong links to BN. The leading mainstream newspaper in Malaysia, The Star, is owned by an investment arm of the BN coalition party, Malaysia Chinese Association, while another widely read daily, The New Straits Times, is owned by the private company Media Prima, which is closely linked to the BN coalition leader, United Malays National Organization (UMNO). The free newspaper, The Sun, is owned by two close allies of the former prime minister, Mahathir Mohamed. The Malaysian National News Agency or Bernama, established by Parliament in 1967, is the government's news agency and is used for disseminating information pertaining to the government's agenda and policies. Most mainstream newspapers subscribe to Bernama and often source for news reports written by the news agency.

Alongside the mainstream media is an alternative media that caters to more specific target audiences and operates on much smaller budgets. These include printed and online publications of opposition parties, social organisations and social and civil activists and most recently, a weekly newspaper highlighting social issues called The Heat. In 2013, the Ministry of Home Affairs suspended The Heat's license indefinitely following a front page article that lambasted the extravagant spending of the Prime Minister and his wife.[3] There are also several online news websites (e.g. Malaysiakini, The Malaysian Insider, Free Malaysia Today and The Malaysia Chronicle) that report and comment on a range of national issues as well as stories considered more controversial.

There was initially no filtering system or laws to actively censor internet content and the government had promised no censorship the Internet when it launched the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), an information-technology development project, in August 1995.

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[3] 'Weekly The Heat suspended indefinitely by Home Ministty', The Malaysian Insider, 19 December 2013, http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/weekly-the-heat-suspended-indefinitely-by-home-ministry

However, authorities have been known to use other national laws to control online content and restrict the circulation of certain information but the Internet was largely unregulated until the government made amendments to the Evidence Act 1950, which was gazetted on 31 July 2012. Under the title "Presumption of fact in publication", Section 114A empowers law enforcement authorities to hold an individual accountable for publishing seditious, libellous, or defamatory content on the Internet (Government of Malaysia, 2012).

Research and analyses conducted on the freedom of the Malaysian media have found it to be based on the authoritarian concept found in press theories (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani, 2005; Yin, 2003). The aim of the authoritarian press is to advance and support all policies of the government. Furthermore, under such a system, the government would not object to general discussions of the political system, but would not allow any overt criticism of government policies and projects as well as any attempts to unseat the government (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956).

1.10   Outline of the thesis

This first chapter presented an overview of the aim, objectives, and methodology of this study as well as how the study intends to fill the research gap. Also included in this chapter was a brief description of the socio-political landscape that form the background for this study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant research done in the area of refugee representation and identity as well as empirical research that guided by critical discourse analysis, in particular the Discourse-Historical Approach, and positioning analysis of narratives-in-interaction. Chapter 3 discusses the theoretical framework used in this study

in detail. It also includes a detailed description of the two data sets used in this study and the respondents involved as well as how the data was collected and then analysed.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from the analysis of the refugee representation in the media data set. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the thematic analysis of the interview data set according to theme. Chapter 6 is the final analysis chapter and presents in-depth positioning analysis of the narratives of three long-term refugee respondents. The thesis concludes with Chapter 7, which presents a discussion of the findings from chapters 4-6 and some final concluding remarks. The final chapter also discusses implications of the study and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of previous research that informs this study. It presents research relevant to understanding refugee representation and identity. The chapter is divided into two main sections: research on elite and non-elite discourses. Elite discourses (section 2.2) are produced by those who have control and power over public spaces, namely the discourse of the media and politicians. Elite discourses have the power to influence and shape discourses surrounding migrants by enforcing their will 'against the will or interests of others' (2009, p. 88). The discourse of non-elite voices presented in Section 2.3 includes stakeholders (the UNHCR, human rights groups and non-governmental organisations), the general public (social media, public spaces) and refugees themselves. Studies on refugees are usually located within the larger field of migrant studies and often include both asylum seekers and refugees (ASR). Therefore, care is taken to describe the sample population of the each study ('refugees' and/or 'asylum seekers') presented here.

The research studies discussed in this chapter are a result of a systematic search of academic databases, such as EBSCOhost, ProQuest, JSTOR, Wiley and the databases of publication publishers, such as Taylor & Francis, SAGE Journals, and Oxford University Press. The search keywords included 'refugee' and/or 'asylum seeker' with a range of other search items, such as 'discourse', 'discourse studies', 'critical discourse analysis', 'narrative', 'representation', 'identity' and related terms. Another combination of search terms used to obtain studies related to this region were 'refugee' and/or 'asylum seeker' and 'Asia' and 'Malaysia'.

Section 2.4 discusses briefly the approaches undertaken by the studies presented in sections 2.2 and 2.3. Section 2.5 presents a critique and discussion of the gaps in the literature that was found in this study. Section 2.6 presents some concluding remarks.

2.2   The representation of refugees in elite discourses

Based on the systematic search of research studies in this area, it was found that the main focus in studies carried out in the West has generally been on written and spoken media and political discourses, namely what is said about refugees in mainstream newspapers and by political leaders. Nolan et al. (2011) propose several roles the media can play that affect the way minority or migrant groups gain representation as social actors with rights in multicultural societies. First, the media can determine if groups are represented as social actors, who are able to contribute to debates and discourses relating to national identity or as 'problems'. Second, media representation can play 'an agenda-setting role' that influences how government policies are developed (p. 659). Third, it shapes the way minority groups are either respected or discriminated against in different domains of social life. Therefore, it is understandable why there are numerous studies on the way refugees are represented in dominant or elite discourses, such as the media and political discourses, which are frequently recontextualised in the media.

There has been a significant amount of research done in Australia and the UK on refugee and asylum discourse in newspapers and among political leaders. These studies can be categorised under two general themes. The first is the use of discourse to construct 'new racism' (Barker, 1981) or the 'norm against prejudice' (Billig, 1988, p. 95), which is the mitigation and justification of racist behaviour and language by a majority group. This new form of racism has supplanted the more blatant old form of racism and has been influenced by increasing caution over the social taboo of appearing outwardly racist (Augoustinos & Every, 2007). Augoustinos and Every proposed five discursive repertoires that can be used to justify racist talk:

> (a) the denial of prejudice, (b) grounding one's views as reflecting the external
> world rather than one's psychology, (c) positive self and negative other

presentation, (d) discursive deracialisation, and (e) the use of liberal arguments for "illiberal" ends. (2007, p. 125)

Studies that have focused on this area in regards to representing or talking about ASR in media and political discourse include Augoustinos et al. (2005), Baker et al. (2008), Billig (1988), Blommaert (2001), Capdevila & Callaghan (2008), Every & Augoustinos (2007), Gilbert (2013), Goodman & Speer (2007), Ibrahim (2005), Kushner (2003), Masocha & Simpson (2011), Sales (2002a), Saxton (2003), Steiner (2000), van den Berg et al. (2003) and van Dijk (Goodman & Speer, 2007; 1997). The common representations or labelling of refugees and asylum seekers identified by these studies were as illegal or illegitimate migrants, threats, bogus or fraudulent Others, criminals and an economic burdens. Goodman and Speer's study on the use of categories to represent asylum seekers and refugees in the UK public media and political debates on asylum (2007) revealed that classifications of asylum seekers and refugees were strategic moves to justify the speaker's position of this group. They are either differentiated and conflated as 'refugees' and '(illegal) migrants' or even simultaneously differentiated and conflated to justify harsh treatment of the ASR. Jiwani (2006) describes the action of labelling migrants and other 'people of colour' with negative labels such as 'alien', 'immigrant', 'refugee', 'terrorist' as an act of denying or 'whitewashing' overt racism (p. 14).

The second theme is related to the first and centres on the discursive practices of those in power to legitimise the exclusion of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. A common strategy used to accomplish exclusion is representation of ASR along the 'us' versus 'them' binaries as reported in these studies on media and political discourse in the UK (Lynn & Lea, 2003; Lynn & Lea, 2005; Mehan, 1997; van den Berg, et al., 2003; van Dijk, 1997; Verkuyten, 2001, 2003, 2005). Every (2008) analysed Australian political debates that centred around arguments to 'costs to self' versus 'duty to others' to justify the exclusion of ASR. Another way to legitimise the exclusion of ASR was through the

securitisation of discourse, most commonly seen in the representation of ASR as threat (Bailey & Harindranath, 2005; Barclay et al., 2003; Bradimore & Bauder, 2011; Charteris-Black, 2006; Gale, 2004; KhosraviNik, 2009; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Pugh, 2004). For example, KhosraviNik (2009) and O'Doherty & Lecouteur (2007) accounted for the legitimation of ASR in the UK and Australia respectively through the conflation of ASR along with other migrants into a single homogenous group that was represented as threatening to the respective host countries. The study conducted by Nolan et al. (2011) on the representation of Sudanese Australians, who were resettled refugees, by the Australian press around the 2007 Federal Election revealed a consistent othering of the Sudanese to construct them as outsiders instead of citizens. This practice sharply contradicted Australia's national multiculturalism and integration policies.

Apart from research on the representation of refugees using labels or categories, there is also research focusing on the representation of refugees using metaphors. The study conducted by Charteris-Black (2006) on right-wing discourses relating to immigration policies during the UK's 2005 election campaign revealed how the metaphors relating to water and 'container' was used to represent ASR as threats and legitimise anti-immigration discourses. Studies from the UK by Baker et al. (2008), Gabrielatos and Baker (2008), and Baker and McEnery (2005) also identified a similar strategy of representing asylum seekers and refugees using water metaphors, such as 'flood', 'stream' and 'pour'. Pugh (2004) deconstructed the image of the refugee usually represented in political discourse through the metaphors or water (i.e. sea-faring 'stateless wanderers' not confined by state borders) and natural disasters (e.g. flood, tide, swamped). Gale's (2004) study of Australian political discourse leading up to the 2001 election found that ASR were represented as flooding the country through discourse that invoked fear and danger. The emotionally charged water metaphor implies loss of immigration control (van der Valk, 2000) and functions effectively to invoke a sense of

fear at the uncontrollable mass of refugees, i.e. the topos of water (Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008) or topos of danger (Hart, 2008).

Another metaphor used to describe refugees in elite discourses include de-humanising metaphors of animals and disease (McKay et al., 2011; Santa Ana, 1999). McKay et al.'s study (2011) on how HIV-positive refugees were conflated into the category of HIV-infecting criminals illustrated how refugees being represented as carrying diseases resulted in further stigmatisation and exclusion from society. The metaphor of the queue was also used to construct asylum seekers as 'queue jumpers', who were undeserving of a place in Australia, in contrast to 'genuine refugees' (Gale, 2004; Gelber, 2003; Gelber & McDonald, 2006; Kampmark, 2006). This use of 'queue jumper' subscribes to the moral order of things as a means to justify representing asylum seekers and refugees negatively, i.e. as people who violate the concept of a queue.

However, the media sometimes represented ASR in a more favourable light as was the case in the study conducted by Finney and Robinson (2008) on the local press coverage in York and Cardiff over the new arrivals of asylum seekers to both cities. The local press in both cities represented the asylum seekers differently, one negatively and the other positively. Similarly, Mannik's study on the Canadian media's response to the arrival of a boat of asylum seekers in 1987 described the contrast between the national press and local newspapers reporting on the incident, with the latter providing a more personal and sympathetic coverage of the asylum seekers (2014). Steimel's (2010) analysis based on discourse studies and narrative analysis approaches on human interest stories or features on refugees in the US newspapers revealed a largely positive representation as refugees as victims in the difficult American economic climate. Horsti's study (2013) on the framing of three female asylum seekers in a mediatised advocacy campaign in Finland revealed how the media campaign was able attract positive attention regarding the plight of the asylum seekers. The media campaign accomplished this by 'de-ethnicizing' and

'de-muslimizing' the asylum seekers to highlight their unmarked difference and also by representing them as part of 'us' (p. 91).

2.3 The representation of refugees in non-elite discourses

There has been significantly less research carried out within discourse studies on refugee representation outside media and political discourse or non-elite discourses. Such discourses exist simultaneously alongside elite discourses and play an important role as resistance or counter discourses (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1980). This section will discuss these studies that have focused on the perspective of non-elite voices, including: i) the voices of the UNHCR and humanitarian organisations (2.3.1), ii) the general public and social media (2.3.2), and iii) the perspective of refugees themselves (2.3.3).

2.3.1 Representations by humanitarian organisations

The literature search carried did not yield many empirical studies that analysed the voice of humanitarian organisations with regards to ASR. However, there were some studies conducted on the representation of ASR by UNHCR and humanitarian organisations and these studies centred on the theme of the refugee as a victim (Clark-Kazak, 2009; Johnson, 2011; Rajaram, 2002). Clark-Kazak's multimodal analysis of UNHCR annual reports and appeals identified the objectifying of 'women, children and the elderly' to represent refugees (2009), while Johnson noted the increasing feminisation of UNHCR discourse surrounding refugees (2011). Rajaram (2002) critically examined Oxfam's project aimed at giving more refugees a voice that represented them in terms of loss and helpless, thus rendering them to the position of 'speechless' de-politicised and de-historicised figures (Malkki, 1996).

Hedman (2009) explored the representation of refugees by the UNHCR from a different angle. She discussed the problematising of the re-representation of the figure of the refugee in the Malaysian context through an analysis of UNHCR activities and campaigns in conjunction with World Refugee Day in Malaysia. Here, the representation of the refugee was given space to emerge alongside the national discourse of refugees as illegal migrants through their promotion as 'as deserving of *our* encouragement, respect and support' (p. 283). However, Hedman argued that this positive identification of refugees as the Others deserving of respect simply reinforced their national designation as essentially not 'one of us' but belonging to 'them' (p. 299).

2.3.2 Representations by the general public

Studies relating to refugee representations among the general public can be divided into those that were produced in the public space and on online social media. There are quite a number of examples of the former in research conducted in the UK. One example is the comparative study carried out by Pearce and Stockdale (2009) among lay respondents and 'experts' working in support capacities for asylum seekers in the UK. Although the representation of asylum seekers by both groups were significantly more positive than commonly found in media discourse, the experts represented ASR in more complex ways and along less polarised lines compared to lay respondents. The media's influence was cited to account for contradictory and underdeveloped representations of asylum seekers. The rhetorical and discursive analysis on readers' letters to British newspapers carried out by Lynn and Lea (2003) found a consistently negative representation of asylum seekers in these lay discourses. This was accomplished through what Lynn and Lea describe as 'New Apartheid', which is the repositioning of the social order of local social groups with regards asylum seekers to legitimise the latter's inferior position as an outsider in British society.

Two studies by Goodman and Burke (2010) and Goodman (2010) from the UK explored the legitimation of racist attitudes towards ASR. In the former study, the analysis of focus group interviews with undergraduate students revealed the strategic use of 'just' to present accusations of racism as unreasonable and to justify opposition to asylum as based on practical and economic reasons. Goodman's (2010) study analysed public domain texts and debates on the topic of asylum seeking. The findings centred on the discursive use of the notion of the 'taboo against prejudice' (Billig, 1988, p. 94) among members of the public to either take anti-asylum positions or to make accusations of racism. Goodman notes the consistent finding in discursive psychology research that illustrates how speakers are still able to say either overtly or covertly racist things despite being aware of this taboo against prejudice (p. 13).

The study carried out by D'Onofrio and Munk (2004) as part of research commissioned by the Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees in the UK (ICAR) went a step further to explore the effects of negative representations in elite discourses. They interviewed and analysed the responses of local residents to ASR and found that the residents' initial perception of ASR mirrored that of the representations found in the UK media discourse. They were fearful of ASR because they posed a threat to the nation's resources and/or were involved in criminal activities although they acknowledged that the media's unconstructive and inflammatory coverage of ASR might have played a role in influencing how residents thought and felt. Yet, these respondents responded more positively when presented with accurate information about ASR that did not correspond with media representations, and some with refugee neighbours acknowledged that living alongside refugees helped them understand refugees better.

Examples of research on the perception of the public from Australia include the study by Hanson-Easey and Augoustinos (2011), Hanson-Easey et al. (2014) and Dimasi and Briskman (2010). The former two studies focused on discussions over talkback radio on

Sudanese refugees. Hanson-Easey and Augoustinos explored the use of 'sympathy talk' by callers regarding the stabbing of a Sudanese-Australian refugee to soften racist and prejudiced complaints. Hanson-Easey et al. studied how the arguments surrounding the representation of Sudanese refugees essentialised them as a 'tribal' out-group. Dimasi and Briskman interviewed the residents on Christmas Island to investigate their reaction to the incident in 2001 when the Australian government prevented the MV Tampa from bringing rescued boatpeople onto Christmas Island. The locals' response differed significantly from the Australian public as the former were furious with the decision. They subscribed to notion of hospitality and the represented the asylum seekers as people in need rather than invaders.

There is a very small but increasing number of studies relating to how the asylum debate is produced over social media. Burke and Goodman (2012) analysed social media discussions on racism and support for asylum seeking that centred on ideas associated with Nazism and Hitler. The study found that both pro- and anti-asylum supporters drew on aspects of Nazism and racism to justify their positions and positions their opponents as racist. Goodman's (2007) study on the debates on internet message boards in the UK over a proposed a ruling that would allow children to be separated from their failed asylum seeker parents revealed the representation of asylum seeking families as either loving families (positive) or units for breeding (negative).

There were also research on non-elite voices in social media that included conflicting voices and opinions. Fozdar and Pedersen (2013) carried out an analysis on asylum debates on 'blogosphere', i.e. online blogs, that included both pro- and anti-asylum contributors. Every (2013) used discourse analysis to look at the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by social advocates of asylum in Australia of 'shaming' those opposed to asylum in media articles, online comments and letters to newspaper editors.

2.3.3 Refugees representing refugees

There are numerous studies on the experience of asylum seekers and/or refugees from other areas in social science, such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and migrant studies. These studies often include either asylum seekers or refugees or both asylum seekers and refugees. So, the review in this section will discuss the studies that include both groups that are most relevant to the topic of this study.

The majority of studies on ASR focused on the shared identities and/or experiences of asylum groups. These studies were often confined to specific geographical locations (Blommaert, 2001; Rainbird, 2012; Spicer, 2008), ethnicity or social identities (Eastmond, 1998; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh & Qasmiyeh, 2010; Kinefuchi, 2010) or nationalities within refugee host countries (Buyer, 2008; Colic-Peisker, 2005; Griffiths, 1997; Hatoss, 2012; Ramsden & Ridge, 2013; Wilcke, 2006; Witteborn, 2008).

An example of a study confined to location is Rainbird's (2012) study on the speech acts of asylum seekers in East Anglia, UK. The asylum seekers negotiated personal identities within the context of a collective identity, shared notions of place, the British immigration system and the asylum seeking process. Moves to embrace or resist the existing representation of asylum seekers as the 'ethnic Other' (p. 145) were built around the themes of distrust and collaboration. Distrust referred firstly, to instances when asylum seekers felt their status applications were threatened by other asylum seekers, who behaved in ways that justified the criminalised image of asylum seekers as propagated by local elite discourses. Secondly, distrust referred to their reluctance to trust people they did not know well for fear that it would get them into trouble. The asylum seekers also admitted collaborating with other asylum seekers to construct shared memories about their plight and shared identities that would eventually aid them in their asylum claims. Spicer's (2008) study, also based in the UK, was conducted among ASR parents and children and focused on their experiences of place and social inclusion/exclusion. The

study noted the differing effects of either inclusive or exclusive local neighbourhoods on the refugee parents' and children's attachment to the place and subsequent integration into the local community.

Studies including ASR based on their ethnicities or social identities focused on the issue of exclusion from the host countries. In Fiddian-Qasmiyeh and Qasmiyeh's (2010) study on Middle Eastern Muslim ASR in Oxford and Manchester, UK, it was revealed that the Muslim ASR experienced exclusion due to being assigned identities based on: i) their uncertain legal status, ii) their religious identification as Muslims, and ii) their exclusion from the existing local Muslim communities. As a result of these imposed identities, they struggled to find a 'home' in the UK. The issue of 'home' was also the main focus in Kinefuchi's (2010) study on Montagnard refugees from Vietnam in the United States. Despite living in the U.S. for over 20 years, these refugees struggled with identities imposed on them by their host country, which was a place they were placed in without being given any say in the matter. They still maintained links to their home in Vietnam as a means of coping with their forced migration and maintaining a sense of Self (p. 244).

Studies relating to the experiences of refugees from particular countries in their new host countries focused on their attempt to integrate into their new surroundings. The theme of place, home and belonging were at the forefront of these studies. For example, Hatoss (2012) studied the discourse of Sudanese refugees living in Australia using positioning analysis. The refugees juggled two identities, their Sudanese identity and their new Australian national identity. The yearning to maintain the Sudanese Self overlapped with the desire to be accepted as Australian citizens but yet the refugees recounted many instances of being socially excluded by the Australian community. Colic-Peisker's (2005) study, also conducted in Australia, focused on the integration experiences of Bosnian refugees and explored the effect of the Bosnians' 'whiteness' on how they were treated

in Australia. The respondents reported that on a superficial level, their European identity proved advantageous in their immediate context but the relations with the English-speaking locals broke down when it came to communication, due to the Bosnians' poor command of English. This linguistic barrier only served to highlight their 'otherness' (p. 633).

Griffiths (1997) and Buyer (2008) both carried out research on clan identities among Somali refugees in London, UK and Cape Town, South Africa respectively and how the refugees coped with xenophobia. Griffiths' study noted that young Somalis often took on a new ethnic identity that aligned with the Afro-Caribbeans living in their neighbourhood rather than their ethnic clan identities to respond to instances of racism. However, this move resulted in a conflict with and regression of their clan identities and traditions. Buyer's study on the Somalis in Cape Town found that refugees with higher education were able to employ their intellectual skills to cope with xenophobia rather than rely on clan identities.

Witteborn's (2008) study on Iraqi refugees in the United States focused on how the Iraqis used narratives to construct 'diasporic imaginations' or a collective memory of the war in Iraq and being in exile or away from home. The findings revealed that the Iraqi refugees did not position themselves as 'independent selves' but rather, as individuals that oriented towards historical, social, political, cultural, spiritual, and geographic relations based on an Arab pan-national identity. They downplayed the significance of the refugee identity as being only a small part of their overall self-determination.

Verkuyten and de Wolf (2002) remarked that discourse analytic studies have largely ignored the voices of ethnic minority groups, including refugees, and how they defined and negotiated their identities (p. 374). 13 years on from that observation, this study argues that the same situation persists in academic studies. The link between social power

and the degree of access to discourse has been established (Van Dijk, 1996) and minority voices naturally do not possess these 'speaking rights' (Lynn & Lea, 2003, p. 447). Therefore, they are vulnerable to oppression and stigmatisation.

Apart from the studies conducted by Hatoss (2012) and Leudar et al. (2008) mentioned above, the search yielded only one more discourse analysis study in this area. In the study carried out by Yap et al. (2010), the Foucauldian Discourse Analytic approach was used to analyse how the concept of volunteering was used by refugees to reimagine themselves as 'good citizens' to challenge pre-existing representations of refugees in wider discourses. Yap's study highlights another gap in research on refugees representing refugees, namely studies focusing on micro-level or individual refugee accounts. As discussed above, most studies have focused on shared identity and the collective voice of groups of ASR.

2.4   Approaches to research on refugee representation and identity

Research focusing on the representation of asylum seekers and refugees within critical discourse analysis have focused mainly on the media and political discourses. The individual studies employed a range of critical discourse approaches that included the work of Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003), Wodak (1989; 2001, 2008; 2011; 2009) Reisigl and Wodak (2001, 2009) van Dijk (1993, 2005; 2000; 1991, 1992; 1996; 2000), and van Leeuwen (1996, 2008a). Some studies were also influenced by the work of Foucault (1980) and Billig (1988, 1991; 1995; 1988) on ideology and power.

For example, KhosraviNik's (2009) study of the representation of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants employed the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001, 2009) in combination with van Dijk's (1991) work on genre related features of news texts as well as van Leeuwen's (1996, 2008a) categorisation for analysing the

representation of social actors, which was included into the referential and predication levels of the DHA. Paul Baker has contributed to the field of CDA through his work on combining CDA approaches, particularly the DHA with corpus linguistics (Baker, et al., 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2005; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008).

A significant amount of research in this area has also been carried out by discursive psychology researchers in the UK (Burke & Goodman, 2012; Goodman, 2007, 2008, 2010; Goodman & Burke, 2010; Goodman & Speer, 2007) and Australia (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Augoustinos, et al., 2005; Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010, 2011; Hanson-Easey, et al., 2014). As discussed in detail above, these studies analysed a range of data types including media and political discourse (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Augoustinos, et al., 2005; Every & Augoustinos, 2007; Goodman, 2010; Goodman & Speer, 2007) and discussions by the general public and on social media (Burke & Goodman, 2012; Goodman, 2007, 2008; Goodman & Burke, 2010; Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2010, 2011; Hanson-Easey, et al., 2014). The discursive psychology approach has also been combined with CDA approaches, e.g. in the study by Masocha and Murray (2011).

Studies exploring the representation of refugees by refugees themselves as discussed in section 2.3.3 come from a wide range of areas within the humanities and social sciences, including migrant studies, sociology, anthropology, geography and citizenship studies, and focus on the personal experiences of refugees.

2.5 Critique of previous research

This section presents some critique of the literature discussed in the section above. Several observations can be made regarding the literature review on research on elite discourses presented in section 2.2. First, there is a lack of studies on refugee

representation and identity conducted on the Asian region. Most of the research presented here were conducted in Europe and North America. Research in this area from the larger Asia Pacific region is represented by the research conducted mainly in Australia that focuses on elite discourses, namely media, political and legislative discourses. This is disproportionate to the number of refugees actually currently residing in Asia Pacific. The latest UNHCR Global Trends Report for 2013 (2014) noted that out of the 11.7 million newly displaced individuals in 2013, the Asia Pacific region hosted the highest number of such individuals (3.5 million). Four of the top five countries hosting the most number of refugees, Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, and Jordan, were all Asian countries, with the exception from the five being Turkey.

Furthermore, studies on forced migration in Malaysia is scarce despite the increasing importance of Malaysia as a transit country for ASR. The 2013 Global Trends Report identified Malaysia as the country that filed the most number of asylum claims with the UNHCR in 2013 at 53,600 cases or 26.4% out of the total 203,200 globally (ibid.). Figure 2.1 below, extracted from the report, shows Malaysia having the second biggest increase in the number of asylum claims after Germany from about 20,000 in 2012 to over 50,000 in 2013.
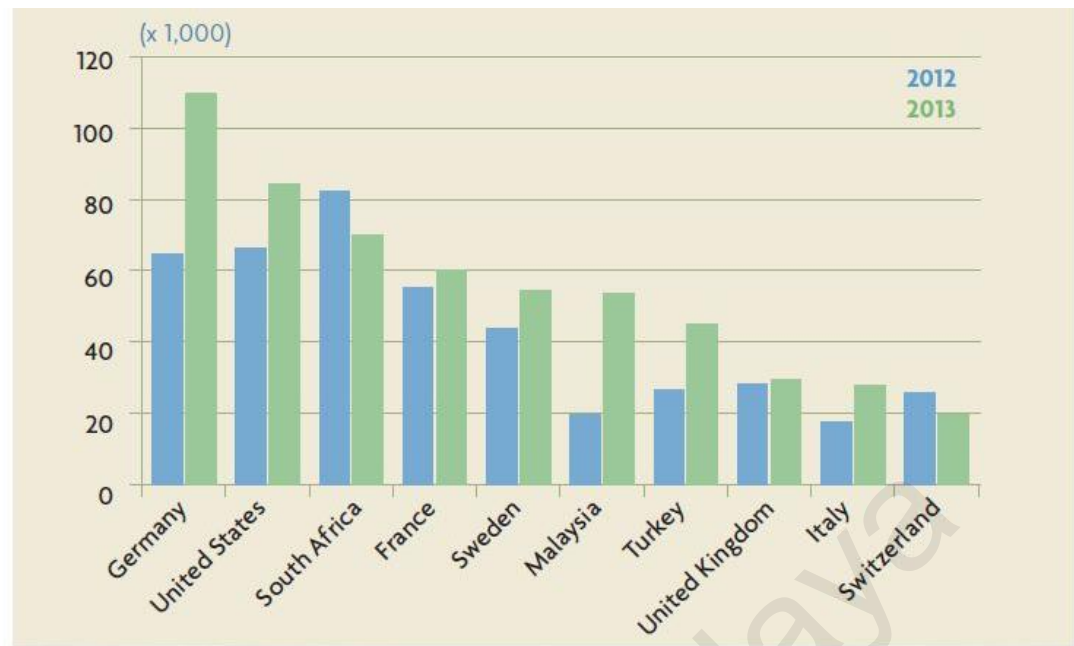
Figure 2.1: Main destination countries for asylum seekers

(Source: UNHCR Global Trends 2013)

The systematic search conducted on academic databases, such as EBSCOhost, ProQuest, JSTOR, Wiley and databases from publication publishers, Taylor & Francis, SAGE Journals, and Oxford University Press, yielded no systematic review of research studies on refugees in Malaysia or Asia. Most studies on refugees in Asia have been limited to state policies and larger socio-political developments affecting refugees (Nah, 2007; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2004; Vas Dev, 2009). A paper for the University of New England Asia Papers (UNEAC) by Kaur (2007b) was the only literature this study was able to find that concerned the media representation of refugees in Malaysia and the paper only provided a brief commentary. Kaur reported that the Malaysian mainstream media generally did not highlight refugee issues and that their plight was only voiced by humanitarian groups and alternative online websites.

Second, studies on refugees in transit remains scarce. Based on the literature search conducted here, it was observed that majority of the studies have been conducted among

refugees already resettled in European and North American regions. UNHCR reported that 90% of the 93,200 refugees resettled in 2013 were resettled to the United States of America, Australia and Canada (ibid.). The other two major destinations for resettlements were Sweden and the United Kingdom. This resettlement figure of 93,200 remains significantly low compared to the 11.7 million refugees registered in 2013 and the 51.2 million displaced individuals globally. Yet, the amount of research being conducted in regions outside North America and Europe among the majority of the displaced individuals remain disproportionately low. This clearly disproportionate number of resettled refugees in developed countries versus developing regions can be seen in Figure 2.2 below.
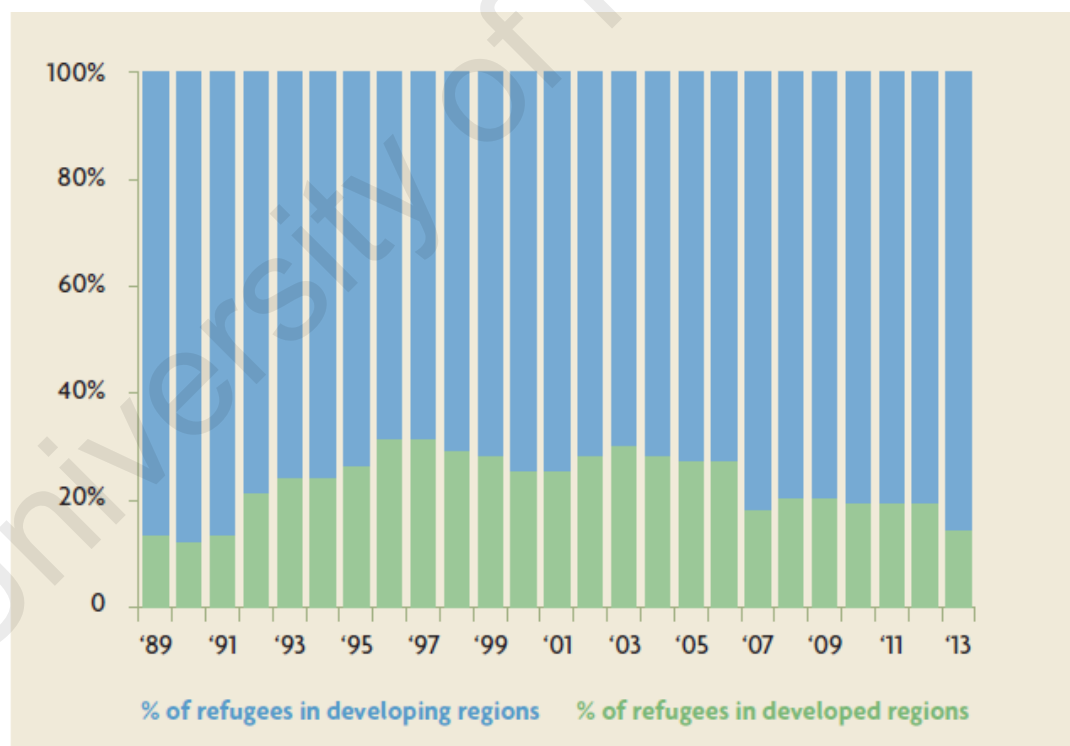
Figure 2.2: Refugees hosted by developed versus developing regions (1989-2013)

(Source: UNCHR 2013 Global Trends)

As seen in Figure 2.2, less than 20% of the global refugee population currently reside in developed regions. Thus, there remains a great need for research to be conducted among the 80% of ASR outside these regions, including the 150,000 refugees currently living in Malaysia.

A third gap identified by this study's literature search was the scarcity of studies conducted on refugee representation in countries that are non-signatories to the UNHCR Refugee Convention. Most of the research in this area come from UNCHR signatories, such as European and North American countries and Australia. The experiences of refugees residing in either signatory or non-signatory countries are vastly different. One major difference is the legal status of refugees in these countries. The representation of refugees' legality or illegality in the case of non-signatory countries are important if a comprehensive understanding of the issue of forced migration is to be understood. Yet, the representation of refugees living in transit in non-signatories countries and their struggles have been greatly underrepresented in research thus far.

Fourth, there is a lack of studies that foregrounds the voices of refugees alongside both elite and non-elite voices when it comes to refugee representation and identity. This is significant as research of this kind would help establish the link between elite discourses and its direct impact on the lives of refugees and their sense of self-presentation and identity. Such studies are few and far between but provide valuable insight into the direct and tangible effects of overly simplistic representations of refugees in the form of counter narratives (Bamberg, 2004a) or resistance discourses (Fairclough, 1992; Foucault, 1980). A good example is Leudar et al.'s study (2008) on the response of refugees in the UK to hostile representations assigned to them by the media and local residents. These 'hostility themes' that existed in the UK discourse prevented refugees from readily claiming the refugee identity due to negative characteristics that accompanied it. The refugees also attributed their psychological and difficult living problems to the hostility resulting from

the negative discourse. Leudar et al. critiqued the tendency in research on asylum seekers and refugees to merely analyse the discourse produced by others rather than that produced by refugees themselves and advocate research that gives refugees the space to speak out.

As mentioned in 2.3.3, there is also a lack of studies on refugee identity and representation in discourse analysis that give prominence to the perspective of refugees themselves. There are even fewer studies that foreground individual accounts of refugee identity. Thus, this study hopes to contribute to this area and provide refugees in Malaysia a space to talk about the situation in which they live.

2.6   Summary

Chapter 2 discussed research related to the representation and of identity of asylum seekers and refugees. 2.2 presented research on elite discourses, while 2.3 presented research on non-elite discourses. 2.4 briefly discussed the approaches used in the studies discussed in 2.2-2.3. 2.5 then presented a critique of the studies mentioned and the research gap this study hoped to fill. The following chapter, Chapter 3, describes the framework that grounded this study as well as the data and methodology used in this study in detail.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three discusses the theoretical framework used to analyse the media and narrative data sets respectively. The entire study is framed by the critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective, particularly the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The five-step analytical process proposed by the DHA as well as van Leeuwen's categorisation for analysing the representation of social actors (1996, 2008b) were useful tools for the analysis of the textual data set. The analytical tools used to analyse the narrative data were thematic analysis and Bamberg's positioning analysis for narratives-in-interaction (1997; 2003; 2004b; 2004c; 2007; 2008).

Section 3.2 will discuss the Discourse-Historical Approach that frames the entire study. Section 3.2.2 will present the analytical tools used to analyse the media data set. Section 3.3 describes the analytical tool used to examine the personal narratives, which is narrative analysis. The sections under 3.3 explain in detail how this study is positioned with regards to the differing perspectives on narrative analysis and how it is used in this study. Bamberg's positioning analysis for narratives-in-interaction is discussed in 3.3.4.

Sections 3.4 and 3.5 will describe how the textual data and narrative data sets respectively were collected, prepared for analysis and analysed. The chapter will conclude with the summary in section 3.6.

3.2 Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

The study was guided by the critical discourse analysis perspective, particularly the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2001, 2009). The DHA, like other CDA approaches, is suitable for exploring elite discourses and power relations due to its critical stance in approaching a particular research subject. Like the other approaches under CDA, the DHA aims to expose and critique 'unequal power relations' and hegemonic discourses through the analysis of language use in social practice. The very nature of power is indeed unequal or asymmetrical as it is characterised as the ability to assert one's own will over the will of others (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88) and discourses play an integral role in legitimising or de-legitimising power in social practice. Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2009) argue that CDA is able to foreground the link between political agendas and the media.

Baker et al. (2008) note that the strength of the DHA in comparison to other CDA approaches lies in the deconstructing of a text through 'a close analysis of context' that builds on network of referential, predication and argumentation discursive strategies alongside analysis of mitigation, metaphors, presuppositions, etc (p. 295). This is relevant to forming a comprehensive understanding of the representation of refugees within the socio-political and cultural context of Malaysia. Therefore, the DHA was chosen as the overarching framework for this study. Before describing this framework in detail, section 3.2.1 discusses some important concepts relating to DHA.

3.2.1 Important concepts

3.2.1.1 Discourse and discursive strategies

Discourse, according the DHA perspective, encompasses several aspects (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009; Wodak, 2001). Generally, discourse is a complex bundle of linguistics or semiotic acts that are context-dependent and manifested within and across social fields of action (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009). The relationship between discursive practices and social fields of action is dialectical as both constitute and are constituted by each other. Another feature in defining discourse is its relation to the macro-topic. Discourse is always about a subject matter and within that macro-topic more sub-topics emerge and frequently make reference to other discourses, making discourse highly interdiscursive in nature. Finally, discourse is linked to argumentation about validity claims' of particular perspectives or points of view by certain social actors (p. 89).

For individual social actors, who are naturally members of at least a particular society, institution or community, discourse is a form of shared knowledge and a memory of how social practices are to function (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). In re-enacting social practices, social actors employ discursive strategies, which are intentional plans of discursive practices and according to Bourdieu (1972) influenced by pre-existing and internalised dispositions and habitus. These strategies are intentional because they are intended to influence or control knowledge and persuasively communicate (Wodak, 2007). Thus, it's essential to examine what discursive strategies are employed by social actors mentioned in the textual data and to what means these strategies are used.

3.2.1.2 Texts and genres

According to Wodak (2001, p. 66), discourses are realised through texts and genres. *Texts* here refer to the visual, written or oral realisations of 'linguistic actions', which encompasses both speech production and speech reception. Texts are usually associated

with various *genres* and *genres* are socially recognised ways in which language is used as embedded within specific social activities. In the case of the discourse of refugees, related genres could be news articles, press statements, TV interviews or personal narratives of refugees.

3.2.1.3 Fields of action

Fields of action in the DHA refers to 'a segment of social reality' (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009: 90) that shapes and frames discourses and can be understood as the differentiation between various functions and socially institutionalised actions of discursive practices. These fields of action are realised through texts reproduced in various genres. The fields of action that this study engages in the investigation of the representation of refugees in Malaysia consist of public and personal fields of action. Public fields include the formation of public opinion, legislation, and international relations. Under the personal field of action are the personal narratives of refugees living in Malaysia. Table 3.1 presents an example of fields of action, genres and discourse topics studied that are present in the discourse surrounding refugees. This list is by no means comprehensive and merely illustrates the concepts from DHA that informed the research design of the study.

Table 3.1 Relation between fields of action, genres and discourse topics

Fields of Action			
Formation of public opinion	Legislation	International relations	Personal

Genres			
•news reports •news columns •opinion articles •press releases •press interviews	Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2007	diplomatic meetings	personal narratives of refugees
Texts			
Media texts (written)	Act (written)	Reports (written)	Interviews (spoken)
Discourse Topics			
• security • illegality • exclusion • vulnerability • trafficking	• protection • trafficking • human rights	• trafficking • human rights • international policy	• citizenship • illegality • vulnerability • exclusion • hope/resettlement

Fields of action are manifestations of a society's or culture's understanding of realities and any examination of fields of action help to bring insight into a particular speaker's or author's perspective and construction of discourse. In the context of this study, an examination of different fields of action brings to light particular understandings of the realities in which refugees inhabit. In this study, two fields of action were examined: i) the public representation of refugees and ii) personal self-representation by refugees. Under public representation of refugees, the genre of texts analysed were news articles in mainstream and alternative newspapers as well press statements made by political leaders and human rights groups concerning asylum seekers and refugees. Personal narratives from in-depth interviews with refugees formed the self-representation texts.

3.2.1.4 Representation

Representation is an important concept within the scope of this thesis. According to Hall (1997), representation is the production of meaning through language as used by social actors to stand for ideas, thoughts and feelings. In considering Hall's constructionist perspective of representation, it is noted that meaning itself is never fixed but always changing as social actors continually receive meaning and reassign new meaning. Because meaning is determined by social actors, Hall argues that representation is closely related to power, which constantly strives to establish meaning that will support its agenda. The contestation among groups over what should be accepted as the appropriate or correct meaning is referred to as the 'politics of representation' (Holquist, 1983; Shapiro, 1988).

3.2.2 Tools of analysis

3.2.2.1 DHA tools of analysis

The DHA focuses its analysis on three dimensions: (i) content or topics of discourses, (ii) discursive strategies, and (iii) linguistic means and realisations. These three-fold steps are taken in analysing texts. First, the text is analysed to identify the main discourse topics. Then, the discursive strategies and the linguistic means by which these strategies are achieved are identified.

The DHA orientates itself around the identification of five discursive strategies as a means to analysing discourse and its related texts (taken from Reisigl & Wodak, 2009: 93). These discursive strategies are presented in Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2: DHA discursive strategies

Strategy	Question	Devices
Nomination	How are persons, objects, phenomena/events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically?	membership categorisation devices, deictics, metaphors, verbs and nouns referring to processes and actions, etc.
Predication	What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena/events and processes?	adjectives, pronouns, collocations, comparison, similes, metaphors, allusions, positive or negative traits, etc.
Argumentation	What arguments are employed in the discourse in question?	topoi, fallacies, deictics

Perspectivisation	From what perspective are these nominations, attributions and arguments expressed?	direct/indirect speech, quotes, discourse markers, metaphors, etc.
Intensification/ Mitigation	Are the respective utterances articulated overtly; are they intensified or are they mitigated?	mental processes, particles, tag questions, hedging, indirect speech acts, etc.

These tools of analysis proposed in the DHA were to analyse the textual data set but as will be mentioned in greater detail in section 3.4, instances of nomination, predication and argumentation were more salient in the analysis compared to the latter two strategies. Another useful tool of analysis was van Leeuwen's categorisation for analysing the representation of social actors and this is discussed below.

3.2.2.2 Socio-semantic categorisation of social actors

Van Leeuwen's categorisation for analysing the representation of social actors (2008a) is based on the premise that all discourse recontextualises social practices. He defines social practice as 'socially regulated ways of doing things' and texts as representations of social practices (p. 6). *Recontextualisation* occurs when discourse or knowledge produced through texts are re-embedded into new content to 'serve the contextually defined purpose'.

KhosraviNik (2009) proposed incorporating van Leeuwen's categorisation into the referential and predicational levels of the DHA because it 'functions on a local intra-textual level' (p. 483). Social actors can either be excluded or included when being represented by authors and speakers to achieve particular purposes and van Leeuwen proposed numerous linguistic realisations found in discourse. Exclusion strategies include

suppression and *backgrounding*. Inclusionary language reallocates social roles and relations between participants. The analysis of the inclusion strategies can provide an indication about prevailing attitudes towards social actors and how these attitudes give rise to hegemonic discourses that influence and shape social practices affecting those social actors. van Leeuwen provides a long list of discursive strategies that include or assign social actors particular roles. Some of these strategies include *activation* and *passivation* (which relates to the issue of agency), *genericisation* and *specification*, *assimilation*, *nomination* and *categorisation*, *functionalisation* and *identification*, and *personalisation* and *impersonalisation*, among others.

Another useful tool of analysis in the context of this study is van Leeuwen's list of *legitimation* strategies. Recontextualisation through legitimation in discourse answers why-questions regarding social practices (p. 106) and provides further support for particular representations of social actors. Van Leeuwen identifies four types of legitimation: (i) authorisation, (ii) moral evaluation, (iii) rationalisation, and (iv) *mythopoesis*. Table 3.3 presents an overview of these legitimation strategies.

Table 3.3: The Discursive Construction of Legitimation

Strategies	Sub-categorisation	Detail
Authorisation (vested in a person in authority)	Personal authority	Legitimacy rests with people because of institutional role or status
	Expert authority	Legitimacy provided by expertise
	Role model authority	Example of role models/opinion leader
	Impersonal authority	Laws, rules and regulation
	Authority of tradition	Tradition, habit, custom, practice
	Authority of conformity	Because everyone else does it
	Evaluation	Evaluative adjectives

Moral Evaluation (based on values)	Abstraction	Reference to practice in abstract ways to distil particular qualities
	Analogies	Comparisons and examples
Rationalisation (foregrounds logic and rationality)	Instrumental	Explanatory constructions of purpose
	Theoretical	Founded in some kind of truth
Mythopoesis (storytelling)	Moral tales	Reward for engaging in legitimate social practices
	Cautionary tales	(Negative) Result of not engaging in legitimate social practices
	Inversion	Inverting specific semantic features
	Symbolisation	Symbolic actions representing institutionalised social practice

3.2.3 DHA with Corpus Linguistics

In this study, the DHA is employed in combination with a small-scale corpus linguistic analysis of the media corpus. Baker et al.'s (2008) CDA and corpus linguistics (CL) study is an attempt to address the criticism against CDA methods as being based on the analysis of too small a selection of texts. They note that CDA's contribution lies in its ability to illuminate the analysis in greater detail that moves beyond the simplistic positive/negative representation of social actors. On the other hand, the wide coverage of CL is able to further support the saliency and frequency of particular topics, topoi and metaphors within the corpus. They also note that CDA helps researchers spot significant exceptions

and diversity in the data that may have been missed out under the CL method due to its low frequency and occurrence.

This study does not employ corpus linguistics or any kind of quantitative analysis to the textual data. However, in order to identity salient linguistic elements in the data for further analysis, the Wordsmith concordance software and the query function in the NVivo software were used. This use of concordance softwares to manage the textual data is described in detail in section 3.4.

3.3 Narrative Analysis

Research questions 2 and 3 will be addressed through the collection of narratives from refugee respondents. Eastmond (2007) advocated narratives as the best way to conduct research among refugees not only because it allows a more comprehensive view of the 'refugee experience' but also because it avoids the tendency to limit views on refugees as 'an undifferentiated, essentialised and universal category quite irrespective of the different historical and political conditions of displacement and of the individual differences between people who become refugees' (p. 253).

Scholars have identified the common contradictions in narrative research that view narrative as a genre, epistemology and method (Bamberg, 2012; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012) and this section will discuss the distinction between those views. Alongside a description of these views, this section will also argue for the multiple view of narrative as a genre, epistemology as well as a method in the context of this study. First, section 3.3.1 discusses the view of narrative as a text type or genre. Second, 3.3.2 describes the view of narrative as more than merely a genre, i.e. as a mode of thought and knowledge in understanding the human view of the world (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, p. 17). Building on this section, 3.3.3 then discusses the main approaches commonly found within narrative research (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012; Riessman, 2008) and the epistemological view taken by this study of the narrative interview as an interactional site between interlocutors. Finally, 3.3.4 presents the narrative framework used in this study, positioning analysis by Bamberg, which is primarily concerned with the use of narrative research to explore the positioning and negotiation of identities.

Most research within the narrative analysis tradition are not positioned on a critical stance in the way that CDA is although some attempt at critique has been introduced in approaches to critical narrative inquiry (Barone, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, 1994; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 1999; Polkinghorne, 1995) and critical narrative

analysis (Souto-Manning, 2014). However, narratives allow speakers to engage with and challenge 'master narratives' or storylines that exist in dominant discourses about particular topics or social categorisations through 'resistance' (Bamberg, 2004a). Rather than view narratives as merely personal and therefore free from societal and discursive influence, narrative analysis can offers a means to connecting micro-level discourses of a personal nature with macro-level discourses, such as media and institutional discourses, and therefore provide some form of critique of dominant discourses.

3.3.1 Narrative as a genre

Narrative and storytelling has been a part of human history, with historical evidence of storytelling practices reaching as far back as 1500 BC (Bamberg, 2012). Storytelling, whether in written, oral or visual form, is an integral device for thinking about and expressing the sense of Self, individually or collectively. The tradition within narrative research of studying narrative as a text type has its foundation in structuralist approaches or *narratology* from the field of literature (Bal, 1997; Genette, 1980; Prince, 1982; Propp, 1968). The most influential approach in linguistics is the narrative structural approach proposed initially by Labov & Waletzky (1967) and then developed by Labov (1972, 1982, 1997). Structuralist approaches view narratives as a text type on its own and revolves around the analysis of story components and structure. In this view, narrative is distinguished from other text types by its retelling of the 'temporal sequence' of particular experiences (1967, p. 13). To analyse these experiences, the model proposed examines the basic components of narrative: abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, coda and evaluation.

In the context of this study, narrative is viewed as the *genre* of personal stories and the narrative interview as a *field of action* under the DHA. Engaging different fields of action allows the discourse under investigation to be studied in greater depth and breadth. It is

hoped that the personal narratives of refugees analysed in this study would complement the findings of the analysis on the media data set as well as provide refugees the space to engage with and respond to wider discourses relating to refugees in Malaysia.

3.3.2   Narrative a mode of thought and knowledge

Alongside the structuralist tradition in narrative research is the view of narrative as a mode of thought, knowledge and communication of human reality. Narrative in this tradition is a means by which people make sense of and express perspectives of their reality and this means of obtaining knowledge is contradictory to the 'logico-scientific' view of the knowledge (Bruner, 1986) and understanding of reality that is based purely on facts and evidence (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, p. 15). Instead, narrative allows speakers to reflexively negotiate meaning and selfhood based on the retelling of stories of experience.

Indeed, since the recent 'narrative turn' in the social sciences, increasing attention has been given to the study of narratives as a way of understanding human nature and the world. Narratives are any kind of texts in a 'storied form' (Riessman, 2005) and many scholars claim that human life is storied and identity is narratively constructed. Rosenwald and Ochberg argued that, 'Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities are fashioned' (1992, p. 1). Atkins (2004) made a similar assertion when he said, 'identity – who I am – is structured through the textual resources of narratives' (p. 350). In other words, narrative self-disclosure and self-reflection are the means by which speakers realise their selves and reflexively monitor this selfhood.

As such, it is clear that the analysis of narratives is useful for any kind of study on identity or to answer the 'who am I' question particularly because it privileges subjectivity and positionality (Riessman, 2001). Narratives allow the speakers or authors to present

their lives and experiences the way they interpret or 're-imagine' them rather than on actual reality, thus giving researchers an insight to how identities are constructed in the individual's past, present, future as well as historical, cultural, political and social contexts. The epistemological position of this study is based on the notion of narrative as a means to understanding human experience and selfhood or identity.

3.3.3 Narrative as a method

Bamberg (2012) argued that if narrative is considered a means by which speakers confer meaning to people, places and objects in the world, then it can also be considered a method for examining meaning-making and understanding how their identities are constructed, negotiated and maintained. Therefore, the analysis of stories in narrative research itself becomes the method regardless of the setting in which the stories take place, be it in interviews or in naturally occurring talk.

Bamberg (2004a) identifies the two common ways self-reflection and an individual's life is narrativised, namely through literary narratives intended for a general or specific readership and through the research or therapeutic interview. Narratives privilege the personal and the narrator's choice of what events to narrate and how these events are to be made relevant to the narrator's self-disclosure and identity. With this in mind, this study has chosen the narrative interview as the site for narrative analysis and the personal stories of refugees living in Malaysia as the object of analysis.

3.3.3.1 The narrative interview

This study agrees with De Fina's argument (2009) that narratives in interviews should be considered as interactional sites rather than the homogeneous, unnaturally occurring events they have come to be known as, mainly due to the influence of Labov and

Walezky's narrative model (1967). Although narratives are elicited in interviews, this does not mean that they are 'artificial tellings' presented without any social objective (De Fina, 2009, p. 237). Apart from analysing the content of narratives, it is also essential to also analyse the way narratives are shaped by the interlocutors as well as by the different contexts in which the telling is embedded. The narrative account in an interview is told in response to a particular question and is recipient oriented.

Schegloff (1997a) observed that the conditions of the production of narratives greatly affect the structure of the narratives themselves. This may result in a narrative told in different narrative formats, shaped by negotiations between the speaker and interlocutors as a sense making process. Therefore, narrative accounts in interviews are not always neat, coherent and orderly but incomplete and constantly undergoing negotiation. De Fina pointed out that a reliance on the canonical story as a model for analysing narrative accounts may overlook the narrative and interactional resources interlocutors draw on to construct and shape a particular narrative (p. 253). In doing so, we may miss seeing the reasons for the emergence of particular accounts and what they tell us about the speaker's identity.

The interview guide and questions used in this study was guided by several issues. Narrative and qualitative researchers have suggested that eliciting rich narratives from social science interviews depended significantly on the way the questions are asked by the interviewers. Elliot (2005) identified some aspects of interviewing that encourage the elicitation of rich narratives: i) structure of the interview, ii) use of language, iii) degree of open-endedness of the questions. In general, respondents were able to provide richer narratives when asked to speak about their experiences rather than strictly following a structured set of questions (Graham, 1984; Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1990). Referring to the type of language used during interviews, Chase (1995) observed from her failure to elicit proper narratives during a research interview that respondents did not respond to

academic or sociological language or registers. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) also noted that the use of everyday language in framing questions yielded better narratives. They also emphasised the importance of structuring the questions around the respondents' experiences rather than on achieving the interests of the interviewers, which meant making questions as open-ended as possible.

3.3.3.2 The role of the interviewer

This study acknowledges the influence of the interviewer in shaping how narratives are constructed as well as which stories are told within the interview. Rather than consider data from interviews as unusable as an objective source of research data, De Fina (2011) pointed out that the status of the interviewer, which is negotiable and constantly being negotiated throughout the research interview, can be a source of interactional data that can provide insight into how interlocutors align with one another to construct and develop narratives. Modan and Shuman (2011) also aligned to this perspective and argued that interview data should not be considered inferior to naturally occurring conversational data. They remarked that both interviewer's and interviewee positions were always fluctuating, which allowed speakers to strategically manipulate how information is embedded into narratives to 'do ideological work' (p. 23).

With this in mind, as both the researcher and interviewer in this study, I acknowledge my own influence in the interviews with the respondents in co-constructing which stories are told as well as how they are told. The rationale for choosing the positioning analysis framework was so that I could account for my own involvement in the narratives. The narrative accounts analysed and discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 were obtained from my interviews with refugees that focused on their journey to Malaysia and subsequent life in Malaysia. Although I tried to constantly position myself as sympathetic to the

perspectives of the respondents, my status as an insider and outsider was continually changing throughout the interaction with the respondents.

3.3.4 Positioning analysis for narratives-in-interaction

Hatoss (2012, p. 50) advocated the use of positioning as an appropriate analytical tool in the study of identity in narrative that aims to capture the narrated event (the story) as well as the narrating event (the interview). The positioning framework employed in this study is based the positioning framework by Bamberg (1997; 2003; 2004b; 2004c; 2008), which is built on the concept of positioning introduced by Davies and Harré (1990). Bamberg's positioning framework functions on the assumption that narrative plots or 'story lines' are co-produced by narrators and their interlocutors. The framework focuses on the concept of *positioning* for understanding how identities are not only created but also how existing ones are taken up by speakers through 'narratives-in-interaction'.

'Positions' here means the "identity-relevant effects of the way speakers order conversational devices and discursive activities" (Korobov & Bamberg, 2007, p. 256) and emerge as part of the delivery or performance of a narrative. In other words, the analysis through positioning involves looking at emergent 'acts of identity' through the analysis of how interlocutors describe and talk about people, their actions and the referential world (Bamberg, De Fina, & Schiffrin, 2011). At the heart of the framework is the interest in exploring how the sense of Self is negotiated, tested out and practised particularly at the local level, through the analysis of 'small stories' (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) rather than in macro discourses or big stories.

Bamberg introduces three levels of positioning that can be analysed to understand how identities emerge vis-à-vis master or dominant narratives.

- Level 1: How are characters positioned in relation to one another within narrated events (the story world)?

- Level 2: How does the speaker position him or herself in relation to the audience or interlocutors being addressed (the telling)?

- Level 3: How do narrators position themselves to themselves vis-à-vis master or dominant narratives of a culture or local context? (the Self)

Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008) propose five steps to structure the analytical process of this framework that is centred around these five questions:

(i) What is the story about and how are the characters in the story positioned with regards to each other (*positioning level 1*)?

(ii) How is the story introduced and what are the interactional moves used to prepare the story (*positioning level 2*)?

(iii) How are questions in the research setting answered in the form of telling a story (*positioning level 2*)?

(iv) How do all interlocutors engage in joint interactional (*positioning level 2*)?

(v) How do interlocutors construct each other and themselves in terms of teller roles and in doing so establish a sense of self/identity (*positioning level 3*)?

3.3.4.1 Positioning level 1 (the story world)

Positioning level 1 scrutinises how characters are linguistically established and how they relate to one another within narratives or the story world to bring about the *story* or the *narrated event*. Narrated events or the stories narrators choose to tell helps create understanding about past experiences and glimpses into their lives. The choice to tell specific stories also provide an indication about significant events or themes that may be integral to the narrators' self-construction and idea of the Self. This section presents the analytical tools used in this study to analyse the way refugee respondents' 'identity

claims' were realised through the positioning of themselves and others within the story world as well as the positioning of the characters with regards to each other.

Structural aspects of the story

Positioning level 1 is concerned with what goes in on the story world level and therefore, analysis can be carried out on the structural aspects of the narrative by looking at grammatical devices and narrative structure involved in the creation of a story. Labov & Waletzky's (1967) initial work on the narrative or personal experiences, which was later developed further by Labov (1972, 1982, 1997), offers a framework for looking at the structural components of narrative: *abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, coda,* and *evaluation*.

The *abstract* or *story preface* (Sacks, 1974) functions to summarise the story before it is actually told. The *orientation* provides information to the audience regarding the characters, time, place and behavioural situation within the story. The *complicating action* forms the main part or body of the story as it presents to the audience the significant or extraordinary incident that takes place. The *resolution* usually follows the complicating action and focuses on the result of the story or how the complication was resolved. The *coda* bridges the events in the story world with the real world. Finally, *evaluation* allows the narrator to present his or her point of view regarding the events within the story by answering the question, 'so what?'. The evaluative aspect of a narrative is a defining feature of narrative because as De Fina & Georgakopoulou (2012) assert, a story with no evaluation is merely 'a sequence of events with no point' (p. 29).

Labov (1972) identified three types of *evaluation*: *external*, *embedded* and *internal*. *External evaluation* occurs when the narrator stops and steps out of the story to explain or comment on some aspects of it, while in the latter two types, the narrator provides evaluation while remaining within the story. *Embedded evaluation* involves the narrator

voicing personal thoughts while narrating the story, while *internal evaluation* is often found embedded within the complicating action sections of the story.

Toolan (2001) identifies a characteristic of narrative, namely that it is always told or focalised through a particular perspective. *Focalisation* is the point of view from which people, events, phenomena are implicitly 'seen, felt, understood, and assessed' and can apply to the narrator or a character within the story. The important question to ask with regards to the focaliser is 'Who sees?' and can go some way towards revealing the narrator's positioning of characters within the story world.

Voicing is another important tool of analysis when looking at how characters are positioned within the story world. The concept is rooted in Bakhtin's work on dialogism including concepts such as *heteroglossia*, *double-voicing*, *polyphony*, and *ventriloquation* (1981). *Voice* can be defined as recognisable social positions or roles that characters perform. Narrators are able to represent events and characters by creating recognisable social worlds through *voicing*, which Bakhtin defines as the process of blending various voices together to form a coherent interaction. However, this representation of voices is not objective but a means by which narrators can evaluate the characters or social actors and position themselves in relation to these social actors.

Double-voicing or *double-voiced discourse* is one of the main tenets of dialogism as it acknowledges the presence of multiple voices and perspectives all in interaction with each other. Davies & Harré (1990) pointed out that double-voicing is a linguistic resource that individuals can draw upon in positioning.

Baxter (2014) identifies three types of double-voiced discourse (henceforth DvD) proposed by Bakhtin:

(i) uni-directional DvD: the speaker stylises his/her own speech in sympathy with the other speaker's voice and thoughts but their voices remain unmerged.

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(ii)   vari-directional DvD: the speaker's voice clashes with the second voice in ridicule and hostility. This DvD is most seen in parody.

(iii)   Active DvD: dual agenda of both voices included in reflexive talk.

Ventriloquation can be defined as the process where a narrator speaks through a character and at the same time, enacts his or her ethical or social position by either aligning or distancing him or herself from that character. The juxtapositioning of voices and the use of ventriloquation is not merely a means of representing the social world but also to establish the narrator's evaluation of it and the characters that occupy it.

Heteroglossia refers to the existence of multiple speech genres in a text. Referring to the novel, Bakhtin defined *polyphony* as the presence of multiple but independent voices merged into one perspective. The author does not impose his authorial voice but instead, allows the multiple voices to mould and influence the narrative. The study will be focusing more on double-voicing and ventriloquation and not on heteroglossia or polyphony because the latter two were not significantly salient in the narrative data set.

3.3.4.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

Positioning level 2 moves the focus onto how identities emerge through the interaction between interlocutors involved in the 'telling' of the story. It poses questions pertaining to why a story is told from a particular perspective or in a particular point in the interaction, as well as how interlocutors accomplish the story interactively. The latter involves the sequential turn taking of interlocutors and are analysed using techniques from conversational analysis (Sacks, 1995; Sacks, et al., 1974; Schegloff, 1982, 1997b), which are adapted for the purposes of studying interaction in narrative.

As previously mentioned (3.3.4), the analysis of the interactional level consists of three main parts. The first part (step 2) involves analysing the interactional moves and turns made by all interlocutors, especially the narrator (which are refugee respondents in this

case of this study), leading up to introduction of the story. In particular, this study looks at what positions the respondents take up when assuming the role of narrator. This supports the perspective of narratives as co-constructed by participants.

The second part (step 3) addresses the function of the story in the context of the research interview. The role of the interviewer's questions in this study is important as is how narratives emerge as a direct result of this interaction between the respondents and the interviewer. This is significant because of the functional nature of narratives, i.e. narratives are always told for a purpose and in response to something.

The final part (step 4) explores the actual the joint interactional engagement between all interlocutors (*positioning level 2*). The focus is on the positions interlocutors take up as the narrative develops with regards to one another as well as how they react to being positioned by others interactionally.

3.3.4.3 Positioning level 3 (the Self)

Positioning level 3 looks at how speakers create 'a sense of (them as) selves', which is built on the story and interaction levels to answer the question, 'Who am I?' (Bamberg, 2004b, p. 336). In other words, it is only when speakers have developed 'subject positions' can they go on to develop a sense of continuity and self. Through this process, they are positioning themselves vis-à-vis social positions or roles and wider cultural discourses, by either resisting (distancing) or embracing (aligning) them or displaying neutrality towards them. The first two positioning levels are meant to lead progressively to the final level as the 'acts of identity' and sense-making are linked back to specific moves to position of be position in both the first two levels.

This final positioning level is of vital importance in the context of the critical discourse approach that frames this study. De Fina (2013b) argues the significance of positioning level 3 as an analytical tool for studying identity that links local or small story level

identities and talk with larger and often institutionalised macro discourses. In other words, the construction and negotiation of identities at the individual level can be traced back to underlying and covert influences from wider social practices and discourses.

3.4   Media texts collection and analysis

This section describes how the media data set was compiled, prepared for analysis and then analysed using the analytical tools mentioned above.

3.4.1   Scope of media texts data set

To achieve the first research objective, a textual analysis was conducted on news articles from Malaysian mainstream newspapers and alternative news websites. The mainstream newspapers included The Star, The New Straits Times, and The Sun, which were the top three most widely distributed English language print newspaper (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2012). The alternative news websites included Malaysiakini, The Malaysian Insider and Free Malaysia Today, which were the top three alternative English language news websites according to leading provider in global website metrics, Alexa.com[4]. The mainstream newspapers were available in print and online, while alternative newspapers were only available online. This study also took into account the voices of non-government organisations (NGOs) or human rights groups that took an active interest in refugee related issues and their press statements were also included into the data set. These groups included Aliran, The Malaysian Bar Council, Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) and SUHAKAM as well as other NGOs, who were quoted in the mainstream and alternative press including Human Rights Watch, Lawyers for Liberty, Health Equity Iniquities, Amnesty International and Tenaganita among others.

3.4.2   Keyword search and coding

News articles obtained from keyword searches of 'refugee', 'asylum seeker' and its variations was included in the study's first data set of media texts. Using the Nvivo 9

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[4] Alexa.com, *Top sites in Malaysia*, http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/MY, Retrieved 23 April 2013.

software, all articles were coded according the categories proposed in the DHA and social actors model (as discussed in Chapter 3). The concordance software, Wordsmith, was also used to run word frequencies, collocates and concordance lines. Representations of refugees and asylum seekers found in the analysis were categorised according to the type of newspaper (mainstream or alternative) and voices in the press. The representations were also thematically categorised where relevant. This list of categories of representations formed the basis of Part 2 of the interview stage (refer to 3.5.1.3).

3.4.3   Analysis with concordance and word frequency softwares

This study was interested in exploring how refugees were represented by elite voices and the Malaysian press in public discourse. Therefore, the perspectives of the three groups (government, alternative and press) needed to be categorised accordingly. The study analysed the data set in two ways. First, using a more general statistical method through the concordance software, Wordsmith. Second, a more in-depth linguistics analysis was conducted on selected articles through the NVivo coding and these findings are discussed in Chapter 6.

However, there was some difficulty in doing that because the data set consisted of news articles from both mainstream and alternative press that sometimes quoted both government and alternative voices together and sometimes quoted them separately. The voices were quoted verbatim as well as in either direct or indirect quotations. The problem was more in getting accurate results from the concordance software, Therefore, in order to successfully analyse these voices separately through the concordance software, the data set needed to be adjusted. The following steps were taken to prepare the data set for analysis.

First, the data set was thus divided into three sub-sets reflecting the three voices: government, alternative and press. For the voice of the press, the articles were able to be analysed linguistically without needing any adjustments. However, the sub-sets for the government and alternative voices needed to be adjusted because they were often mingled or interspersed with news reporting language. The second step involved extracting individual quotes from the particular articles, leaving out parts of the article that were not directly related to the quotes. For example, in example 3.1, only the parts highlighted in bold were selected for analysis using the concordance software.

Example 3.1:

Lim added that Malaysia must ensure protection of this basic human right (for the refugees) to reflect its intention to become a leading democratic country in the Islamic world.

"It is rather embarrassing that Malaysia's poor human rights track record was highlighted in Australia recently," Lim said, referring to the two countries' agreement in a refugee swap deal announced on May 7 last month.

Under the agreement, Australia will resettle 4000 refugees currently residing in Malaysia over a period of four years.

Bar Council Law Reform and Special Areas Committee chair Datuk M. Ramachandran said the Council will submit a memorandum relating to the protection of refugees rights to the relevant ministries soon.

"We have drafted short to long term recommendations, including the Government to take full responsibility of children of refugees and asylum

seekers and for them to be integrated into the mainstream education system," Ramachandran said.

Source: Bar Council wants Govt to provide full protection to refugees, The Star, 20 June 2011.

The newly adjusted article files now contained only quotes and these files were then renamed and included accordingly into either the government or alternative sub-set for concordance analysis. Figure 3.1 below shows the breakdown of the data set according to the four sub-sets.
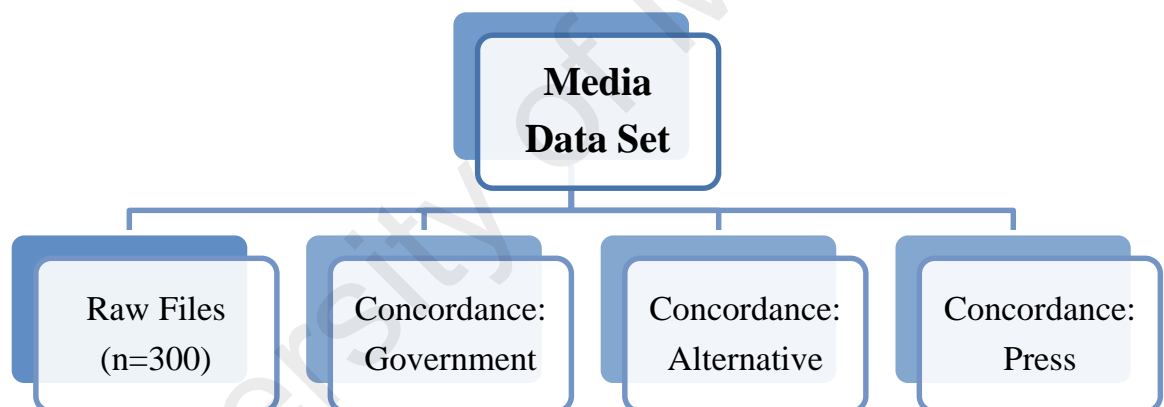
Figure 3.1: Media texts data set and sub-sets

The data sub-sets were now ready for analysis but were firstly analysed for word frequencies with NVivo 10. An example of the results of the word frequency query is provided in Figure 3.2, which is the results from the government sub-set.
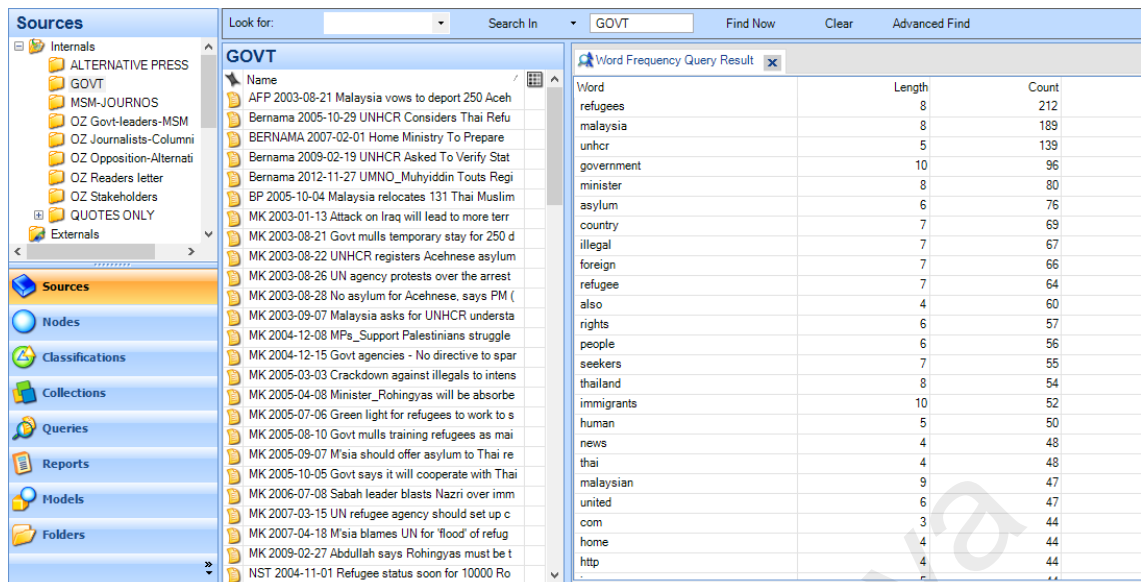
Figure 3.2: NVivo 10 Word frequencies in government data sub-set

Frequently occurring words (e.g. 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', 'illegal', 'foreign') were then analysed for collates and concordance lines to determined common patterns in the sub-sets. The results from the concordance analysis on the government and alternative data sub-sets were then compared to identify any interesting points worth noting. The use of concordance, word frequency and any statistical results were merely tools used as a guide and to help identify possible themes in the data, which were then explored further with the in-depth linguistic analysis.

3.4.4　In-depth linguistic analysis on raw files

Based on the results from the concordance analysis, the textual data set was analysed using a more fine-grained linguistic analysis based on the analytical tools mentioned in 3.2.2 and the results are presented and discussed in Chapter 4. The data was first coded line by line using NVivo 10 and examples of the nodes used are shown in Figure 3.3 and 3.4 below.

Figure 3.3: Coding nodes in NVivo according to DHA discursive strategies

Figure 3.4: Coding nodes according to van Leeuwen's social actors model

Figure 3.3 shows the nodes that were used to code the textual data articles using the five DHA discursive strategies, while in Figure 3.4 are the nodes for van Leeuwen's social actors model. There were further sub-nodes below the main nodes and the number of references assigned to each individual node is recorded in the software. This and the

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linguistic analysis revealed three salient representations of refugees: illegal immigrants, threats and victims. These representations are discussed in Chapter 4.

3.5   Narrative data set

The second data set consisted of personal narratives of refugees obtained via in-depth interviews. This section will discuss how the data was collected, transcribed, prepared for analysis and analysed. 3.5.1 deals with how the respondents were recruited and how the interviews were conducted. 3.5.2 discusses some issues relating to the transcription of the interviews. 3.5.3 presents the criterion used to identify narratives in the interviews and 3.5.4 describes how the data set was prepared for analysis and then analysed.

3.5.1   Conducting the interviews with refugees

3.5.1.1 Purpose of the interview

The purpose of the in-depth interviews was to elicit the following topics in order to answer Research Objectives 2 and 3:

- Story of life in country of origin and push factors for leaving

- Story of journey to Malaysia

- Personal experiences of living in Malaysia

- The meaning of 'refugee'

- Responses to representations of refugees in public discourse

- Identity and positioning

- Their opinions about their situation

3.5.1.2 Respondents

Respondents for the study were recruited from refugee communities living in the states of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur on a voluntary basis after the details and purpose of the study was fully explained and consent received. Further recruitment was also obtained via the snowballing method or recommendations from respondents or social workers involved. Respondents were adults of any age, gender, ethnic or religious group, who had been living in Malaysia for at least 3 years. The reason for selecting respondents who had been living in Malaysia for some time was because these respondents would be more familiar with Malaysia and its people, having already spent a considerable amount of time in the country. Thus, it was expected that they would be more aware of existing discourses and social structures that directly or indirectly impact their lives.

3.5.1.3 Interview sessions

Interviews with refugees were conducted over a period of about one and a half years. The first interview was took place in August 2012 and the last interview in February 2014. There were no follow-up interviews conducted because some of the respondents were not contactable thereafter, either because they had been resettled abroad or had simply moved to another place.

The interviews were conducted in a quiet place where the respondents felt comfortable in. Respondents were encouraged to tell the story of their journey to Malaysia, including the reasons for leaving their country of origin, how they ended up in Malaysia and their subsequent experiences living in the new country. They were also encouraged to talk about how they view themselves in this new situation and their hopes for the future. In the event where respondents experienced difficulties expressing themselves or narrating their stories coherently, the researcher reverted to a more semi-structured interview style

to help guide the informant along the way. The interviewer also asked their opinions about the common representations of refugees that emerged from the study's textual analysis.

The interview was conducted in primarily English but Bahasa Melayu was used on several occasions. Those more comfortable speaking in their native languages were interviewed through an interpreter. As far as it is possible, interpreters from within the informant's own community were used. All interviews were recorded using audio recorders and transcribed into English immediately after. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B.

3.5.1.4 Consent and confidentiality

Data collected from the respondents was only used with consent. Respondents could at any time pull out from the study, refuse to answer any question or request that particular information not be used in the study. Their names and details were kept confidential and they are referred to in this thesis using a pseudonym of their choice. The researcher gave them assurances that she would not divulge any of the information given to anyone outside the research project. (Refer to the consent form used in Appendix A)

3.5.2 Transcription

This section discusses some issues relating to the transcription of the interviews.

3.5.2.1 Epistemological stance

The interviews were transcribed immediately after the interviews by the researcher herself and other experienced research transcribers. As mentioned above, the study employed Bamberg's positioning analysis to analyse the narratives. Thus, the study was interested in analysing the narratives on three levels: the story world, the interactional

telling and the positioning of the Self. Although positioning level 2 involved analysis of the interaction between the respondents and the researcher (who was also the interviewer), it did not require as detailed transcription as usually required by conversation analysis studies. Therefore, this study employed the basic transcription notation from Jefferson's system of transcription notation (2004) and the symbols used to transcribe the interviews are provided in the list of symbols on page xviii. The only departure from Jefferson's notation is the symbol to represent a short pause of less than a tenth of second, transcribed as (.) in Jefferson's notation, which I have also chosen to transcribe as "…" at times for ease of reading, in my own view.

The intention behind the transcription bears in mind what Bamberg (2012) stated in that transcription involves the attempt to carry out three challenging tasks of: i) rendering reality, ii) transforming reality, and iii) selecting and "communicating what is considered relevant about that reality to the reader and to the interpretive task at hand". Thus, the transcription undertaken in this study seeks to faithfully render the reality of what is occurring in the interview while also foregrounding aspects of that reality that are "considered relevant". Bamberg, therefore, argued that there are no rights or wrong when it came to transcription but part of the interpretive process of doing research.

With this in mind, the features of the transcripts used in this study are as follows:

- Using Jefferson system of transcription notation to capture content and basic turns in the interactions between all interlocutors.

- Utterances were transcribed verbatim including pauses, repairs, and grammar and/or vocabulary mistakes. Notes were included in parentheses to elaborate where needed.

- As the study did not focus on prosody or sociolinguistic aspects, the transcripts did not include phonetic details.

- All utterances were separated into numbered lines. Where utterances were lengthy, they were divided in multiple lines and each line was limited to a single thought or point within the utterance (see example 3.3).

Example 3.3:

42   I: So, there's a question of, you know, what is their ethnicity actually?

43   [Are you like Indians?] (.) Or Myanmars?

44   P: [Yea, Indians.

45   Actually I can… ((laughs)) some of them, okay, when I go, when I go, when I go to tuition, because I'm studying, right… I go to tuition (.)

46   they can, they assume, some of them assume that I am Punjabi, Indian.

In example 3.2, the interviewer speaks in lines 42-43 and the refugee respondent speaks continuously in lines 44-46. The interviewer's three questions are broken up into two lines. The first question in line 42 and then the latter two questions in line 43, which were put on the same line because it was part of the same question presenting a choice of "Indian" or "Myanmar" to the respondent. The respondent gives his answer in line 44, which is a completed utterance, followed by a pause. His next utterance is broken up into two lines. Line 45 involves several pauses and repairs but he makes only one point, i.e. that he goes for tuition classes and provides the context for his point in the next line. There were many instances where the respondents had long turns that did not involve the interviewer. In order to make these turns manageable for analysis, they needed to be divided up into lines as illustrated in the example above.

3.1.2.2 Issues relating to translation-in-transcription

Of the 20 respondents interviewed, six interviews were conducted through an interpreter. The English language parts of these interviews, such as the researcher's questions and the interpreter's responses to the researcher, were first transcribed into English and then the transcripts were completed by a translator from that native language, who translated and transcribed the foreign language portions into English. The researcher then checked the transcripts again in consultation with the translator to ensure accuracy and continuity of the transcript.

Six of the the 20 interviews had a mix of English and Bahasa Melayu languages because there were instances of code-switching either by the researcher, the respondents and/or the interpreters. These portions of the interviews were transcribed and translated by the researcher herself, who is also a certified English-Bahasa Melayu translator. In these transcripts, the portions in Bahasa Melayu appear in italics and the English translation of particular lines follow immediately in parentheses and italics. Example 3.3 below taken from May's interview is an illustration of this.

Example 3.3:

50 **M:** **Because nobody come and… collect me lah.**

51 *Takda panggil saya keluar, takda…*

(No one got me out, no one…)

52 Final- final- final I telephone my boss ah… 'Bos ah… *kesian kesian mari angkat ah… kita tiga orang lah.*'

(Finally I telephoned my boss saying, 'Boss, have pity, have pity, come and get us… we are three people, you know.')

In the example above, code-switching into Bahasa Melayu occurs in line 51 and then again in line 52. In the case of the code-switching mid-sentence in line 52, the translation of the line in parentheses includes the English portions that have been grammatically edited.

The transcription practices undertaken in this study adhere to what Bucholtz (2000) called *naturalized transcription* because in the transcripts, written features are privileged over oral discourse features, such as pronunciation and dialects. The "transcriber's goal" (p. 1463) here was to produce a transcript that would be suitable for narrative and positioning analyses, in which the content and general structure were more important than other aspects that would otherwise be suitable in transcripts for sociolinguistic or conversation analysis research.

3.5.3   Criteria for identifying narratives

To prepare the spoken data set for narrative analysis, it was essential to have a list of criterion as a consistent guide to identifying what portions of the interviews could be considered as narratives and thus, used in the study. This study employed De Fina's (2013b) list of four criterion for identifying narrative genres:

- topic,

- storyworld protagonists,

- temporal organisation, and

- the presence of story components as developed by Labov & Waletzky (1967) and then later on by Labov (1982, 1997).

De Fina also mentioned the importance of extra-textual centred criterion such as "the function of story and its embedding in specific activities" (p. 162) in identifying narrative genres because all narratives have a purpose and are usually embedded in social activities. Narratives were selected if at least some, if not all, of these criterion were found.

As the interviews were highly conversational, different narratives genres frequently appeared in the narratives and could be categorised according to the following genres:

- *Stories of personal experience* (De Fina, 2003, p. 98): the main objective was to present the narrator's evaluation of a particular story, event or action in the past.

- *Chronicles* (De Fina, 2003, p. 100) or general accounts: not personal accounts but referred to a group of people or community. Chronicles were narrated to be descriptive and informative and may not have a specific point. They functioned not to evaluate but rather to tell or narrate an event.

- *Heritage narratives* (De Fina, 2008, p. 430): "other oriented" narratives told from the perspective of family members and functioned to lend credibility or authority to the narrator's point or statement.

- *Narrative references*: shared stories reduced into one-liners (Georgakopoulou, 2007, p. 53); simple utterances referencing an event, action, saying, attitude attributed to someone in the past (De Fina, 2013a, pp. 162-163).

3.5.4   Analysing the narratives
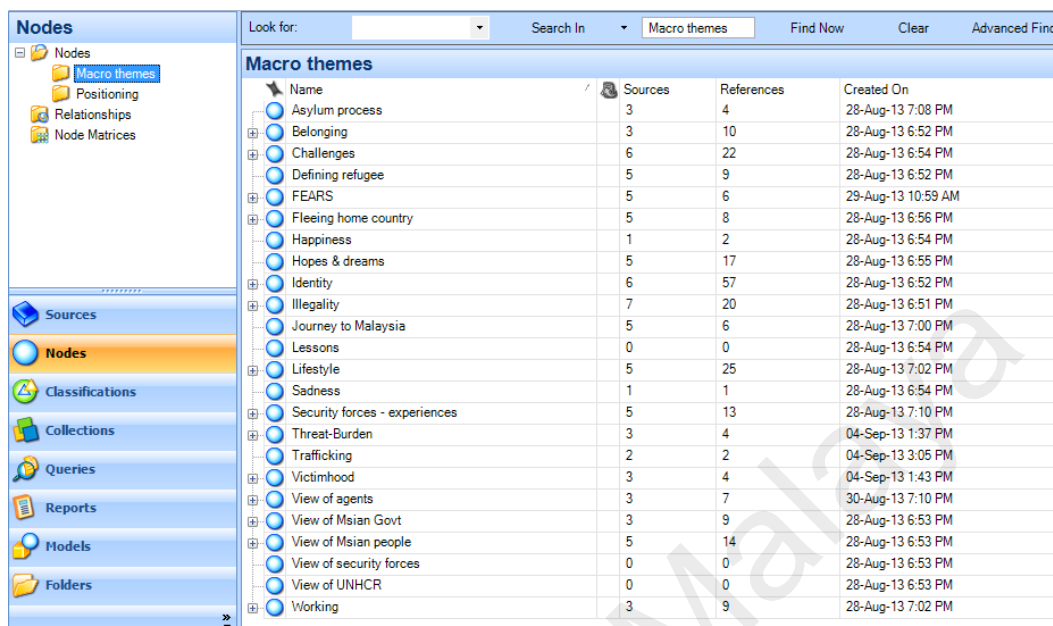
The personal narratives of the refugees were subjected to two types of analysis: thematic analysis and positioning analysis. The findings from these two types of analysis are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

Thematic analysis was carried out on the narratives of all refugee respondents in an attempt to glean a general or big picture perspective about the refugee experience in Malaysia. This part of the analysis included both short-term and long-term refugees. To complement the findings from the thematic analysis, a more in-depth positioning analysis was carried out on three selected long-term refugees - Prince, John and May – who had all been living in Malaysia for about 20 years or more. In the case of the teenagers Prince and John, they were born and raised in Malaysia. The rationale for choosing these three refugees was because they were the respondents, who had been in Malaysia the longest and already assimilated into the local culture. Their experiences of living in Malaysia were undoubtedly different from other short-term and mid-term refugees and needed to be treated differently.

3.5.4.1 Thematic analysis

The narratives of all refugee respondents were coded in the NVivo software into thematic nodes. In the software, nodes are coding strands that can be given any label. All interviews could basically be divided into three parts: i) why refugees left their countries of origin and why and how they came to Malaysia, ii) stories about their lives in Malaysia, and iii) defining "refugee" and responding to existing representations about them in public discourse. Within these sections, portions of the narrative relating to specific themes such as home/belonging, exclusion, illegality, vulnerability, safety, among others

were coded under the appropriate nodes and sub-nodes. Figure 3.5 provides an overview of the thematic nodes, under which the narrative data was coded.

Figure 3.5: Thematic nodes for coding narrative data

Using the analysis query in NVivo, the entire data set was run through the software to search for frequent themes. These frequently appearing nodes in the data set were then categorised again under more general themes. Chapter 7 discusses the three main occurring broad themes under which refugees in this study represented themselves and negotiated the refugee identity.

3.5.4.2 Positioning analysis

The narratives from the three selected long-term refugees were analysed using Bamberg's positioning analysis framework for narratives-in-interaction (or small stories). The analysis process consisted of five main steps. The positioning levels that were analysed were: i) how characters were positioned within the story (level 1), ii) how the narrator positioned himself (and *was* positioned) within the interactive encounter (level

2), and iii) how the narrator positioned a sense of self or identity vis-à-vis dominant discourses or master narratives (refer Chapter 4 for more detail).

The first analytic step was to identify the characters mentioned in a particular story or narrative account and how these characters were positioned by the narrator and with regards to one another within the space and time of the narrative (level 1). Then, I analysed how the narrating was accomplished to prepare for, suspend, resume and complete the story (level 2). The important analytic tools for step two were Labovian story components including internal and external evaluative devices (Labov, 1982, 1997; Labov & Waletzky, 1967). The third step consisted of the analysis of the research interview setting, i.e. how the interviewer asked a question, how the narrator answered it in story form, and what observations could be drawn from that (level 2). In the fourth step, the co-constructed interaction between the interviewer and narrator was analysed (level 2). The focus in this fourth step was not so much on turn-taking as it is in conversational analysis but on positions interlocutors take up for themselves and others as they interact. The final step involved analysis of how the narrator constructed himself/herself in terms of speaker roles and how that established a sense of self of identity in the context of larger discourses that the narrator may have referred to or been aware of. Despite the analysis in positioning level 2 being divided into three steps, the analysis in steps 2-4 was not always reported in the chronological order but instead, presented to enable a better flow and understanding of the extract. The findings from this positioning analysis is presented and discussed at length in Chapter 8.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has presented the overarching theoretical perspective that informed the entire study (3.2) as well as descriptions of the analytical tools used to analyse the media (3.2.2) and narrative (3.5.4) data sets. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the textual analysis of the media data set, while Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings from the narrative analysis.

CHAPTER 4: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis on the representations of asylum seekers and refugees (henceforth ASRs) found in the media data set. The data consists of media texts in Malaysian public discourse over a 10-year period (2003-2012). The representations of ASRs by three voices, (i) the Malaysian government (section 4.2), (ii) opposition leaders and human rights organisations (section 4.3), and (iii) the Malaysian press (section 4.4), will be discussed. The findings presented are a result of analysis using the concordance software, Wordsmith, and more in-depth linguistic analysis (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). The results of the concordance analysis will be presented alongside selected examples and longer extracts, which will be discussed in detail for illustrative purposes. Section 4.2-4.4 will discuss how ASRs were represented by these voices and how these representations were discursively accomplished. The concluding section in this chapter will consist of a discussion on the findings presented here (section 4.5).

In this chapter, the representation of ASRs is analysed together rather than focusing solely on the representation of refugees because ASRs were always referred to collectively instead of separately in the data set. Hence, all references to 'refugees' in this chapter refer to the representation of the larger asylum population in the data set unless stated otherwise. Small sections of this chapter include analyses also found in Don and Lee (2014), which was an academic paper generated from the textual analysis in this study[5].

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[5] Don, Z. M., & Lee, C. (2014). Representing immigrants as illegals, threats and victims in Malaysia: Elite voices in the media. *Discourse & Society, 25*(6), 687-705. Please refer to the List of Publications and Papers Presented for full paper.

4.2   Refugee representation by government voices

Due to the lack of any official legislation or policy regarding refugees, most of the fate of the asylum population is played out in public discourse, particularly through statements made by top government leaders, which then may or may not result in an ad hoc procedure for managing refugees. The government's 'policies' on refugees have mainly been reactive rather than proactive due to the history of the management of all migratory and refugee movement in the country (Kaur, 2007a, p. 80) and it is their reactions that are reported in the media. The representation of refugees by Malaysian government voices consists of three main representations: (ii) refugees as illegal immigrants (4.2.1), (ii) refugees as threats (4.2.2), and (iii) refugees as victims (4.2.3). Each representation will be discussed in turn in this section. Here, 'refugees' refers to ASRs unless stated otherwise because the government voices generally do not make a distinction between refugees and asylum seekers.

4.2.1 Refugees as illegal immigrants

Under the two previous Prime Ministers, Mahathir Mohamad and Abdullah Badawi, the narrative of ASRs in Malaysia centred around the theme of ASRs as illegal immigrants or illegals, 'told from the perspective of 'us', a national perspective. The main thrust of this representation is the construction of the illegality of ASRs. This is achieved in several ways.

4.2.1.1 Refugee status

(a) NOT refugees

One way refugees were constructed as illegal immigrants was through the government's definition of the asylum population. The government frequently stated that

ASRs were *not* refugees. In transitivity terms, refugees as carriers in relational attributive

processes were constructed in relation to what they were not, i.e. not asylum seekers or

refugees. Table 4.1 provides the attributes used to dismiss the status of refugees:

Table 4.1: The use of 'not' to dismiss refugee status

	Item
1.	not asylum seekers
2.	not refugees
3.	not under the UNHCR's watch
4.	people who are not eligible in our country
5.	not classified as refugees
4.	not all who say they are refugees are political refugees

Items 1-2 simply represent the asylum population as either 'not asylum seekers' or

'not refugees'. Items 3-6 mean the same thing using different phrases. In item 4, the

asylum population is referred to as 'not under the UNHCR's watch', which implies that

because they are not refugees because UNHCR deals with refugees. A similar strategy is

employed in items 5 and 6, where the asylum population is defined as not falling under

the category of refugees (item 5) and in item 6, specifying between political refugees and

other refugees, the former being the only acceptable type of refugee.

(b) Malaysia not subject to international law

This refusal to accept refugee status is also achieved through the government's

assertion that it is not party to the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and

therefore, not subject to international or UNHCR laws. Table 4.2 lists down the instances

when the government has asserted its sovereignty and autonomy as well as its authority over UNHCR.

Table 4.2: Malaysia asserting authority over international law

	Utterance
1.	Malaysia did not sign
2.	Malaysia/country has not signed
3.	Malaysia is not a signatory
4.	Does/will not recognise
5.	If the UNHCR wishes to appeal after these people are arrested, then it is up to them. But it is up to us whether we accept the appeal or not.
4.	it is not right for UNHCR to register the Acehnese as possible refugees when they are not refugees.
7.	it (UNHCR) should not be taking people except for those who really have a problem and it should inform us.

1-4 all has to do with Malaysia's recognition of the Refugee Convention and this was achieved through the representation of Malaysia as agent in not signing or recognising refugees. In 1, 2 and 4, Malaysia is given the role of *actor* in the material processes of not signing the Convention and not recognising refugees. Utterance 3 is most frequently used and here, government voices assign Malaysia the attribute of not being a signatory (Halliday, 1985). In utterance 5, the UNCHR's right to appeal on behalf of arrested asylum seekers was subordinated to the Malaysian government's authority and sovereignty as stated in no uncertain terms in the second sentence, 'But it is up to us whether we accept the appeal or not.' Note the sharp contrast here between [+power] and [–power].

In 5 and 6, government voices employed legitimation based on the personal authority of the government. They represented themselves as the source of authority on deciding

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whether the UNHCR's actions were right or in both cases, not right. Again in 7 the UNHCR is being passivated as having to 'inform' the government about who it is taking in. This point is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.1.3.

Another way government voices asserted its non-recognition of refugee status was through the negation of the modal verb *should* in examples 4.1 and 4.2:

Example 4.1:

Malaysia's preparation to deal with an expected influx of Thai refugees <u>should not be interpreted as an offer of safe shelter to anyone</u>.

Source: Preparation 'not an offer of safe shelter', Star, 2 May 2004.

Example 4.2:

(1) "It works like this. (2) If a situation in a given country is considered unsafe or unstable, we sometimes give temporary shelter to the citizens of that country who are suffering from the situation on a humanitarian basis. (3) <u>That should not be taken as a sign that we recognise them as refugees or political asylum seekers</u>," Syed Hamid said.

Source: 'Thais not given status of refugees', Star, 2 September 2005.

The argument in both examples is structured in the same way. The clause in 4.1 of Malaysia's action, i.e. 'preparation to deal with an influx of Thai refugees' is juxtaposed with a disclaimer, beginning with 'should not' with 'interpreted', which qualifies what that action is not ('an offer of safe shelter'). Similarly in 4.2, the result of the action of giving shelter in (2) is mitigated with the clause in (3), again marked with the negated modal verb 'should not' with 'be taken' to justify Malaysia's non-recognition of ASRs.

Example 4.3:

The government is considering training female refugees to work as maids to help alleviate a shortage of foreign domestic workers, Home Minister Azmi Khalid said on Tuesday. "Of course this does not mean we encourage new refugees to come to the country," he said.

Source: 'Govt mulls training refugees as maids', Malaysiakini, 10 August 2005.

(c) Conflation of ASRs with illegal immigrants or workers

Analysis of the data set consistently showed that the government maintained its stand that asylum seekers and refugees would be classified as 'illegal immigrants' and treated accordingly. There was no distinction made between ASRs and illegal immigrants and the former was included into the latter group. This strategy, according to van Leeuwen's categorisation, is *genericisation*. This representation of ASRs as illegal immigrants conflates them into the category that is usually used to describe migrant workers who enter Malaysia to seek employment without any legal documentation, which is a violation of immigration laws. This study argues that the choice to use the term 'immigrant' rather than the more general term 'migrant' is in itself significant. The term migrant includes various types of movements of people and can commonly be divided into *sojourners*, who do not stay anywhere permanently and *immigrants* (Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). Immigrants, in the definition provided by Matsaganis et al., refer to migrants who enter another country with the intention of staying permanently. The United Nations and International Organization for Migration do not use the term 'immigrant' but 'migrant' to describe the different groups of people movement. 'Irregular' is preferred over 'illegal' because the latter denotes a criminal quality.

4.2.1.2 'illegal', 'illegal immigrant' and 'foreign'

Predication was a common strategy to construct ASRs as illegal immigrants. In the corpus of 80 news articles containing government statements, the adjective *illegal* occurred 77 times and was used with *immigrant* 49 times. It was also used with *migrant* seven times. *Illegals* occurred 15 times and the adverb *illegally* occurred two times. ASRs are described as illegals or illegal immigrants, thus making them vulnerable to the consequences of being illegal in Malaysia, i.e. punishment for immigration offences such as arrests, detention or deportation. They are not distinguished from immigrants who enter Malaysia illegally to work and instead are conflated into the larger category of illegal immigrants.

The illegal immigrant is also considered a foreigner and therefore not a citizen and is in violation of Malaysian immigration laws. The adjective 'foreign' is second most commonly used adjective and occurred 70 times in relation to immigrants and ASRs. It occurred 28 in relation to *workers* and three times in the phrase 'illegal foreign workers'. Example 4.4 below is taken from a statement made by the Home Affairs Minister in 2005, Azmi Khalid, concerning the Myanmar Rohingya refugees and illustrates how foreign workers, illegals and refugees are conflated into the same category:

Example 4.4:

(1) We think they should be absorbed into the labour force. (2) We have to find ways to organise them because it will be a waste if they are here and we don't recognise them or we don't give them the opportunity. (3a) Like it or not, they are here so it's better if we give them jobs rather than not (3b) and we have foreign workers anyway, so <u>why can't we make them foreign workers too</u>?

Source: 'Minister: Rohingyas will be absorbed into local workforce', Malaysiakini, 8 April 2005.

In sentence (2) of 4.4, the minister justifies his suggestion to absorb the Rohingyas into the workforce by arguing that it would be 'a waste' if they were residing in Malaysia without being put to use. Sentence (3) is used to legitimise this argument further. In sentence (3a), legitimation through rationality by way of explanation is used. The suggestion ('it's better if we give them jobs rather than not') is legitimised because of the explanation given ('Like it or not, they are here'). Similarly in (3b), the suggestion is presented in the form of a question ('why can't we make them foreign workers too?') is legitimised by an explanation, i.e. because 'we have foreign workers anyway'. To the Home Affairs Minister, one migrant is the same as another, whether refugees or foreign workers, and all of them are viewed as commodities or human resources.

4.2.1.3 Passivation of refugees

The ideological work undertaken by the government to transform ASRs into illegal immigrants is a form of statecraft that Devetak (1995) described as a 'boundary producing political performance' that functions to establish the notion of the sovereign state. The preservation and protection of the sovereignty of the state requires certain measures of control and monitoring. The Malaysian government activates itself as responsible for these measures of control, naturally passivating ASRs at the same time, and this section discusses this in detail.

The government voice often activates itself in relation to the UNHCR and does the same with refugees. Refugees are almost always passivated as being subject to action by the government. This is realised in a number of ways. According to van Leeuwen (2008c), passivation can be further divided into two categories: the social actor can be *subjected* or *beneficialised* (p. 33). Analysis on the data revealed a higher occurrence of refugees being subjected. The most common passivation strategy is *participation*, where the

passivated refugees are subjected according to Halliday's framework on transitivity structures (1985) as *goal* in material processes, *phenomenon* in mental processes, or *carrier* in effective attributive processes (p. 43). *Circumstantialisation* is also employed to subject refugees to the government's actions.

(a) Material processes

The material processes used by government voices to passivate refugees included allow, arrest, recognise, absorb, deport, release, treat, detain, accept, hold, and return (send back). ***Allow*** was frequently used in the corpus, mostly occurring with *ASRs*. The government was always Senser with regards to ASRs as seen in examples 4.5 to 4.7 below.

Example 4.5:

(1) We have always treated it under one law. (2) Anybody who comes into the country without proper documentation will be considered illegal. (3) If <u>they</u> <u>are</u> <u>allowed to stay</u>, <u>we allow</u> it more on a humanitarian basis.

Source: Refugees 'a perennial problem for Malaysia', New Straits Times, 18 April 2007.

Example 4.6:

(1) We don't recognise the UNHCR's action but on humanitarian grounds, we release them. … (2) "But if the refugees are big in number, we won't release them. If only two or three, <u>we allow them to go.</u>"

Source: 'Home Ministry To Prepare Cabinet Paper On Refugee Woes – Radzi', Bernama, 1 February 2007.

Example 4.7:

(1) Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman said the government needed to weigh all the pros and cons before implementing the new policy.

(2) "We have to study this in detail. (3) It will benefit the country if <u>refugees</u> with certain expertise are <u>allowed to work</u> while they are here," he said.

Source: 'Government may allow refugees to work', Star, 22 February 2010.

In example 4.5, the Foreign Minister in 2007, Syed Hamid Albar, states the Malaysian government's policy on refugees with regards to the country's laws. In (2), the carrier, 'anybody who comes into the country without proper documentation', is given the attribute 'illegal'. In (3), the conditional clause is used in the passive form and the subordinate clause identifies the *Actor* responsible for allowing refugees to stay, which is 'we', i.e. the Malaysian government. The reason given is a humanitarian one.

Example 4.6 is another instance where humanitarianism is given as the reason the government shows refugees mercy. The Home Affairs Minister in 2007, Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, refers to refugees being held in detention following immigration raids on illegal migrants and in (1), the UNHCR is passivated with regards to the government's non-recognition of its authority. The *but* conjunction allows Radzi to highlight the fact that the government is making an exception to 'release them'. (2) starts off with 'but' as well and this time he presents a first hypothetical situation, i.e. 'we won't release them', which is dependent on the phrase, 'if the refugees are big in number'. A second hypothetical situation is given in (3), 'If only two or three, we allow them to go.' What this statement really means is that the government's mercy for release is conditional, depending on the number of refugees held in detention. A large number is seen as threatening, whereas the government could make an exception for a few refugees only. The UNHCR and the refugees are subjected to the Malaysian government's authority and discretion in this matter.

In example 4.7, the Foreign Minister in 2010 was speaking about the prospect of allowing registered refugees to work in Malaysia. Once again as seen in sentence (3), the government was activated, while refugees and the country were passivated. The country is beneficialised as receiving benefit from the government's decision to allow refugees to work, while the refugees themselves are subjected social actors.

Refugees were also passivated with regards to punitive action taken against them by the government. This can be seen in the material processes *arrest*, *deport*, *detain*, *hold*, and *release*, in which refugees were assigned the role of goal. **Arrest** occurred 12 times, four times with either *asylum seekers* or *refugees* and three times with *illegals* or *illegal immigrants*. It occurred twice with *Acehnese* and also once each with '*Myanmar nationals*', '*these people*' and *'those who are arrested'*. Some examples are given below.

Example 4.8:

"When we arrest them (refugees), the UNHCR will come and say they are under its care."

Source: 'Home Ministry To Prepare Cabinet Paper On Refugee Woes – Radzi', Bernama, 1 February 2007.

Example 4.9:

"They will be treated as illegal immigrants hence subject to arrest and deportation."

Source: 'No asylum for Acehnese, says PM', Malaysiakini, 28 August 2003.

Refugees were similarly assigned the role of goal with regards to *deport* and *detain* nine and seven times respectively. **Deport** was used with *Acehnese*, *illegal immigrants*, *asylum seekers and refugees*, *foreigners* and *Myanmar*. **Detain** was used with *Myanmar nationals*, and once each with *refugees*, *illegals*, and *'those detained for various immigration related offences'* and *not detain* with *'anyone who did not break any laws'*.

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In example 4.10 below, we can see the use of *deport*, which was a common strategy used to passivate the Acehnese refugees in 2003.

Example 4.10:

Abdullah, who is also the home minister, was reported saying yesterday that Malaysia's stand on the Acehnese asylum seekers would be no different from that on other illegal immigrants, and they would be deported. (…)

"We never send people to conflict areas," Abdullah said when asked about the UNHCR's statement.

He said Malaysia's policy has always been to deport all illegal immigrants but noted it has also helped UNHCR send refugees to third countries for resettlement.

Source: 'Gov't mulls temporary stay for 250 detained Acehnese', Malaysiakini, 21 August 2003.

Detain was used frequently in reference to Myanmar nationals in the context of the attempted Myanmar deal by the Home Affairs Minister at the time, Hishamuddin Hussein and the extract below is one such example:

Example 4.11:

(Malaysia and Myanmar have agreed in principle to exchange detainees, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein announced today, sparking concern among human rights groups. He said the exchange will help reduce congestion at immigration depots nationwide.) "There are about 1,000 Myanmar nationals detained at immigration depots for various immigration related offences".

Source: 'M'sia and Myanmar sign exchange detainees deal', The Sun Daily, 18 October 2011.

Hold was always used in the past tense, *held*, and occurred once with *Acehnese* and twice with *Myanmar nationals*. **Release** occurred with *refugees*, *people with UNHCR identification* or *cards*, and once each with *asylum seekers*, *Thai refugees* and *Acehnese*.

Example 4.12:

(1) "When we arrest them (refugees), the UNHCR will come and say they are under its care. (2) We don't recognise the UNHCR's action but on humanitarian grounds, we <u>release</u> <u>them</u>. (3) Moreover, they're being monitored by the UNHCR. (4) "But if the refugees are big in number, we won't <u>release</u> <u>them</u>."

Source: 'Home Ministry To Prepare Cabinet Paper On Refugee Woes – Radzi', Bernama, 1 February 2007.

In sentences (2) and (4), refugees, deictically referred to as *them* and as passivated in the material process *release*, are subject to the government's authority in dealing with them.

(b) Mental processes

Two mental processes used to passivate ASRs were *recognise* and *accept*, where ASRs were given the role of Phenomenon. Table 4.3 below is a list of the phenomena the occurred with ***recognise*** and instances where ASRs were referred to as circumstantial.

Table 4.3: Phenomena and circumstantials with mental process 'recognise'

Phenomenon	Circumstantial: Role (as what)
Asylum seekers and refugees	Political asylum seekers and refugees
Political asylum seekers and refugees	Foreign workers
Burmese Rohingya Muslims	A new group of refugees
Rohingyas, Chins, Acehnese and Filipinos	

As phenomonen, *ASRs* were specified as *political* asylum seekers and refugees. The *Burmese Rohingya Muslims* were also given the role of phenomenon. the associated group *Rohingyas and Chins from Myanmar, Acehnese and Filipinos* was also specified as phenomenon.

Examples 4.13 and 4.14 illustrate how ASRs were represented as phenomena with *recognise*:

Example 4.13:

Malaysia did not sign and ratify the agreement on refugees. We do not <u>recognise</u> and <u>accept</u> <u>UNHCR-hosted refugees</u>.

Source: 'Home Ministry To Prepare Cabinet Paper On Refugee Woes – Radzi', Bernama, 1 February 2007.

Example 4.14:

"That should not be taken as a sign that we <u>recognise</u> <u>them</u> <u>as refugees or political asylum seekers</u>," Syed Hamid said.

Source: 'Thais not given status of refugees', The Star, 2 September 2005.

In example 4.14, ASRs are represented as phenomenon deictically as *them* and as circumstantial, i.e. 'as refugees or political asylum seekers'. Similarly in example 4.15 below, we see how refugee groups from Myanmar, Aceh and the Philippines as assigned the role of phenomenon and circumstantial *foreign workers*.

Example 4.15:

"Once the <u>Rohingyas and Chins from Myanmar, Acehnese and Filipinos</u> are <u>recognised as foreign workers</u>, they can contribute to the economy of the country," Azmi told reporters after the Cabinet committee on foreign workers met yesterday.

Source: 'UNHCR refugees to be allowed to work here', Star, 6 July 2005.

Example 4.16 below is an example of how ASRs are constructed as phenomenon ('them') and circumstantial, 'refugees or political asylum seekers':

Example 4.16:

"It works like this. If a situation in a given country is considered unsafe or unstable, we sometimes give temporary shelter to the citizens of that country who are suffering from the situation on a humanitarian basis. That should not be taken as a sign that we <u>recognise them</u> <u>as refugees or political asylum seekers</u>," Syed Hamid said.

Source: 'Thais not given status of refugees', Star, 2 September 2005.

From these excerpts, it can be observed that *recognise* was usually employed in the negative, as in the government as Senser not recognising ASRs. As far as government officials were concerned, as can be seen in example 4.15, it was only when refugees were recognised as foreign workers, were they deemed legal and allowed to work in Malaysia.

Accept functioned in a similar way to *recognise* when used by government voices as it activated the government as having the authority to acknowledge the presence of ASRs in Malaysia on the one hand and on the other hand, passivated ASRs as subject to the government's decision to receive and acknowledge them. This can be seen in example 4.17:

Example 4.17:

Hishamuddin said the swap could reduce the number of refugees in the country as Australia would accept 4,000 refugees from Malaysia and send out 800 in exchange.

"While the number sent here may not achieve the target, the country (Australia) will continue with its commitment to <u>accept 4,000 refugees</u> as agreed."

Source: 'Asylum seeker swap can repair Malaysia's image: Hisham', Star, 23 June 2011.

(c) Circumstantialisation

ASRs were passivated through the use of circumstantialisation by means of prepositional phrases using *against* and *of*. *Take action against* was used once each with *'anyone who is here illegally'* and *'UNHCR refugees'*. *Against* occurred twice more with *not discriminate against* in:

Example 4.18:

"We gave aid, we <u>did not discriminate against them</u>."

Source: Refugees 'a perennial problem for Malaysia', New Straits Times, 18 April 2007.

and with protecting Malaysian borders example 4.19:

"While it is truly understandable that all sides of the Parliament want to employ the most effective policy for the country <u>to protect its borders against illegal arrivals</u>, its action in bringing down and tarnishing the good name of another country is uncalled for."

Source: 'Malaysia angry over Australian criticism', Sydney Morning Herald, 13 August 2012.

Refugees were also passivated through the use of the nouns *treatment, return* and *recognition* with the preposition *of*. The *treatment of refugees* occurred four times, e.g. in these two examples:

Example 4.20:

Australian opposition lawmakers are welcome to visit Malaysia to inspect the standard of <u>treatment of refugees</u> in the country, Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said yesterday.

Source: `Aussie MPs are welcome to visit', New Straits Times, 24 June 2011.

Example 4.21:

> Hishammuddin vowed that asylum seekers Australia sent to Malaysia under the
> plan would not be abused and that Malaysia was working to improve the <u>treatment
> of refugees and illegal workers</u> in the country.
>
> *Source: `Nauru solution won't stop human traffickers', New Straits Times, 17
> September 2011.*

Recognition occurred once with *of* in example 4.22:

> "At that time the agreement with the UNHCR was that a third country would
> receive them. That was the position (only in respect to Vietnamese boat people)
> then but it is not supposed to mean a change of position in respect of <u>recognition
> of refugees or asylum seekers</u>."
>
> *Source: Refugees 'a perennial problem for Malaysia', New Straits Times, 18 April
> 2007.*

Return occurred once with *of* in example 4.23:

> "The strategies and methods to create a safe and conducive environment for the
> <u>return of refugees</u> are steps that OIC countries should discuss expeditiously."
>
> *Source: 'The real answer to refugee woes', Star, 14 May 2012.*

4.2.1.4 Legitimating ASRs as illegal

Legitimation is another strategy used by government voices to justify representing
ASRs as illegal immigrants. Many of the examples of legitimation strategies overlap with
the other strategies mentioned in sub-sections 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.1.2. This section will not
discuss all instances of legitimation to avoid a repeat of examples already discussed in
detail above but will select several interesting examples.

(a) Authorisation

Legitimation based on the reference to authority is a frequently used legitimation strategy. There are numerous occasions when government leaders and security officials make a claim of ***personal authority***, i.e. 'because I say so'. For example, as employed by the Home Affairs Minister in 2007, Radzi Sheikh Ahmad in the example below.

Example 4.24:

(1) "Malaysia did not sign and ratify the agreement on refugees. (2) We do not recognise and accept UNHCR-hosted refugees. (3) Although the UNHCR is here, it's only because Malaysia is a member of the United Nations along with other countries. (4) We accept UNHCR's presence (in our country) but we don't recognise their powers".

Source: 'Home Ministry To Prepare Cabinet Paper On Refugee Woes – Radzi', Bernama, 1 February 2007.

Sentence (1) addresses what Malaysia did not do, i.e. sign the refugee convention and this is followed by legitimating sentences in (2)-(4). The activated social actor here is identified in (1) and (3) as 'Malaysia' and in (2) and (4) as 'we' and is responsible the act of not recognising refugees (sentence 2) and not recognising UNHCR powers (sentence 4).

Legitimation by reference to ***impersonal authority***, i.e. to the law of the land, was also used to represent ASRs as illegal immigrants. One such example is the statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003, Abdullah Badawi:

Example 4.25:

(1) Malaysia's stand on the asylum seekers from the war-torn Indonesian province of Aceh would be no different to that on other illegal immigrants, said Abdullah, who is also the home minister.

(2) "If foreigners are found without valid entry permits, they will be sent back. (3) This is the law of the country," he was quoted as saying by the Malay Mail newspaper.

Source: 'Malaysia vows to deport 250 Acehnese despite UN protests', AFP, 21 August 2003.

Abdullah is first indirectly quoted in sentence (1) genericizing asylum seekers as illegal immigrants and foreigners. Sentence (2) states the consequences for 'foreigners… without valid entry permits' and this statement is justified by the reference to impersonal authority in (3), i.e. 'the law of the country'.

Example 4.26 is taken from a news article reporting the reaction of immigration and police officials to the public statement made by the UNHCR Commissioner, Voller Turk, earlier on that the government would spare ASRs from the 2005 crackdown on illegal immigrants.

Example 4.26:

(1) ...immigration department representative Ramli Halim and police representative Supt Abdullah Hamid said their respective departments have yet to receive any directives on the matter.

(2) "We (immigration department) are one of the (many) enforcement agencies here today. (3) Our function is to enforce laws such as the Immigration Act and Passports Act. (4) We are directed by the government and that is as it stands now," said Ramli.

(5) However, he said if Turk's claim was true and if a directive is issued to his department, it will be abided by. (6) Similarly, the police department ensured its compliance if it was made official.

(7) "We will toe the line and ensure that we'll do what we're told to and not unnecessarily arrest and detain them, once we get directives from the top," said Abdullah.

(8) The police officer, however, criticised Turk's argument that Malaysia was subject to international law despite not being a signatory to the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention which governs rules that protect asylum seekers.

(9) "Don't quote principles of international law to us. (10) When it comes to refugees in Malaysia, international law to us is dead," he said.

Source: 'Govt agencies: No directive to spare refugees in 2005 dragnet', Malaysiakini, 15 December 2004.

The whole premise of example 4.26 is based on the argument that the Malaysian government is the final authority on how ASRs are viewed, i.e. as illegal immigrants. In sentence (2), Ramli identifies who 'we' is, i.e. 'one of the (many) enforcement agencies' and in sentence (3), he states the function of the department 'to enforce laws'. Sentences (4) and (6) reinforce the authority of the government and how the immigration department is merely enforcing 'directives from the top' (7). In sentence (7), the police are activated as Actor in 'toeing the line', and 'doing what they're told' by spokesperson, Abdullah. Yet, both phrases mean the police department's submission to 'the top', which is the Malaysian government. The imperative in sentence (9) is a response to the suggestion that Malaysia has to abide by international law and it is then reiterated by the adverb clause in (9), 'When it comes to refugees in Malaysia' and the following statement 'international law to us is dead'. Once again, the UNHCR's position and international law is subjected to the country's law.

(b) Rationalisation

Despite clearly stating repeatedly that ASRs are illegal immigrants and that Malaysia does not recognise the refugee convention, yet there have been many occasions when the government have spoken about the possibility of recruiting refugees to work in the lower

skilled jobs, such as in construction and domestic service. The strategy frequently used in the corpus to discuss this option is *rationalisation*.

In examples 4.27 and 4.28, the Home Affairs Minister in 2005, Azmi Khalid, is quoted speaking about allowing refugees to work.

Example 4.27:

> (1) "We know that in Malaysia there are refugees registered with the UN refugee agency. (2) <u>Since they are in Malaysia</u>, we will allow them to work. (3) They will be issued with a temporary work permit," said Home Affairs Minister Azmi Khalid.
>
> *Source: 'Green light for refugees to work to solve labour crunch', Malaysiakini, 6 July 2005.*

Example 4.28:

> (1) The government is considering training female refugees to work as maids to help alleviate a shortage of foreign domestic workers, Home Minister Azmi Khalid said on Tuesday. (2) "The females who are healthy and want to work as domestic maids, we will allow them to be trained and absorbed into the workforce," Azmi told AFP.
>
> ... (3) <u>"Some of them have been here for some time. (4) They speak the language and understand our culture as well so they can enter all categories of workers,"</u> he said.
>
> *Source: 'Govt mulls training refugees as maids', Malaysiakini, 10 August 2005.*

In both examples, the use of *theoretical rationalisation* by way of *explanation* as defined by van Leeuwen (2008) is used to legitimise transforming the refugee into a foreign worker, while still maintaining their illegal status. In other words, refugees are still recognised as illegal but an exception is made for them in order to allow them to enter the labour market. The reasons given centred on opportune factors, such as their current residence in Malaysia in 4.27 ('Since they are in Malaysia') and the length of their stay

and their understanding of local language and culture in 4.28 ('Some of them have been here for some time. They speak the language and understand our culture as well…').

Example 4.29 from the same period in 2005 is one instance of the use of *goal orientation* under the *instrumental rationalisation* category to legitimise recruiting refugees. The formula of goal orientation is basically, 'I do *x* in order to do (or be, or have) *y*' (van Leeuwen, p. 114).

Example 4.29:

(1) "For those who are here that cannot go back due to political pressure in their homeland, <u>we cannot allow them to be beggars... (2) we want them to be working under umbrellas that we will create for them so they can get jobs and the women can be trained to be domestic maids.</u>"

Source: 'Crackdown against illegals to intensify: Azmi', Malaysiakini, 3 March 2005.

The actions, 'we cannot allow them to be beggars' (1) and 'we want them to be working under umbrellas that we will create for them' (2) are to achieve the goal, 'so they can get jobs and the women can be trained to be domestic maids' (2). In example 4.30, the same point is argued using *means orientation*, where 'the purpose is constructed as in the action' or the formula, '*x*-ing serves to achieve being (or doing, or having) *y*' (p. 114).

Example 4.30:

<u>"Once the Rohingyas and Chins from Myanmar, Acehnese and Filipinos are recognised as foreign workers, they can contribute to the economy of the country,"</u> Azmi told reporters after the Cabinet committee on foreign workers met yesterday.

Source: 'UNHCR refugees to be allowed to work here', The Star, 6 July 2005.

In this case, the action of recognising the different refugee groups as 'foreign workers' achieves the purpose of having them 'contribute to the economy of the country'.

Examples of the use of *theoretical rationalisation* through *definition* are those also found in sub-section 4.2.1.1 (under the heading 'NOT refugees') and discussed in detail there.

4.2.1.5 ASRs as numbers and statistics

The government made use of numbers and statistics, what van Leeuwen refers to as *aggregation*, to refer to ASRs as a homogeneous group, e.g. 'more than 4,000 being taken by Australia', 'the number', 'the 800 sent here', '50 per cent fall in the number of boatpeople', 'dozens', 'the vast majority', 'thousands more'. References to 'boats' and 'boatload' also aggregated the ASRs. According to van Leeuwen, aggregation could be used as a tool for manufacturing consensus of opinion by a majority group (2008c, p. 37) but in the case of this study, the aggregation of ASRs served as a way to represent the group as indeterminate, anonymous and impersonal. The indeterminate or unknown can be utilised to fuel fear as can be seen underlined in the statement made by the former Home Ministry deputy secretary-general Raja Azahar Raja Abdul Manap in 2011:

Example 4.31:

(1) Raja Azahar notes that <u>the number of registered refugees</u> in Malaysia have <u>more than doubled</u> over the past six years -- from <u>40,000 in 2004 to 94,000</u> at the end of April.

(2) <u>Thousands more</u> are waiting for their claims to be processed. (3) "If Malaysia does not do something, <u>the number will keep increasing</u>."

Source: Hopes and fears of a novel refugee deal, New Straits Times, 6 June 2011.

4.2.1.6 Case studies: Aceh and Thai Muslim refugees

This sub-section will discuss a more detailed analysis of the discursive strategies used by the government to represent refugees as illegal immigrants during two events in 2003 and 2005 relating to asylum seekers that fled to Malaysia from Aceh and South Thailand respectively.

(a) Acehnese refugees in 2003

In 2003, large numbers of Acehnese civilians fled to Malaysia seeking refuge from the military operations and martial law imposed by Indonesian security forces in Aceh. In May 2003 before the Acehnese refugees started entering the country, the then Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi was quoted stating that preparations were underway to expect a large number of Acehnese trying to enter the country. Police officials were quoted at the time highlighting the fact that the expected Acehnese refugees would be treated differently from illegal immigrants because they were 'people migrating because of war and not… illegal immigrants'. In example 4.32, an unnamed police spokesperson is quoted.

Example 4.32:

(1) "Previously, <u>some people came from Aceh</u> but <u>they came as illegal immigrants</u> to seek a living. (2) So <u>they were classified as illegal immigrants,</u>" he explained. (3) "But in this case, (incoming refugees) will be treated as <u>people migrating because of war</u> and <u>not as illegal immigrants</u>."

Source: 'Flood of Acehnese refugees expected, preparations underway', Malaysiakini, 21 May 2003.

Here, the spokesperson identifies one group of migrants, who 'came from Aceh' 'as illegal immigrants' in sentence (1). This group is then passivated as being subjected to classification as 'illegal immigrants'. Sentence (3) begins with 'But in this case', which

makes the social actor identified in that sentence (asylum seekers from Aceh) an exception to the rule, i.e. 'people migrating because of war'.

However, as the numbers of arrivals started increasing, the status of the Acehnese was altered from that of people needing help to illegal immigrants. The Malaysian government then insisted that the Acehnese were not refugees. The Prime Minister at the time, Mahathir Mohamad, was quoted in August 2003, speaking otherwise about the Acehnese.

Example 4.33:

(1) Malaysia will not grant asylum to <u>those who flee here from the war-torn Indonesian province of Aceh</u>, said Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today. (2) "They will be <u>treated as illegal immigrants</u> hence <u>subject to arrest and deportation</u>…" … (3) "<u>We want to determine</u> where the migrants take off from in Indonesia, where they land in Malaysia, which one is legal, the points of entry, etc, and if they are illegal, how do we repatriate them," he added.

Source: 'No asylum for Acehnese, says PM', Malaysiakini, 28 August 2003.

In example 4.33, Malaysia is activated in its intention not to grant asylum (1), to treat the Acehnese as illegal immigrants (2) and wanting information pertaining to the migrants (3). The migrants are passivated in sentences (1) and (2). In sentence (3), the migrants are represented as active social actors in the subordinate clauses taking part in actions such as taking off from Indonesia, landing and entering into Malaysia, and given attributes such as legal and illegal. Malaysia, in wanting to determine the specifics of these activities, is represented as attempting to patrol and control its borders against the migrants. Rather than highlighting the need of the Acehnese, this statement securitises them by identifying their illegal status.

In a similar tone, the Deputy Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, was widely reported saying:

Example 4.34:

(1) Malaysia's stand on the asylum seekers from the war-torn Indonesian province of Aceh would be <u>no different to that on other illegal immigrants</u>, said Abdullah, who is also the home minister. (2) "If <u>foreigners</u> are <u>found without valid entry permits</u>, they will be sent back. (3) This is the law of the country."

Source: 'Malaysia vows to deport 250 Acehnese despite UN protests', AFP, 21 August 2003.

In sentence (1), the asylum seekers are referred to as 'illegal immigrants' and in sentence (2) as 'foreigners' 'found without valid entry permits'. Two things are happening within these statements. Firstly, by redefining ASRs as 'foreigners' and more specifically, 'illegal immigrants', ASRs are being conflated into the illegal immigrant category. Secondly, the government leaders make claims to the personal authority of the government as head of the state (sentence 1) and the impersonal authority of the laws of the country (sentence 3) to legitimise sending the Acehnese back.

Tribbett (2004) attributes Malaysia's reaction and treatment of the Acehnese refugees to two factors: (i) the fear of 'flooding' by refugees and illegals alike and the economic burden that would place on the country's economy, and (ii) the desire to placate its powerful neighbour, Indonesia, and other ASEAN countries in the region.

Tribbett quotes an Inter Press Service journalist, Kuppusamy, to support his arguments of Malaysia's fear of migrant flooding:

Government officials have often privately said that Malaysia's refusal to ratify the U.N. convention is partly prompted by fears that refugees from countries like the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam that have perennial refugee problems would swamp the country. A senior government official, who requested anonymity, said Malaysia is a small nation with porous borders in a region with potentially explosive refugee problems. 'Like the Vietnamese boat people—anybody in the region just has to take a boat and in a matter of hours would reach our shores,' he said. 'We don't want to open floodgates that would overwhelm the nation.'

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One of the hallmarks of the ASEAN coalition is the commitment to respecting each member state's 'independence, sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity' (Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), n.d.). In the spirit of non-interference, Malaysia has often preferred not to comment on domestic issues in other ASEAN member states, even if it concerned human rights violations. In the case of Aceh, Malaysia's refusal to recognise them as refugees would not impose on Indonesia's sovereignty. Selected deportations of Acehnese refugees served to save Indonesia's 'face' and yet not draw too much attention from international human rights groups (Tribbett, 2004: 37).

In 2005, there was a shift in the perspective regarding Aceh and its people in Malaysia. Nah & Bunnell (2005) attributes this change in perspective partly to the 2004 tsunami that hit Asia. Following extensive news coverage and images in the mainstream media on the devastation of the tsunami and its crippling effects on the Acehnese people, Malaysian leaders sought ways to provide aid for the victims and to help rebuild Aceh (p. 253). Speaking about the government's 2005 crackdown on and massive deportation of illegal immigrants, the Home Affairs Minister, Azmi Khalid, explained that the crackdown would not apply to the Acehnese because the government was 'sympathetic' to their plight (see example 4.35). In sentences (2) and (3), Azmi activates the government as carrier in the attributive process ('we are very sympathetic'), actor in the material process ('will not send them back') and senser in the mental process ('we know the extent of damage').

Example 4.35:

(1) He said enforcement officers carrying out raids had been told to release Acehnese found without travel documents.

(2) "<u>We are very sympathetic to their cause</u> and <u>will not send them back</u>. (3) <u>We know the extent of damage</u> that the tsunami caused in the province," he said.

Source: 'Aceh illegals to be spared detention', New Straits Times, 2 March 2005.

Yet, this generosity to Aceh did not really extend to the Acehnese refugees still staying in Malaysia. Just two days later, the Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak spoke differently about the crackdown and this can be seen in example 4.34.

Example 4.36:

(1) "We will take action against anyone who is here illegally. (2) There is no exemption on this including those who are carrying letters, genuine or otherwise, from the UNHCR.

(3) If the UNHCR wishes to appeal after these people are arrested, then it is up to them. (4) But it is up to us whether we accept the appeal or not."

Source: 'Illegal immigrants: None will be spared from Ops Tegas', The Star, 4 March 2005.

In sentences (1) and (4), the government is activated as deciding the fate of 'anyone who is here illegally'. Sentence (2) emphasises that the government would not make an exception for any, regardless of their legal status, disregarding even ASRs considered 'genuine' by the UNHCR. This quote was also discussed in section 4.3.1.1, where it was highlighted that the government represented itself as the final authority in this matter and not the UNHCR.

Despite widespread sympathy for the Acehnese, the Deputy Prime Minister's statement once again relegated them to the status of illegal immigrants subject to the laws of the country, without protection from the UNHCR. Malaysia eventually granted the Acehnese refugees temporary stay following the 2004 tsunami. This permit lasted until 2008, until which time it was extended to 2010 and it was expected that the Acehnese refugees would gradually return home.

(b) Thai Muslim refugees

The second incident took place in September 2005, when 131 Thai Muslims fled across the Thai border into Northern Malaysia seeking refuge. This incident placed Thailand-Malaysia relations under particular stress after Malaysia initially refused to repatriate the 'asylum seekers', who the Thai government referred to as rebels and insurgents, and then internationalised the issue by seeking the help of the UNHCR (Hourdequin, 2008). The move to include the UNHCR angered the Thai government, who preferred to resolve the issue bilaterally with Malaysia. The tension between the two nations lasted from September 2005 right into the beginning of 2004.

The reaction of the Malaysian government towards the Thai Muslim refugees differed to its reaction to the Acehnese refugees. While not going quite so far as to recognise the Thai Muslims as refugees, government voices did not represent the Thai Muslims as illegal immigrants. The Foreign Minister at the time, Syed Hamid Albar, was the main spokesperson during this event and some of his comments are reproduced in examples 4.37 to 4.39.

Example 4.37:

(1) "… to hand over anyone, <u>we need to be satisfied</u> that everything pertaining to human rights, due process and rule of law is complied with. (2) <u>We need to be certain</u> of that. …

(3) They are <u>not illegal immigrants</u>. (4) <u>They say they are fleeing what is happening in Thailand</u>."

Source: 'Govt says it will cooperate with Thailand over refugees', Malaysiakini, 5 October 2005.

In example 4.37, Syed Hamid states the condition under which the Thai Muslims could be allowed to stay in Malaysia. In sentences (1) and (2), Malaysia is activated as carrier in the attributive process that is employed with the modal verb 'need', which presents the

condition of being 'satisfied' and 'certain' as a necessity to granting the Thais stay. Sentence (3) is presented as a statement of fact, defining the Thais as 'not illegal immigrants'. He then voices them in (4) through the use of an indirect quotation, which serves to strengthen the 'fact' that the Thais are not illegal immigrants but people who had legitimate grounds to flee from Thailand. Example 4.38 is another instance whereby Syed Hamid foregrounds the agency of the Thais.

Example 4.38:

(1) He said that though Malaysia acknowledged Thailand's assurance of safety of the refugees, their return to Thailand depended solely on them. (2) "Until such time that these people tell us they want to leave Malaysia, we cannot do anything."

Source: 'UNHCR Considers Thai Refugee Problem Bilateral Issue, Says Syed Hamid', Bernama, 29 October 2005.

Here, Malaysia is represented is lacking power to send the Thais back in comparison to the Thais, who are given the authority to decide their own fate and this is seen in sentence (1). In sentence (2), the Thais are activated as sayer ('these people' and 'they') in the verbal process 'to tell' and Malaysia is passivated further in the subordinate clause, 'we cannot do anything'. In other words, agency is given to the Thai Muslims through the use of indirect speech by quoting what they have told Malaysia, i.e. claiming not to be refugees because they are fleeing persecution, and Malaysia is placed in the position to be told of the suitable time for their departure. This allows Malaysia to seem less empowered to return the refugees to Thailand. It could be seen as move to avoid further antagonising the Thai government by appearing not to outwardly oppose or threaten Thailand's sovereignty.

Example 4.39:

(1) "It was simply done on humanitarian grounds. (2) It works like this. (3) If a situation in a given country is considered unsafe or unstable, we sometimes give

temporary shelter to the <u>citizens of that country who are suffering</u> from the situation on a humanitarian basis.

(4) That should not be taken as a sign that we recognise them as refugees or political asylum seekers."

Source: 'Thais not given status of refugees', The Star, 2 September 2005.

In sentences (1) to (3) of example 4.39, Syed Hamid legitimises Malaysia's refusal to hand over the refugees to Thailand by making claims of altruism, i.e. on 'humanitarian' grounds (1) and rationalisation (2 and 3). The use of the adverb 'simply' in (1) suggested actions undertaken out of necessity to accord humanitarian aid. Sentence (2) is constructed as a statement of fact and a means of explanation, while in (3), Syed Hamid constructs a hypothetical situation through the use of the if-condition clause, where 'temporary shelter' is granted on the condition that the asylum seekers are fleeing an unsafe or unstable environment. The representation of these people as 'citizens of that country who are suffering' is also another appeal to altruism as a means of legitimising this viewpoint. Sentence (4) is indeed telling as the Minister felt it necessary to include a disclaimer to his statement, despite clearly stating in sentences (1) to (3) that the Thais qualified for refuge in Malaysia.

Despite not directly calling those involved 'refugees', the Malaysian government's reaction to the plight of the Thai Muslims and its statements that emphasised Malaysia's responsibility to international law and human rights implies in practice that the Thais were considered and treated as refugees. Malaysia finally repatriated one refugee identified by the Thai authorities as having past insurgent links and it was reported that the remaining 130 refugees were relocated from the opposition governed northern state of Kelantan to the state of Terengganu, which was controlled by the ruling party, Barisan Nasional.[6] (See

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[6] 'Malaysia relocates 131 Thai Muslim refugees', *Bangkok Post*, 4 October 2005.

Funston (2008) for a complete overview of the Thai insurgency issue and Malaysia's involvement in it.)

Hourdequin (2008) suggested that the handling of the Thai refugee issue had much to do with the political manoeuvring of the ruling elite Malay party, UMNO, within its Muslim community. This issue was particularly tricky because UMNO and the Malaysian government faced pressure from the opposition Muslim party PAS and Muslims groups from a wide spectrum, who were sympathetic to the Thai Muslims, to grant the refugees asylum. But in doing so, Malaysia would risk the wrath of Thailand for violating the ASEAN non-interference principle.

4.2.2 Refugees as threats

Another representation of refugees constructed by government voices that is linked to the illegal immigrant representation is refugees as threats to Malaysia and Table 4.4 lists down the discursive strategies used to construct this representation.

Table 4.4: Discursive strategies used to represent ASRs as threats (government)

Discursive strategy	Item
Categorisation (Appraisement)	
Categorisation (Classification)	economic refugees
	burden
Legitimation	Hypothetical future
	Authorisation
	Emotions
Circumstantialisation	of
Metaphor	Flood
	influx

4.2.2.1 Categorisation

Categorisation according to van Leeuwen's inventory is how social actors are categorised or labelled. The representation of refugees through the use of categorisation in the corpus of government voices can be broken down into two main sub-strategies. Firstly, *appraisement* is a form of categorisation that evaluates social actors positively or negatively (2008: 45) and it is achieved in the corpus through the use of nouns and noun phrases. Secondly, *classification* is one type of categorisation that identifies social actors based on existing dominant socio-cultural categories of reference to people or people groups (2008: 42).

(a) Appraisement

Examples 4.40 and 4.41 contain instances of appraisement of refugees that contributed to their representation as threats.

Example 4.40:

> (1) The asylum seeker swap deal between Malaysia and Australia is a pioneering and cutting-edge solution to tackle people smuggling worldwide, said Home Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein. (2) He said he was confident that the new approach to combat human trafficking would be picked up by other countries in resolving <u>the rampant movement of refugees</u>.
>
> *Source: Asylum swap deal is 'pioneering', The Star, 18 May 2011.*

In 4.40, the use of the adjective 'rampant' with the noun 'movement' not only assigns agency to refugees who are responsible for this movement but also evaluates them negatively as something that is rapidly getting out of control.

Example 4.41:

> (1) Australia would determine "whether they are <u>medically fit to travel</u> and are not <u>a threat to national security</u>, and then send them to us", said Raja Azahar. (2) "If they are on <u>criminal</u> <u>or terrorist blacklists</u>, we don't want them."
>
> *Source: 'KL `wants veto power' on refugees', New Straits Times, 4 June 2011.*

In 4.41, Raja Azahar, who was the deputy secretary-general in the Home Ministry at the time, represented the asylum seekers coming from Australia as both medical and criminal threats. Firstly, there is a need for Australia to determine the asylum seekers' medical fitness and their potential threat to 'national security' in (1). In sentence (2), he then identifies those on 'criminal or terrorist blacklists' as candidates Malaysia does not want.

(b) Classification

One way the representation of ASRs as threats was legitimise was through their classification as 'economic refugees' and this can be seen in examples 4.42 and 4.43, which were statements made by Syed Hamid Albar in his capacity as Home Affairs Minister in 2009 and Foreign Affairs Minister in 2007.

Example 4.42:

(1) "Actually, those eligible to receive the card are political refugees. (2) But the UNHCR likes to issue it to whoever asks for its help, including economic refugees. (3) My ministry hopes the UNHCR will evaluate the people seeking refugee status before issuing the cards. (4) We do not want crime and social problems to proliferate here because of the actions of the UNHCR," he told reporters after holding a meeting on the hiring of foreign workers for employers here.

Source: 'UNHCR Asked To Verify Status First Before Issuing Refugee Cards', Bernama, 19 February 2009.

Example 4.43:

(1) Asylum seekers are given temporary stay in a country when they are running away from political persecution, not people who run away from their country to improve themselves economically. (2) Economic refugees should go through the proper channels.

Source: Refugees 'a perennial problem for Malaysia', New Straits Times, 18 April 2007.

A similar strategy is used in both examples. Firstly, political and economic refugees are clearly differentiated. Then they are further defined by what they do, especially economic refugees. In 4.44, political refugees are defined in (1) as 'those eligible to receive the (UNHCR) card', whereas economic refugees are linked to 'crime and social problems' in (4). In 4.45, political refugees are described as 'running away from political persecution', whereas economic refugees are those 'who run away from their country to

improve themselves economically' (1). Sentence (2) then clearly identifies economic refugees and the sentence is constructed as an imperative, telling these refugees what they should do, i.e. 'go through the proper channels' in coming into the country.

In example 4.44, Syed Hamid, stated the reason why Malaysia did not recognise refugees and again, the economic refugee is singled out as being particularly problematic, i.e. 'here for economic reasons' and 'a burden to our society' (5). The use of 'burden' implies the strain refugees pose on Malaysia's resources.

Example 4.44:

(1) "The European Union does the same thing. (2) It doesn't allow migrants in for economic reasons. (3) So there is nothing political in our stand.

(4) Not all who say they are refugees are political refugees. (5) Some are here for economic reasons and this is <u>a burden to our society</u>. (6) If we recognise refugees, we could open the floodgates and encourage them to come here just to escape economic hardship in their own country," he said in response to an Associated Press report on the United Nations calling on Malaysia to stop thinking of refugees as migrants and criminals.

Source: 'Syed Hamid: We won't recognise refugees', New Straits Times, 9 March 2007.

4.2.2.2 Legitimation strategies

Several legitimation strategies were also used to reinforce the threat representation – *authorisation, hypothetical future and moral evaluation* – and this section will discuss all three in turn. *Authorisation* is the reference to authority that could be based on law, tradition, institution and customs. Reyes' legitimation framework (2011) proposed that legitimation is sometimes achieved through the reference to the *hypothetical future*, which although is located in the future, is still a threat 'that requires … imminent action in the present' (p. 786). The main way this is accomplished is through the use of

conditional sentences. Moral evaluation is legitimation that is achieved through the emphasis on values.

(a) Authorisation and hypothetical future

There were two *authorisation* strategies present in example 4.46 (refer to section above). In sentences (1) and (2), the minister refers to the European Union's migration policy as a means to legitimise Malaysia's stance towards refugees. This legitimation strategy is *role model authorisation*, with the European Union (EU) as the role model and in doing so, explains that Malaysia's action is the 'same' (1). The explanation given for the EU's policy is 'economic reasons' (2). The conclusion of this argument is in sentence (3), that Malaysia is acting out of economic and not political reasons. Sentences (4) and (5) refer directly to refugees. In (4), the use of 'not all' before the indirect quotation implies that Malaysia has the authority to decide which refugee's claims are valid or acceptable. Sentence (5) reinforces this legitimation based on Syed Hamid's *personal authority* as spokesperson for the Malaysian government. The sentence is constructed as a statement of fact consisting of two facts: i) some refugees come to Malaysia for 'economic reasons', and ii) they are 'a burden to our society'.

Sentence (6) is constructed as a conditional clause, where the effect, i.e. 'we could open the floodgates and encourage them to come here' is dependent on Malaysia recognising refugees, 'if we recognise refugees'. The use of 'floodgates' is strategic as it builds on the metaphor of Malaysia's borders as a container keeping out migrants threatening to 'flood' the country (a further discussion of this is found in section 4.2.1).

Similar strategies were used in example 4.45, which is quoted from Don and Lee (2014, p. 693-694).

Example 4.45:

> (1) On Monday, Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar said that "it is not right for UNHCR to register the <u>Acehnese</u> as possible refugees when <u>they are not refugees</u>." (2) <u>Malaysia</u>, which is not a signatory to the UN convention on refugees, <u>does not recognize</u> refugees or asylum seekers, he said. (3) "If we encourage refugees to come to Malaysia, all <u>the illegals</u> will want to come," he said.

> *Source: UN agency protests over the arrest of Aceh refugees, Malaysiakini, 26 August 2003.*

In (1) the Foreign Minister is quoted criticising the UNHCR's action for registering 'the Acehnese as possible refugees when they are not refugees'. The relative clause in (2) presents as a fact that Malaysia is not a 'non-signatory' to the refugee convention. This presupposes that no explanation is needed, as seen in the assertion that Malaysia 'does not recognise refugees or asylum seekers'. Part of the representation of asylum seekers as illegal immigrants involves passivating them as being subject to Malaysia's decision not to recognise ASRs. Through a conditional clause (3), a link is established between 'refugees' and 'illegals'. The subordinate clause, containing a statement of a condition, 'If we encourage refugees to come to Malaysia', depends on the conclusion that 'all the <u>illegals</u> will want to come'. The outcome, namely 'illegals' coming to Malaysia is dependent on Malaysia's response to refugees, and so Malaysia is represented as Agent acting to uphold its sovereignty. The main thrust of the argument for not relaxing the rule is border security.

Syed Hamid argued in sentence (1) that the Acehnese should not be registered by the UNHCR because they were 'not refugees' and that Malaysia did 'not recognise refugees or asylum seekers' (sentence 2). In sentence (3), he employed the legitimation strategy of the hypothetical future fuelled by the fear prevalent among Malaysian citizens at the time of illegal immigrants flooding the country. Of course, this statement is fallacious because

the condition for more 'illegals' coming to Malaysia is not dependent on Malaysia allowing refugees into the country.

(b) Moral evaluation

In example 4.46, Syed Hamid is once again quoted speaking about the problem ASRs pose to Malaysia and in this example, he lays the blame on the UNHCR.

Example 4.46:

(1) "The UNHCR should not be taking people except for those who really have a problem, and it should inform us. (2) At present, it doesn't inform us," he added. (…) (3) "UNHCR has to manage it properly. (4) You see (the refugees) on the road. (5) Syndicates exploit them. (6) Children who are fatherless, motherless are on our streets. (7) They have become street children," he said.

Source: M'sia blames UN for 'flood' of refugees, Malaysiakini, 18 April 2007.

The UNHCR is given responsibility for the high number of refugees in the country and this can be seen in the use of the modal verbs 'should' and 'has' in (1) and (3). Syed Hamid is taking an advisory and authoritative position in telling the UNHCR what it should and should not be doing. Sentence (2) is constructed to reinforce this irresponsible behaviour of the UNHCR. Sentences (4) to (7) deal with refugees and are addressed to 'you', who is the genericised audience. The reference to the exploitation of children in (5) to (7) is highly emotive and appeals to values relating the protection of children. 'Syndicates' are blamed for exploiting refugee children, who in turn become 'fatherless' and 'motherless' and have to live on the 'streets' (6). These children are then referred to as 'street children' in (7), a form of evaluation to represent them in a negative position that serves to support his initial point in (1) that the UNHCR should not be taking in refugees.

4.2.3 Refugees as victims

Najib Tun Razak became Prime Minister in April 2009 and alongside efforts to rebrand his public image, he started advocating more moderate policies that included his foreign policy. By and large, the foreign policy has remained largely the same, however Najib is perceived to have made diplomacy and foreign policy an important part of his administration (Khadijah Md. Khalid, 2011), and has attempted to be more open and friendly to Western nations than previous Prime Ministers (Chin, 2010).

A good illustration to this point is the representation of the ASRs over two years, 2011 and 2012, in discussions surrounding the proposed Malaysia-Austalia refugee exchange plan. During this period, ASRs were represented as victims, with an emphasis on their plight rather than on reinforcing the dominant perception of migrants as a threat and problem. The main strategies used to accomplish this representation was the activation and passivation of social actors, legitimation through moral evaluation and mythopoesis.

In July 2011, Australia and Malaysia signed a bilateral agreement that would allow Australia to send to Malaysia 800 asylum seekers intercepted arriving by boat over a period of four years, so they could have their asylum claims heard and processed. In return, Australia would accept 4,000 UNHCR-certified refugees from Malaysia for resettlement. On 31 August 2011, the Australian High Court ruled that the agreement was illegal because that Malaysia was not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, and Australia had no right to remove from Australia asylum seekers whose refugee claims had yet to be determined.

To legitimise this asylum swap deal, ASRs were represented as victims of human trafficking which was complemented by the construction of human traffickers as villains and the Malaysian government as hero (Don & Lee, 2014). The main contributors to this representation from the government are the Prime Minister and the Home Affairs

Minister, Hishamuddin Hussein. In contrast to the statements made during Najib's time as Deputy Prime Minister (see example 4.38), this representation of refugees has appeared to be more sympathetic. Here we see the way context and different political agendas can account for the shift in representation, which could also be attributed to the Prime Minister's efforts to give himself and his government a new image.

The following sub-sections will discuss: (i) the general discursive strategies used by government voices to represent ASRs as victims, and (ii) in-depth analysis of Najib's and Hishamuddin's statement regarding this issue.

4.2.3.1 Discursive strategies

The representation of ASRs as victims or the 'good Other' is part of interrelated representations that include the Malaysian government as the heroic or 'good Self' and human traffickers as the villainous or the 'bad Other'. These representations are accomplished through some common discursive strategies including the activation and passivation of social actors, appraisement and functionalisation, aggregation and collectivisation, identification, impersonalisation, etc. These strategies will be discussed in turn in this section.

Activation and passivation

Both the good Self and bad Other were activated, while the good Other was almost always passivated. Agency assigns responsibility to a social actor, while passivation absolves social actors from responsibility or represents them as lacking power.

The government or the good Self was activated with regards to: 1) its responsibility in eradicating human trafficking, and 2) its collaboration with other nations or international

organisations. Examples 4.47 and 4.48 are examples of how the government was activated with regards these two themes.

Example 4.47:

(1) "This (the refugee swap deal) is just a small part of the bigger picture. (2) The whole reason we are doing this is to send a message to the syndicates to not look at Malaysia or Australia as a country of destination or transit anymore," he said yesterday.

Source: `Refugee deal part of bigger picture', New Straits Times, 13 October 2011.

Example 4.47 is an excerpt from Hishamuddin's interview with the press. The reference to a 'bigger picture' (1) in 4.49 implies that the asylum exchange deal has to be viewed within a broader context and as a means towards the aim, which is specified in sentence (2). 'we' is activated in 'send' with regards to the goal ('a message') and the recipient of this material process is 'the syndicates'. The 'message' is found in the clause 'to not look at Malaysia or Australia as a country of destination or transit anymore'. The reference to 'syndicates' and transit country draws on the discourse of human trafficking.

The Deputy Minister in the Home Affairs Minister, Wira Abu Seman Yusop, was quoted in example 4.48:

(1) "Malaysia is always co-operative and ready to help combat human trafficking and people smuggling networks. (2) That is why the cutting edge approach with Australia is important and we are happy to bring back the agreement with the Australian government if it will stop more people to risk their lives," he said in a statement today.

(3) "As the framework has yet to take into effect and would take time to materialise, Malaysia and Australia have taken a bold approach to rid the people smuggling syndicates in addressing the issue of irregular migration including people smuggling and trafficking in persons as desired by the Regional Cooperation Framework," he said.

In 4.48, both themes are evident here and contribute to the construction of the Malaysian and Australian governments as the good Self in relation to human trafficking. In (1), Malaysia describes itself as 'co-operative and ready to help' with regards to eradicating human trafficking. The reference to the 'cutting edge approach' (2) and 'bold approach' (3) intensifies the value of Malaysia's actions. The frequent mention of Malaysia in relationship with Australia, e.g. 'with Austalia' and 'with the Australian government' (2) and 'Malaysia and Australia' (3) also underlines the collaborative nature of the relationship between both nations and they role in eradicating human trafficking. Human trafficking is portrayed as the cause for migrants trying 'to risk their lives' (2), which is the very thing both governments were working to prevent. The smuggling 'syndicates' are clearly represented as the bad Other when being assigned the role of goal in verbs such as 'combat' and 'rid'. The implication is indeed that only something bad or morally corrupt requires actions such as combating and getting rid of. ASRs are passivated through nominalisations such as 'human trafficking', 'people smuggling', and 'irregular migration'.

4.2.3.2 Najib's article in the Sydney Morning Herald

The Sydney Morning Herald published an article written by the Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak, during his visit to Australia in October 2011, The excerpts in examples 4.49 and 4.50 are taken from that article and will be discussed briefly below.

Example 4.49:

Paragraph 1

(1) Where you or I see a man, a woman or an innocent child, people traffickers see only one thing - money. (2) They target the vulnerable and the desperate and exploit them without mercy, taking advantage of people financially, physically, often even sexually.

Paragraph 2

(3) The sheer heartlessness of the traffickers was demonstrated in the most horrendous manner last December when the man responsible for taking almost a hundred migrants to Australia abandoned his charges in a leaking, overcrowded boat with an engine that was about to fail. (4) Dozens drowned when the boat struck rocks off Christmas Island. (5) At least five children and three babies were among the dead.

Source: People trafficking a trade in human misery that must be stopped, Sydney Morning Herald, 27 October 2011.

In 4.49, refugees are represented as victims of 'people traffickers', whereas the Malaysian government is represented as the good Self, responsible for protecting the victims. The victimisation of refugees here was achieved in several ways. Firstly, they were personalised as 'a man, a woman or an innocent child' (paragraph 1) and 'five children and three babies' (paragraph 2), which humanises these nameless social actors. Secondly, they were predicated as possessing vulnerable qualities, being identified in paragraph 1 as 'the vulnerable and the desperate'. Thirdly, they were passivated with regards to the oppressive agency of the traffickers, e.g. being taken advantage of

'financially, physically, often even sexually' (paragraph 1) and being abandoned (paragraph 2).

Example 4.50:

<u>Paragraph 1</u>

(1) At this point, it would be easy to give up, to tell ourselves that we tried but the problem was too big, too politically difficult to deal with. (2) And the people-smuggling would go on. (3) The boats would continue to sail. (4) Heartless traffickers would continue to take everything from desperate people - their money, their dignity and, all too often, their lives.

<u>Paragraph 2</u>

(5) As the Prime Minister of a progressive, liberal nation, I'm not prepared to stand by and watch that happen. (6) Malaysia has always led south-east Asia in dealing with international problems, so we will continue to work with Australia, and our partners across the region and beyond, to find new ways of stopping the traffickers for good.

This theme of victimisation continues in the paragraph 1 of example 4.50, where refugees were represented as 'desperate people', who had everything taken away from them (4). The traffickers were predicated as 'heartless' (4), which heightens this emotive argument. In paragraph 2, the Prime Minister and the government are given the attributes of 'progressive' and 'liberal' in the subordinate clause in (5) to reinforce the rationalisation of their responsibility of finding solutions for the victims and 'stopping the traffickers for good' (6).

4.2.3.3 Hishamuddin Hussein's statement

Example 4.51 contains a statement made by the Home Affairs Minister, Hishamuddin Hussein, regarding the need for the exchange deal.

Example 4.51:

(1) "Everybody will face same problem of irregular human migration. (2) However, no one is looking at trans-national crime in a holistic manner. (3) If you look at drug smuggling every country have [sic] its own narcotics division and enforcement agencies. (4) But no one has linked drug smuggling to movement of people. (5) Or money laundering for that matter and if you look at terrorism and the funding of terrorism, it is something that we need to address.

(6) We're sending a clear message to syndicates not to exploit innocent victims with false promises of haven in Malaysia for money. (7) It's something that we may be embarking on something people may adopt 50 years from now. (8) What are the solutions now? (9) Business can't be as usual since we have become a target, a transit country. (10) We have to think outside the box."

Source: 'Refugee swap deal to strengthen security', The Sun Daily, 17 June 2011.

Hishamuddin's representation of ASRs here is constructed within the discourse of the criminalisation of forced migration as can be seen in the use of lexical items such as 'trans-national crime' (1), 'drug smuggling' (2 and 3), 'money laundering' (5) and 'syndicates' (6). By associating forced migration or 'irregular human migration' to various type of crimes as well as 'terrorism' (5), he positions the human traffickers as the bad Other or the criminals and the Malaysian government as the good Self, responsible for protecting the 'innocent victims' (6) from the bad Other.

The Malaysian government ('we') is activated in (6) in 'sending a clear message' to the traffickers, whose actions are described as 'false promises of haven… for money'. The use of 'false promises' appraises the words of the traffickers as insincere and opportunistic. In (7), Hishamuddin presents a hypothetical situation in the future

('something people may adopt 50 years from now') to legitimise the exchange deal. In sentence (9), the effect, 'Business can't be as usual', is presented as the outcome of the cause or subordinate clause, 'since we have become a target, a transit country'. This reinforces the sense of duty to a cause, namely to prevent the traffickers from using Malaysia as a place in which to oppress unsuspecting victims. The reference to Malaysia as a 'target' and 'transit country' is integral to this crime discourse. With the presentation of the 'problem', a 'solution' is needed, i.e. 'We have to think outside the box.' (10).

4.2.4 Summary: Government voices

The representation of refugees by government voices that emerged from the data and were discussed in the previous sections can be divided into three broad categories: illegal immigrants, threats and victims. The first two representations have the same function, i.e. either to justify the treatment of ASRs in Malaysia or justify excluding them.

The representations of ASRs as illegal immigrants contribute to ascribing them criminal qualities, which provides the reason for keeping them out of the country or taking punitive action against them (Don & Lee, 2014). This criminalisation is reflected in the choice of words related to the punishment for breaking immigration laws such as *deportation*, *arrest* and *sent back*. Two things are happening in this strategy. Firstly, by redefining ASRs as 'foreigners' and more specifically, 'illegal immigrants', ASRs are being conflated into the more threatening and problematic illegal immigrant category. This is no surprise because Malaysia has not ratified the UN Refugee Convention and has quite consistently maintained its position of considering all ASRs as illegal immigrants. Secondly, the political leaders make claims to the authority of the government as head of the state and the laws of the country and thus state sovereignty has priority over international law.

Vas Dev (2009) argues that these exclusionary strategies of illegality and threat are not used only by the dominant groups in the West but also by those in the Asia Pacific region, including Malaysia as illustrated in that article's analysis. Securitising ASRs as threats is a strategy used to legitimise the action of keeping them out of the country and sending them home (Bailey & Harindranath, 2005; Gelber & McDonald, 2006; Ibrahim, 2005; McKay, Thomas, & Warwick Blood, 2011; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007; Pickering, 2004), which explains Malaysian restrictive immigration policy and the government's somewhat antagonistic attitude towards them. The linguistic strategies used to construct ASRs as threats are similar to the strategies used by dominant groups (Pugh,

2004). They are portrayed using flood metaphors to depict a natural catastrophe defying control, thus posing a danger to us which explains the need to defend ourselves.

No distinction is made between immigrant and ASRs. Their representation as one homogeneous group conflates them into the category immigrant, usually used to describe migrant workers entering Malaysia to seek employment without any legal documentation in violation of immigration laws. The choice to use *immigrant* rather than the more general term *migrant* is in itself interesting. *Migrant* includes various types of movements of people and can commonly be divided into *sojourners*, who do not stay anywhere permanently and *immigrants*, who enter another country with the intention of staying permanently (Matsaganis, et al., 2011). This study argues that use of immigrant itself is strategic as it presupposes the migrant's intention before their claims have even been made or in some cases, before the migrant even enters the country. This constructs their entry as a potential problem and can be used to legitimise anti-immigration policies. In addition, representing them in a collective 'de-personalized mass' dehumanizes them as numbers and nameless and denies them their individuality (Wodak, 2008, p. 57). This functionalisation of them as entrants may prepare the ground for victimisation that is more material and extends beyond just discourse.

The most recent representation of ASRs as victims, still constructs them as the Other, but this time, a good Other. This good Other co-exists with a necessary bad Other, the human traffickers, and enables policies affecting ASRs to be justified in the spirit of combating human trafficking (Don & Lee, 2014). As victims, ASRs are described as vulnerable and helpless and are often passivated in verb clauses as being oppressed and mistreated by the 'exploitative' and 'heartless' traffickers. As passive participants, they have no agency or voice of their own. The activation of the good Self and bad Other differ in the terms of the effect it produces. The aggressor or the bad Other is often activated as carrying out actions that violates the rights of the victims. By activating itself as being

responsible for protecting the victims, Malaysia is represented as the heroic and good Self in contrast to the bad Other, i.e. the traffickers. Yet in the context of the asylum swap deal, this study suggests that the victim representation has to do more with an attempt to justify moving ASRs around like commodities to suit the immigration policies of both Malaysia and Australia, rather than any actual intent to protect the asylum group. The appeal to humanitarianism or sympathy as a means to justify excluding ASRs has recently been studied by critical discourse analysts (Hanson-Easey & Augoustinos, 2011; O'Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007).

4.3 Refugee representation by alternative voices

The 53 articles from alternative voices consisted of statements relating to ASRs made by three main groups: 1) human rights organisations (NGOs), 2) opposition government leaders, and 3) refugee community and refugee rights groups. The representation of ASRs by this particular group centres on three main themes. Firstly, the argument of ASRs in need of human rights protection especially through international human rights laws. The second theme focuses on the definition of ASRs as separate from migrants and immigrants. The third theme posits ASRs as victims of the government. The following sections discuss how these three themes emerge in the corpus.

4.3.1 Human rights and international law

A common theme or topos found in the discourse of alternative voices that contributed to the construction and representation of ASRs centred on advocating the human rights of the asylum population. ASRs were represented as needing protection from human rights abuses. Lexical items relating to this theme were among the most frequently occurring in the corpus. This section discusses these items firstly in terms of their occurrence in the corpus and then further elaborated through specific examples.

4.3.1.1 Human rights and rights of ASRs

'Rights' was the most frequently used noun after 'refugees' and 'asylum seekers', occurring 144 times in the data. It was most frequently used with 'human' as in 'human rights' (100 times). 27 times 'human rights' was used as nomination in the form of proper nouns, such as *Human Rights Watch, UN Human Rights Council* and *Malaysian Human Rights Commission*, etc. The phrase also occurred 50 times as adjectives for nouns such as *violations, obligations, conventions, protection, abuses*, etc. The final occurrence of

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'human rights' was as a noun phrase on its own, referring to the universally acknowledged concept of human rights that can best be summed up by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, n.d.). Table 4.5 below summarises the usage of 'human rights' according to these three grammatical categories.

Table 4.5: Usage of 'human rights' by alternative voices

Category	Item
Proper noun	United Nations Human Rights Council
	Human Rights Watch
	Malaysian Human Rights Commission (SUHAKAM)
	Myanmar Ethnic Rohingya Human Rights Organisation
	Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development
	Association for the Promotion of Human Rights
	Human Rights Committee, Bar Council
	1961 Convention of Human Rights
	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
	United Declaration of Human Rights
Noun phrase	'human rights'
Nouns with 'human rights' as adjective (e.g. human rights *violations*)	violations
	obligations
	conventions
	protection
	standards
	abuses
	agency
	group(s)
	lawyer
	NGO
	norms
	principles
	record

	commission
	commitments
	concerns
	Crisis
	grounds (i.e. – reasons)
	instruments
	organisation
	situation
	track record

In Table 4.6, we find other lexical items that occurred with *rights*, either pre-modifying or post-modifying the *rights*.

Table 4.6: Premodication and postmodification of 'rights' by alternative voices

Category	**Item**
Premodification of noun	*refugee* rights
	labour rights
	legal rights
	procedural and substantive rights
	refugees' and asylum seekers' rights
Postmodification of noun	rights *group*(s)
	rights *NGO*
	rights *protection*
	rights *watchdog*
Prepositional circumstantials	rights ***for***
	rights ***of***

The passivation of ASRs was also realised through *circumstantialisation* with the prepositions ***for*** and ***of*** but in different ways. In example 4.3.1 the use of *for* serves to beneficialise ASRs as on the receiving end of rights that have 1) international procedures and 2) are substantive.

Example 4.3.1:

Thus any agreement between Malaysia and Australia must guarantee Malaysia's respect for international standards of treatment and *procedural and substantive rights for refugees and asylum seekers*.

Source: Press Release: Home Minister must walk the PM's talk in respect of refugee deal with Australia, Malaysian Bar Council, 3 June 2011.

ASRs were also subjected through possessivation. This was realised through the prepositional phrase with *of* and this pattern occurred 13 times in the corpus. All 13 instances referred to either refugees or asylum seekers or both groups and also alongside other migrant groups. Some examples are listed below.

Example 4.3.2:

We also urge the Malaysian government, which does not have a clear policy on refugees, to immediately ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol in order to protect and promote the <u>rights of refugees and asylum seekers</u> in this country, before taking further action to deal with refugee initiatives.

Source: SUARAM: 'Swap will not deter asylum seekers',, The Sun Daily, 28 June 2011.

Example 4.3.3:

Without any legislation or comprehensive policies to protect the <u>rights of refugees, genuine asylum-seekers</u>… are treated as criminals who have breached Immigration laws…

Source: Tenaganita: 'Stop the crackdown and release detainees', The Malay Mail, 23 February 2012.

Example 4.3.4:

We need to enact laws to promote and protect internationally-recognised <u>rights of asylum-seekers</u> and their rights to livelihood, healthcare and education.

Source: SUHAKAM – 'Ratify Refugee Convention, Govt urged', The Star, 7 November 2011.

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4.3.1.2 Protection

The topos that ASRs need protection also contributed to the construction of the human rights and international law argumentation. *Protection* or *protections* appeared 69 times in the corpus, making it the most frequent noun used after *refugee*, *asylum seeker* and *rights*. Table 4.7 provides an overview of how *protection(s)* was used:

Table 4.7: Usage of 'protect' by alternative voices

Category	Item
Prepositional circumstantials	protection *for*
	protection *of*
	protection *to*
	protection *from*
Premodification of noun	*refugee* protection
	international protection
	(human) rights protection
	legal protection
Postmodification of noun	protection *framework*
	protection *claims*
	protection *safeguards*
	protection *services*
Material process	protect
Relational attribute process	protect

(a) Prepositional circumstantials / Circumstantialisation

Protection was used most frequently with prepositional circumstantials such as *for*, *of, to* and ***from***. As was discussed in section 4.3.1.1, these prepositional phrases achieve the effect of passivating ASRs.

'Protection for', 'protection of', and 'protection to' passivated ASRs through beneficialisation, i.e. they were beneficiaries of the call for protection by alternative voices. In all instances of 'protection for', ASRs were either specifically referred to, e.g. 'refugees' or 'asylum seekers' or 'ASRs', or referenced through deitic words, e.g. 'them' or 'this group'. The following two examples illustrate the use of *'protection for'*:

Example 4.3.5:

We want the Australian government to realise that you are sending them back to a country that does not give any form of <u>protection for ASRs</u>.

Source: Latheefa Koya, Lawyers for Liberty, quoted in 'NGOs liken refugee swap to human trafficking', The Malaysian Insider; 25 July 2011.

Example 4.3.6:

I questioned if the humanitarian aid provided to Rohingyas fleeing their burning homes in Myanmar would be forthcoming to the same people if they land on our shores where there is the absence of <u>protection for them</u>?

Source: Sharuna Verghis, Health Equity Initiatives Kuala Lumpur, letter to The Star, 'Humanitarian gesture', 22 December 2012.

'Protection of' was used with asylum seekers, refugees or both ASRs and once each with Acehnese and 'refugees, migrants and stateless persons'. The latter reference is given below:

Example 4.3.7:

Migration Working Group (MWG), a Malaysian group which advocates the <u>rights and protection of refugees, migrants and stateless persons</u>, calls on the government to establish a legal system of residence and work permits for refugees in Malaysia.

Source: Migration Working Group, letter to New Straits Times, 'Work begets respect', 22 June 2011.

Here, MWG employs *association* in the subordinate clause when referring to the groups of migrants, whose rights and protection MWG seeks to advocate.

'Protection to' was used three times, each with 'ASRs', 'refugees' and 'those fleeing the conflict in Aceh' and example 4.3.8 below is one such instance of the usage of 'protection to'.

Example 4.3.8:

We reiterate our position that the UNHCR is a United Nations body here to assist the government in providing assistance and <u>protection to ASRs</u> in the spirit of international solidarity and burden sharing.

Source: Amnesty International – quoted in 'AI defends UNHCR's role', Malaysiakini, 19 April 2007.

'Protection of' occurred nine times, most frequently with either 'ASRs' (three times), refugees (three times) or asylum seekers (once). The usage of 'protection of' is a form of possessivation, where ASRs are subjected to the act of protecting.

Example 4.3.9:

The Malaysian Government must show its sincere commitment to private-public partnerships not just in the areas of the economy and public works, but equally critically in the area of the promotion and <u>protection of human rights for all, including ALL refugees and asylum seekers</u>.

Source: Lim Chee Wee, Malaysian Bar Council, Press Release: Home Minister must walk the PM's talk in respect of refugee deal with Australia, 3 June 2011.

Example 4.3.10:

Malaysia's poor track record in providing even <u>basic protections for refugees</u> means that the 800 asylum seekers who will be sent from Australia under the agreement face grave risks.

Source: Human Rights Watch, quoted in Free Malaysia Today, 'Refugee swap with Australia is people laundering', 25 July 2011.

'*Protection from*' occurred twice in the corpus and both times with the *detention* and *arrest* as can be seen in the example 4.3.11 below.

Example 4.3.11:

(1) Ratify the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and bring domestic law, policy and practices in line with these instruments; (2) this will recognise the existence of refugees, distinguishing them from undocumented immigrants, and thus give them legal status to work and as well as <u>protection from arbitrary detention and arrest</u>.

Source: Amnesty International, letter to The Star, 'Discard bias against refugees', 21 June 2011.

In this example, Amnesty International (AI) called on the Malaysian government to ratify the Refugee Convention in the imperative sentence (1) and in (2), states the outcome of such action, i.e. it will give refugees legal status and protection from detention and arrest. In this statement, refugees are passivated as being beneficiaries of being given legal status and protection by the activated social actor, the Malaysian government, who is not directly referred to but realised through the use of the prepositional circumstantial *from*. The government is implicitly identified in (2) as it is the only body that has the authority to give legal status and protection from legal action. The use of 'arbitrary' presents AI's appraisement of how the Malaysian government regularly treats refugees.

(a) Premodification and postmodification of protection

Adjectival premodification of *protection* also occurred in the data. *Refugee protection* was used seven times and is also another form of passivation, where refugees are subjected to receiving or needing to receive protection as can be seen in the example 4.3.11 below. Here, human rights group Aliran is calling on the UNHCR to continue its work of protecting refugees.

Example 4.3.11:

> We also hope that the Refugee Agency sees the need to emphasise the respect and exercise of basic human rights in monitoring the implementation of <u>refugee protection</u> according to Refugee Convention provisions.
>
> *Source: 'Double standards in Australia-Malaysia refugee swap deal', Aliran press statement, 5 August 2011.*

Other instances of the premodification of protection, i.e. *international protection*, *rights protection* and *legal protection*, further illustrate the emphasis of the alternative voices on representing refugees within international law and human rights frameworks. Postmodifications of protection with nouns such as framework, claims, safeguards, and services, accomplish the same effect.

(b) 'Protect' as material and relational processes

The passivation of ASRs by alternative voices can be seen through the use of 'to protect' as material and behavioural processes, in which the asylum population were assigned the roles of *goal* and *carrier* respectively. The material process 'to protect' occurred 15 times in the corpus and almost always, i.e. 12 out of 15 times, the role of *goal* was assigned to ASRs, either to them directly or to their 'rights'. Three other times this role was assigned to *'human trafficking victims'* (twice), Myanmar *'nationals'* (once) and the general category of *'immigrants'* (once). Some examples of the use of 'protect' as a material process can be seen below:

Example 4.3.12:

> The Malaysian government must take note that Burmese refugees continue to face arrest, detention, prosecution and deplorable living conditions here in Malaysia as a result of the government's refusal to recognise and <u>protect refugees</u> and to treat them as illegal immigrants.

Example 4.3.13:

In the case of refugees, an absence of a legal framework to <u>recognise and protect refugees</u> renders them "undocumented". Almost 100,000 refugees are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), while tens of thousands more wait in line to seek asylum.

ASRs were also assigned the role of carrier in the relational attributive process as can be seen in example 4.3.14.

Example 4.3.14:

Being a refugee is hard, especially as some transit countries have not signed the Refugee Convention that provides protection for them. What this means is that in most situations, <u>refugees are not recognised and protected</u>.

4.3.1.3 Recognition

The concept of recognition occurred fairly frequently in the corpus and sometimes appeared alongside 'protection'. As discussed in the previous section, the call for recognition of ASRs also contribute to the human rights and international law argument offered by alternative voices. It appears 49 times in the corpus, 30 times as the mental process 'to recognise', 10 times as an adjective or compound adjective and eight times as the noun 'recognition'.

In the mental process 'to recognise', ASRs were passivated by being assigned the role of *phenomenon*, as either *refugees* or *asylum seekers* and once as *Acehnese*. Example 4.3.15 provides an example of refugees as phenomenon.

Example 4.3.15:

Tenaganita therefore calls for: … A systematic plan to address the structural flaws in our migration system, including enacting legalisation <u>to recognise refugees</u> and a comprehensive rights-based policy for the recruitment, placement and employment of migrants and refugees in Malaysia.

Source: Irene Fernandez, Tenaganita, Stop the crackdown and release detainees, letter to The Malay Mail, 23 February 2012.

Other instances involved ASRs as phenomenon through possessivation by means of the prepositional circumstantial *of*, e.g. 'the legal status of asylum seekers', 'the plight of refugees', and 'the status of refugees'. Examples can be seen in the two examples below taken from press statements released by the Malaysian Bar Council:

Example 4.3.16:

Malaysia is not legally bound to, and does not, <u>recognise the status of refugees</u> in its domestic law.

Source: Malaysian Bar Council, Press release: 'Merdeka means maturity of rule of law and rights of humanity', 1 September 2011.

Example 4.3.17:

World Refugee Day is observed on 20 June each year. It is a day where <u>we recognise the plight of refugees</u> wherever they are located throughout the world and the efforts being undertaken to address their situation.

Source: M. Ramachelvam, Law Reform and Special Areas Committee, Bar Council, Press Release: 'Government must provide clear and humanitarian-based legal & administrative framework for refugees and asylum-seekers', 19 June 2010.

The example 4.3.16, the Malaysian state's position as a Senser that does not recognise refugees is mentioned by the Bar Council and this juxtaposes the Senser 'we' in the second example (4.3.17), who includes the Bar Council as well as any readers who acknowledge and recognise refugees. Passivation by means of prepositional circumstantial implies either recognising, or in the case of the Malaysian government, not recognising ASRs by recognising their social (in 'plight') and legal (in 'status') situations.

'Recognised' was used as an adjective by itself in examples such as 'recognised documents' and 'UNHCR identity cards as a recognised and acceptable form of identification'. It also appeared as compound adjectives in two ways. The Malaysian Bar Council used the adjective 'officially-recognised' four times in its press statements in 2012, for example in example 4.3.18:

> The Malaysian Bar renews its call to the Malaysian Government to set aside Parliamentary time to introduce and implement refugee-protection legislation in Malaysia, which must include express provisions on the unhindered and unrestricted access to lawful work and officially-recognised employment.
>
> *Source: Malaysian Bar Council, Press release: 'Recognise their dignity, give refugees access to lawful work', 20 June 2012.*

The focus here is on advocating refugee protection and legislation that would allow the refugees access to employment officially recognised by the government. In other words, by advocating legal employment for refugees, alternative voices such as the Bar Council represented ASRs under the human rights framework as needing legal status, sharply challenging the government's predominant illegal view of ASRs. A similar argument can be found in this statement made by the Suhakam commissioner, James Nayagam, in 2011:

Example 4.3.19:

We need to enact laws to promote and protect <u>internationally-recognised rights of</u> <u>asylum-seekers</u> and their rights to livelihood, healthcare and education.

Source: 'Ratify Refugee Convention, Govt urged', quoted The Star, 7 November *2011.*

Here, Nayagam is appealing that the Government uphold the rights of asylum seekers, which is recognised and widely accepted by the international community. According to van Leeuwen's model for studying the discourse of legitimation, this strategy employs the reference to the authority of tradition, in this case, the custom and practice of the international community. The alternative voices' use of recognise differs from the government's use of it. The government used recognised mainly in the negative with regards to the phenomenon (ASRs) but alternative voices employed recognised in either imperative form, calling on the government to acknowledge the asylum population or as discussed above, as a means of legitimating international standards and customs with regards to how ASRs should be viewed.

A related term that appeared frequently in this corpus was 'convention' and in most instances, this referred to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. Example 4.3.20 shows how Malaysia is identified as being resistant to signing and recognising the Refugee Convention during its handling of the Australia-Malaysia asylum deal.

Example 4.3.20:

(1) The Malaysian government is apparently treating this arrangement as a one-off despite the fact that there is a possibility of it becoming permanent. (2) <u>There</u> <u>has also been no pledge to ratify the Refugee Convention</u> although the government seeks to reap the benefits of this agreement.

Source: Aliran press statement, 'Double standards in Australia-Malaysia refugee *swap deal', 5 August 2011.*

Aliran represents the government's flippant attitude towards ASRs with the use of 'one-off' (1) and their lack of action over the refugee convention, 'no pledge to ratify' (2) but the government is assigned the role of Senser in (2) in seeking to benefit from the agreement.

4.3.1.4 Arrest, detention and deportation

Three more frequently occurring lexical items in the corpus of alternative voices were – mentioned here in their root form - detain (117 times), deport (45 times) and arrest (39 times). Each of these lexical items was employed similarly in the corpus to further establish the human rights framework and need relating to ASRs. Table 4.8 provides an overview of some of the ways in which *detain*, *deport* and *arrest* were frequently used in the corpus.

Table 4.8: Usage of detain, deport and arrest by alternative voices

Category	Item
Material process - 'detain'	
Social actor as Goal	Acehnese
	they (refugees)
	undocumented migrants
	asylum seekers
	migrants and refugees
Nouns	detainee(s)
	detention
Noun phrases	detention centres
	detention conditions
	detention deaths
Post-modification of noun	detention of children

	detention of refugees and asylum seekers
Association	arrest, detention, prosecution, human rights violations, whipping
Material process – 'deport'	Chinese nationals of Uighur / Uighurs
	asylum seekers
	acehnese
	asylum seekers and refugees
Social actor as Goal	refugees
	illegal immigrants
	migrants
	they (refugees)
	undocumented migrants
Noun	deportation
	deportation *of Uighurs* (refugees)
	deportation *of migrants and refugees*
Post-modification with 'of'	deportation *of Hamza Kashgari* (asylum seeker)
	deportation *of 323 supposedly undocumented migrants*
Association	arrest, detention, prosecution, whipping, fine, jail
Material process – 'arrest'	
	asylum seekers and refugees
	migrants and refugees
	they/they (refugees)
Social actor as Goal	Acehnese
	illegal immigrants
	refugees
	undocumented migrants
Nouns	
Pre-modification of arrest	*refugee and asylum-seeker* arrests
Post-modification with *'of'*	arrest *of refugees*

	arrest *of 323 supposedly undocumented migrants*
Association	abuse, detention, deportation, extortion, harassment, sale

As mentioned above, 'detain', 'deport', and 'arrest' were all utilised similarly in the corpus to as part of the construction of the human rights framework surrounding ASRs. One of the ways in which this was accomplished was through the passivation of ASRs mainly through material processes where ASRs were always assigned the role of Goal. Table 4.8 provides a list of the referential nouns or noun phrases used to refer to ASRs as Goal. The role of Actor in the material processes was always assigned to government authorities, namely the Malaysian government, including security enforcement units and immigration officers, and also the Australian government in the case of textual data relating to the Australia-Malaysia asylum swap deal in 2011.

The nouns 'detention', 'deportation' and 'arrest' were used as passivation devices through post- and pre-modification of the nouns. Two examples of this are given below.

Example 4.3.21:

> These questions are even more urgent in the context of the rapid <u>deportation of Hamza Kashgari, the Saudi Arabian asylum seeker</u> earlier this month and in the <u>deportation of 11 Uighur refugees</u> back to China last year.
>
> *Source: Irene Fernandez, Tenaganita, 'Stop the crackdown and release detainees', letter to The Malay Mail, 23 February 2012.*

Example 4.3.22:

> The immigration <u>detention of children</u> in Malaysia is an issue of concern to the Malaysian Bar. Malaysia, as a signatory to the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child ("CRC"), is committed to upholding the provision of the CRC that <u>detention of children</u> should only be used as a "last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time".

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The nouns 'detention', 'deportation' and 'arrest' were also used in the corpus in association with other nouns, such as *prosecution*, *whipping*, *jail* and *fine*, which describe the kind of punitive action taken by the Malaysian government against ASRs. Other nouns or noun phrases also used in association with 'detention, 'deportation' and 'arrest', such as *human rights violations*, *extortion*, *harassment*, and *sale*, have criminal connotations and form a kind of appraisement by alternative voices about the Malaysian government's way of handling ASRs. The Malaysian government is activated as the Actor carrying out punitive and sometimes criminal type of action against the passivated ASRs.

4.3.2   ASRs as different from illegal immigrants

An interesting finding to emerge from a comparison of both the government and alternative data set was the categories that were frequently used to refer to ASRs. Apart from 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker', the most frequently occurring referential categories were 'migrant', 'immigrant', 'foreigner' and the noun phrases 'illegal immigrant' and 'illegal migrant'.

Alternative voices used the category 'migrant' 84 times, which was significantly more frequent than 'immigrant' (15 times). The government voices' use of both terms occurred in the reverse. 'immigrant' (61 times) was used more frequently than 'migrant' (33 times) and 'foreigner' was used 16 times compared to only twice in the alternative data set (refer to tables 4.9 and 4.10).

Table 4.9: Categories used by alternative voices to refer to AS and/or R

Lexical items	Frequency
Refugee(s)	480
Asylum seeker(s)	177
Migrant(s)	84
Immigrant(s)	15
Foreigner(s)	2
Illegal immigrant(s)	12
Illegal migrant(s)	4

Table 4.10: Categories used by government voices to refer to AS and/or R

Lexical items	Frequency
Refugee(s)	457
Asylum seeker(s)	181
Migrant(s)	33
Immigrant(s)	61
Foreigner(s)	16
Illegal immigrant(s)	49
Illegal migrant(s)	15

4.3.3   ASRs as victims

Alternative voices recontextualised the government's discourse of human trafficking to liken the asylum deal to human trafficking and a business transaction. The role of good Other or victim remained the same but the good Self and bad Other were recontextualised. The government was always assigned the role of the bad Other and activated as the aggressor, always arresting, detaining, treating the victims in a negative way. This victim-villain relationship was illustrated in four ways. Firstly, ASRs were seen as victims of the Malaysian and Australian governments' human trafficking activities as both governments

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were likened to human traffickers. The complete lack of any mention or reference to actual human traffickers by the opposition voices here was significant to reinforce this construction. The asylum deal was frequently equated to human trafficking through metaphoric expressions such as 'refugee laundering', 'state sanctioned human trafficking', 'a "legalised" form of trafficking', and 'a trade in human beings'.

Secondly, the passivated and disadvantaged ASRs were presented as being treated like 'goods' and 'commodities' by both governments, who were themselves likened to businessmen seeking to benefit from the deal. The metaphoric use of business-related lexicon can be seen in phrases such as, 'government sponsorship of asylum seekers 'exported' to Malaysia', 'this scheme is to out-source', and 'this is a money talks kind of deal'.

ASRs were also portrayed as victims of discrimination or double standards through the representation of the asylum deal as 'a form of racism'. The government was blamed for 'creating an exception for 800 'swapped' people while 90,000 other ASRs remain 'illegal migrants' subject to deportation'. Finally, the ASRs were also victims of both governments' irresponsibility towards their human rights commitments. The organisation Human Rights Watch accused Australia of devolving 'its obligation to another country that has not signed the refugee convention' and Malaysia of 'sidelining human rights'[7].

The opposition voices activated themselves by taking on the role of advocate on behalf of the ASRs by calling on both governments to act responsibly towards ASRs and uphold their commitment to international law, e.g. 'We also call on the police, immigration authorities, and Rela members to stop harrassing them (the refugees) and violating their human rights' (Malaysian Bar Council) and 'Suaram urges the Australian government to

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[7] Phil Robertson (Asia division deputy director) 'Refugee swap with Australia is people laundering', Free Malaysia Today, 25 July 2011. Viewed on 5 January 2012,
<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2011/07/25/refugee-swap-with-australia-is-people-laundering/>

immediately withdraw the proposed asylum swap. We also urge the Malaysian government… to immediately ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol in order to protect and promote the rights of ASRs in this country, before taking further action to deal with refugee initiatives.' (Suaram).

4.4   Refugee representation by the Malaysian press

As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the Malaysian press is modelled on an authoritarian concept of press freedom and is largely owned by government affiliated bodies. As such, it is highly restricted and functions primarily to support and highlight government policies. The mainstream press in Malaysia functions under this authoritarian model and hence, the lines between the government and press voices become blurred because questions are raised over the actual independence of the Malaysian mainstream press. The online alternative press are in a sense free from most of the constraints that the mainstream press face although the renewal of its annual licences is still subject to the discretion of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

This study argues that given the local context of the press, the most appropriate way to analyse the voice of the Malaysian press is through the concept of *recontextualisation*. Text producers, who in the case of this study are the newspapers, engage in the process of *recontextualisation* and carefully and strategically select what to include or exclude with respect to ASRs. With access to the press, politicians are given 'the possibility of having' their will enforced 'against the will or interests of others' (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009, p. 88). This enforcement of power through discourse, which is acquired through some form of collective consent, is less overtly coercive and repressive, and more mental rather than physical in nature (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This study agrees with Hall (1982, p. 64) that representation 'implies the active work of selecting and presenting, and

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of structuring and shaping' rather than offering a neutral reflection of the world. This analytical view illuminates the link between media, politicians and their political agendas, and is 'particularly apparent when questions of migration and asylum are concerned' (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2009, cited in Busch and Krzyzanowski, 2012, p. 279), an issue which shows the ideological positioning of the host country. The same applies to any kind of alternative press, which has its own agenda and political leanings, no matter how free and independent they claim to be. In this section, extracts from both mainstream and alternative press are analysed through the analytical lens of *recontextualisation*. The main finding is presented below.

In the corpus of reporting on asylum seekers and refugees by the press, the asylum population have at times been represented as a 'problem' population, a representation calculated to give them an unfavourable slant. Analysis of government statements in this corpus agrees with Pickering's (2001) analysis of Australian media discourse concerning ASRs that constructs them as not only a problem but a deviant problem, namely a population that deviates from the what is deemed normal and acceptable. Pickering (2001) argues that deviancy as constructed in opposition and seen as a threat to normality is a means by which a state legitimises exclusionary policies towards refugees.

Two main strategies were used to represent ASRs as threats. Firstly, by representing them as social and economic burdens and secondly, through the use of the flood metaphor. In the following examples, we see how both these two strategies were used to construct ASRs as threats to Malaysia.

In Example 4.4.1 (published by Bernama), the Home Affairs Minister, Syed Hamid's words are quoted to communicate his ministry's stand with regard to the UNHCR's evaluation of 'people seeking refugees status' before cards are issued. They are

functionalised as 'criminals' and represented as 'bearers' of social problems, bringing into focus their economic and social strain on Malaysia.

Example 4.4.1:

(1) The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was on Thursday <u>urged</u> to verify the actual status of people seeking asylum in Malaysia before issuing them refugee cards. (2) Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said this was to prevent <u>indiscriminate</u> issuing of refugee status that caused the country to be <u>flooded</u> with foreigners.

(3) 'My ministry hopes the UNHCR will evaluate the people seeking refugee status before issuing the cards. (4) We do not want crime and social problems to proliferate here because of the actions of the UNHCR.'

Source: UNHCR Asked To Verify Status First Before Issuing Refugee Cards, Bernama, 19 February 2009.

In (1) the UNHCR is passivated with respect to 'urged' and although the agent of 'urging' is excluded, it is possible to infer who he is from sentence (2). Here Syed Hamid Albar is nominated and titulated as 'Home Minister Datuk Seri', a move that lends authority to his voice when explaining the need for verification, namely 'to prevent indiscriminate issuing of refugee status'. The negativity associated with the word 'indiscriminate' describes the UNHCR's action in the issuing of cards, while 'flooded' refers to the proliferation of foreigners. 'Flooded' here is linked to the metaphor of water that is seen as an uncontrollable threat to Malaysia. The use of this metaphor legitimises the argument that Malaysia needs to defend itself against these threats, i.e. the foreigners.

Sentences (3) and (4) consist of direct quotations from the Home Minister and is constructed to associate the issuing of cards to 'people seeking refuge' by the UNHCR with the spread of crimes and social problems. This indirectly represented this group as being associated with crimes and social problems and posing a threat to 'us' in (4). 'My ministry' is activated as Senser in (3) in relation to 'hoping' with the UNHCR in object

position. The UNHCR is activated as Agent of evaluation, whereas 'the people seeking refugee status' are represented as being recipients of this evaluation. The patient is represented as one homogeneous group functionalised as 'people seeking refuge status'. Here both refugees and the actions of the UNCHR are being blamed for the proliferation of crime and social problems in Malaysia. 'Proliferate' highlights the severity of the situation.

Similar strategies are found in Example 4.4.2. In April 2007, *NST* published an interview with Syed Hamid Albar, who was the Foreign Minister at the time, and the remarks he made in this interview was subsequently reported by *Malaysiakini*. The *NST* interview was published in a Q&A format, which meant that all of Syed Hamid's remarks were reproduced verbatim. Example 4.4.2 consists of excerpts from this interview.

Example 4.4.2:

Paragraph 1

(1) Q: What is our position on refugees?
(2) A: Refugees have become a perennial problem for us.

Paragraph 2

(3) Q: As things stand now, once (refugees) get their documentation from the UNHCR, it appears that the government is helpless.
(4) A: On humanitarian grounds we do not take action with the understanding that as soon as possible they should be relocated to a third country. (5) It is a transition. (6) But it is becoming a flood. (7) There are some 40,000 who have been recorded (as refugees by UNHCR and given papers). (8) It is supposed to take care and feed them. (8) The fact is that we are not a signatory to the convention (International Convention of 1951 on refugees and the additional protocol of 1967). (9) We have given humane treatment to these people who have come to this country illegally. (10) It (UNHCR) should get them to a third country. (11) Otherwise, every illegal in this country will go to the UNHCR and ask to be certified as refugees.

(12) Q: Has the ministry written to the UNHCR to indicate its concern about the situation?

(13) A: We have done that on a number of occasions. (14) We have called the agency. (15) We have spoken to it and explained our position. (16) The agency understands we have been accommodating in allowing them to operate.

(17) What we are not happy about is the current state of affairs, the difficulty, the social and economic burden we face. (18) Now everybody (refugees) we ask for identity papers, they come up with the UNHCR (identity papers). (19) We don't have the international protocol cover, while UNHCR is operating in our country with our agreement. (20) In the first place, it should not be taking people except for those who really have a problem and it should inform us. At present, it doesn't inform us.

Source: Refugees `a perennial problem for Malaysia', New Straits Times, 18 April 2007.

The interviewer's questions are constructed in a way that passivates the government and represents them as helpless against the problems the ASRs and the UNHCR have posed for Malaysia. Syed Hamid builds on this sense of helplessness through his reference to and appraisement of ASRs as 'a perennial problem' (2) and 'a flood' (6), both terms that imply that the situation is beyond the government's control.

Paragraph 2 sets up a relationship of cause and effect between the issuing of refugee documentation to people seeking asylum and the flooding of the country with foreigners. The metaphorical use of the phrase 'becoming a flood' associates them with a destructive force and emphasises their otherness. 'Flood' serves to convey impending threat to denote a natural catastrophe defying control (Pohl and Wodak, 2012: 209), and is used to metaphorically describe the growing number of refugees, which is a form of *impersonalisation*. In (5) and (6), Malaysia is presented as being faced with a contrast between the original intention, which was for Malaysia to be a place of 'transition' and what actually happened, that the number of refugees was 'becoming a flood'.

Paragraph 3 contains three sets of text, each individually attributed. The first is a direct quote with Syed Hamid ('he') as Sayer speaking in (17) on behalf of the Malaysian people that 'we are not happy about the current state of affairs …', which is a consequence of the UNHCR's action of registering some 40,000 refugees (sentence (7)). Note the way agency and causality is represented with respect to the actions that the UNHCR embodies. The line of reasoning for not allowing entry is the threat to us. Sentence (20) depicts the UNHCR as an entity with obligations, namely what it should not be doing ('taking people') and what it should do ('inform us'), and it does not do what it should be doing ('not informing us').

Syed Hamid's comments were reported from a different angle by the alternative newspaper *Malaysiakini*. Example 4.4.3 is taken from this report.

Example 4.4.3:

(1) M'sia blames UN for 'flood' of refugees

(2) Malaysia has accused the United Nations refugee agency of contributing to a "flood" of immigrants who are poorly cared for, according to a report today.

(3) "What we are not happy about is the current state of affairs, the difficulty, the social and economic burden we face," he told the New Straits Times newspaper.

(4) The UNHCR "should not be taking people except for those who really have a problem, and it should inform us. At present, it doesn't inform us," he added.

(5) Syed Hamid said Malaysia was supposed to be a place of transition, but that the number of refugees was "becoming a flood," with the UNCHR registering some 40,000 refugees.

(6) Malaysia is not a party to international refugee conventions, and illegal immigrants are often detained and later deported to their home country. (7)

However, the UNHCR can assign refugee status to applicants and assist in resettling them in another country or in voluntary repatriation.

Source: Malaysiakini, 18 April 2007.

In the headline (1) and the lead of the report (2), the Malaysian government is activated as responsible for the verbal action of blaming and accusing the UNHCR. The government's passive representation of refugees as 'immigrants who are poorly cared for' is also reproduced in (2). However, the further along in the article a description of the situation in Malaysia is given in (6) and (7). In (6), Malaysia is first referred to as a non-signatory to the refugee convention and that is followed by the passivation of illegal immigrants as being subject to detention and deportation. We can infer from the first clause that the agent of the action detaining and deporting is the Malaysian government.

Sentence (7) starts with 'however', providing a contrast to the government's action through the action of the UNHCR of assigning refugee status and assisting refugees in resettlement. Refugees are therefore represented as beneficiaries of the UNHCR's actions. This brings into focus the 'dual system' that affects refugees in Malaysia (Don & Lee, 2014: 697). On the one hand, they are considered illegal immigrants by the government and are at risk of being treated accordingly. On the other hand, the UNHCR is constructed as having the authority to offer them an alternative identity, i.e. recognised refugees with the prospect of resettlement to a third country.

4.5 Discussion and Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the analysis on the media data set. The objective of the analysis was to explore the representation of refugees in Malaysian public discourse. The three voices presented here were the voices of the government, alternative (opposition and NGOs) and the press.

The governments' representation of refugees could be categorised into three main representations: (i) illegal immigrants, (ii) threats, and (iii) victims. The former two representations functioned to legitimise anti-immigration policies pertaining to refugees, while the latter representation recontextualised refugees in the context of the Malaysia-Australia exchange deal. The government's representation of refugees as illegal immigrants was accomplished through the denial of their refugee status and Malaysia's responsibility to refugees. The occurrence of conflating refugees and asylum seekers with illegal migrants corroborated Baker et al's (2008) findings that the overlapping terms 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', 'immigrant' and 'migrant' were used as synonyms in the corpus (p. 287).

The alternative voices' representation of refugees was framed within human rights and international law. They were represented as (i) requiring protection, (ii) different from illegal immigrants, and (iii) victims of the government.

Sections 4.4 discussed the mainstream and alternative press' respective reporting on two representations of refugees: (i) refugees as threats, and (ii) ASRs as victims. The mainstream press aligned their reporting to the government's perspective and representation of refugees, regardless whether the government was representing refugees positively or negatively. The alternative press tended to frame its reporting from the angle of demonising the government and the representation of refugees contributed to that construction of the government.

Elite voices such as government leaders, politicians and the press have greater access to disseminate their views in public spheres and discourses and inevitably are able to influence public perception and debates on a wide range of issues, including migration and refugees. Therefore, it was important to establish how refugees were represented by these elite voices from a critical lens as a backdrop to and frame for the rest of the study on the personal narratives of refugees.

CHAPTER 5: THE REPRESENTATION OF REFUGEES
BY REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA

5.1   Introduction

The nature of the findings presented in this chapter is based on a thematic analysis of the interviews of 20 short-term, mid-term and long-term refugees. As mentioned in Chapter 3, during the interviews, refugees were asked to tell the story about how they came to Malaysia and their life in Malaysia. They were also asked to speak about their thoughts about the definition of a refugee and if and how they identified with that definition. They were also asked to provide stories that would help give a picture of what it is like living as a refugee in Malaysia. These interviews were then coded in NVivo according to relevant themes. The main themes to emerge from these interviews were categorised into three identity themes and will be discussed in turn in this chapter.

The three most common identity themes that emerged in the narratives were:

> i)   The refugee as homo sacer or bare life
>
> ii)   The refugees as victim
>
> iii) The refugee and the idealised Self

Identity themes' are the common themes that emerged from the coding and analysis of the data pertaining to the representation of refugees and their identity These three identity themes were most commonly drawn on by refugees in this study to discuss their experiences as a refugee in Malaysia and how they understood being a refugee. Sections 5.2 – 5.4 will discuss these identity claims according to specific emergent positions that refugees drew on as observed from my analysis. An overview of relevant quotes from the refugees' narratives will be presented to illustrate these themes and positions. These stories and chronicles were considered narratives according to the criterion for identifying narratives mentioned in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.3). The chapter will conclude with a discussion on the findings in the chapter (section 7.4).

The quotes from refugees are provided here as either *examples* or *extracts*. *Examples* are shorter speaker-bound quotes, in which the refugee respondent is the sole speaker. *Extracts* are longer and involve both the respondent as well as the interviewer. The quotes are then followed by some general analysis and/or brief comments. Some longer extracts are analysed using Bamberg's positioning framework for more detailed analysis. The analysis based on the positioning framework in these cases is not as exhaustive and in-depth as the analysis of narratives in Chapter 6 as it serves more illustrative purposes in this chapter.

Quotes from the narrative accounts of 13 refugees were used in the analysis of this chapter. The respondents were eight male refugees (Siu Hu, Chin Land, Prince, Aung Aung, Francis, Khai Pu, Mohamed and Farta) and five female refugees (Jemy, May, Ah Dim, Hkawn and Julia). Details of these respondents are found in the Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1 Interview respondents quoted in Chapter 5

Respondent name	Gender	Age	Country of origin	Years in Malaysia
Aung Aung	M	26	Myanmar	3
Chin Land	M	35	Myanmar	6
Farta	M	30	Somalia	4
Francis	M	34	Myanmar	8
Khai Pu	M	33	Myanmar	4
Mohamed	M	21	Somalia	5
Prince	M	18	Myanmar	18
Siu Hu	M	29	Myanmar	7
Ah Dim	F	53	Myanmar	3
Hkawn	F	41	Myanmar	3
Jemy	F	31	Myanmar	7
Julia	F	38	Myanmar	5
May	F	70	Myanmar	23

All names used here are pseudonyms chosen by the respondents themselves. The ages of the respondents span a wide range from 18 to 70 years of age. The number of years spent in Malaysia also covered a wide range from three to 23 years.

5.2   The refugee as homo sacer or bare life

A prevalent theme that emerged from the refugee interviews was the struggles they encountered as a result of being caught between two legal systems. On the one hand, they were recognised by the UNHCR as refugees and possessed registration cards. On the other hand, because the Malaysian government has not ratified the UN Refugee Convention, they remained illegal and were often regulated accordingly.

A useful concept for exploring this experience and situation is Agamben's (1998) notion of *homo sacer* (sacred man), derived from the same notion in ancient Roman law, which is a form of life he describes as 'bare'. The homo sacer is described as life that is depoliticised and separated from the politicised form of life as realised in citizenship. By existing outside the sovereign law of a state, refugees fall into what Agamben called '*zones of indistinction*' (p. 14). He argued that these zones were wilful acts by the sovereign state to exclude itself from carrying out its laws. However, in maintaining the space for the excluded, sovereign law draws the boundaries for the included to exist within its laws and thus reinforces its sovereignty (p. 15-29). Zones of indistinction contain those 'no longer humans', who are exempt from normal law and by extension, exempt from basic privileges and protection normally accorded to citizens of the state. Agamben identified the refugee camp as the archetypal example of such a zone and refugees as prime examples of those who occupy them.

The general refugee population in Malaysia including the refugees that participated in this study do not live in refugee camps and are, in a sense, free to roam and live anywhere they choose. However, this loose arrangement, while on a superficial level is beneficial to refugees because they are not confined to camps, is the often cause of many inconvenient and distressing situations for refugees. Examples of these situations will be presented in this chapter. Refugees are not strictly regulated by security and immigration departments as illegal migrants and are often tolerated but this also leaves them vulnerable

to many undesirable situations. This study would like to argue that this state of limbo that refugees are in as they wait in Malaysia is akin to Agamben's notion of a zone of indistinction.

Sections 5.2.1 – 5.2.3 examines two positions refugees took up in their narratives that subscribed to this identity as a homo sacer: i) non-citizens and ii) illegal migrants.

5.2.1   Non-citizens

The first position refugees in this study subscribed to that fell under the homo sacer identity theme was their position as non-citizens in Malaysia and the consequences of this position This positioning is significant because as non-citizens, refugees cannot gain access to what Nyers defines of citizenship as 'modern claims to liberty, equality, rights, autonomy, self-determination, individualism, and human agency' (2004, p. 203).

5.2.1.1 Quotes on being non-citizens

The refugees expressed their non-citizenship through the emphasis on their lack of access to basic rights and opportunities. This section will now present relevant quotes from refugees on this positioning followed by some brief comments.

Example 5.1:

> (1) Refugee is ah… a hard life. Refugee are, you know, five facts. (2) No money... Money, no enough. (3) And everything we cannot solve our problem ourselves. (4) And every hour face… government… neglect, ever neglect. (5) And, we have… <u>no right</u> to build up our business. E:verything we do… always come and disturb. (6) And, <u>we never get our wish fulfilled</u>. <u>Wish don't have</u>. (7) That's why, can be called refugees. (May)

In May's quote (example 5.1), the refugee is defined by 'five facts' in (1), i.e. 'no money', 'cannot solve our problem ourselves', 'face… neglect', 'no right to build up our business', 'we never get our wish fulfilled' (2-6). All these 'facts' point to the refugee's passivity or lack of agency, either in not possessing (money, wishes) or not being able to take action (solving problems, building businesses, etc).

Example 5.2:

> (1) Malaysia also <u>no safety</u> for our life. (2) So we are still struggling in Malaysia because of we have no document, no paper. (3) We are <u>not free</u>, freely… So everything must take care and we cannot work work in… freely. (4) We are, we can only work part-time. (5) So everything is refugee for very expensive. (6) Even the rental, room also. (7) If we have <u>no document, no passport</u>, the agent also very high for the refugee. (Chin Land)

In example 5.2, the refugee was described by Chin Land as not having access to another basic human need, safety (1). The other two problems refugees faced were the inability to work 'freely' (3-4) and higher cost of living for refugees (5-7). These difficulties were all attributed to their lack of documents or papers as mentioned in (2) and (7) ('because of we have no document, no paper').

Mohamed, a refugee from Somalia, in example 5.3 equated the word 'refugee' with 'someone who has no rights, no identity also' (1-2), which was identified as the cause of 'a lot of problems' (3).

Example 5.3:

> (1) Because uh in the language, the word 'refugee', we see it as like uh someone is uh- who doesn't have rights, a lot of rights. (…) (2) In here the *refugee means someone who has <u>no rights</u>, <u>no identity</u> also*. (3) We have a lot of problems. (4) That's a refugee in Malaysia. (Mohamed)

Siu Hu in example 5.4 used the metaphor 'beggar' to describe the same problem.

Example 5.4:

> (1) Uh you see this is uh- for refugee mean it is uh- it mean is- you see like… *we are beggar*. (2) Because uh… we c- we don't have- because in Malaysia, it is

not our own country… (3) so, we don't have like to do- we don't have any right to do in Malaysia and other country also I don't think so. (4) So, this is uh- because we are like a person but doesn't- uh… does not have any right to do in the world. (Siu Hu)

Here, the refugee's transformation into a beggar was attributed to their lack of a country. Because Malaysia was not their country (2), they did not have the right 'to do' (3-4) as normal citizens would. The refugee was summed up in (4) as 'a person but … does not have any right to do in the world'.

Another quote attributed to this respondent, Siu Hu, presented the idea of how Myanmar refugees became non-citizens from a different angle as seen in example 5.5:

Example 5.5:

(1) So, according to my opinion we=if we don't want the government, so we are refugee. (2) Because if you say, 'I don't want our government', so the government will uh (.) the army, if we say in Myanmar… so if I don't- if I say, 'I don't like army', (3) so if the army knows, they come and they arrest me and they will do whatever they want to do to me. (4) So, this way. If we don't want-leaving of our country, so we mu- we are refugee. (Siu Hu)

This positioning of the refugee attributed more agency to the individual, who is able to decide that he or she does not 'want the government' or live under the ruling body and decides to leave the country. Siu Hu spoke using a hypothetical situation in (2), in which a citizen of Myanmar speaks out against the government ('if I say, 'I don't like army''). The negative effect of (2) is found in (3), which supported his statement made in (1) and this is summarised once again in the concluding sentence in (4).

In example 5.6, Farta, a refugee from Somalia, described life as a homo sacer as being denied the chance for upward mobility in life.

Example 5.6:

(1) Uh staying here somehow is not… good. (…) (2) Yea, why? Because for me, I have a degree and what I'm doing now must have a line ((R draws a diagonal line going upwards with hand)). (3) You see? Bu- sometimes I'd like it to just to get a job here. (4) No one is not interested to just… uh no one is interested. (5)

So, I have problem of working here because I don't have any access to the job. (6) So, I'd like to get to where I can have a job. (7) That is the problem, which I don't like it to stay in Malaysia. (Farta)

Farta began by saying in (1) that living in Malaysia was 'not good'. Lines 2-7 provided explanation for his statement. He positioned himself as a degree holder instead of a refugee (2) and illustrated to the interviewer that as such, his life must move upwards or develop positively. He used the metaphor of a 'line' and then visually reiterated this picture with the use of his hand to draw an imaginary diagonal line moving upwards. This upward movement involves having a job and in (3), he positioned himself as someone in search for a job but who could not gain access to any jobs because 'no one is interested' to hire him (4). This disinterest prevents him from moving upwards into the place, where he 'can have a job' (6).

5.2.1.2 Narrative accounts of being non-citizens

This section presents two longer extracts from refugee narratives relating to the positioning of being a non-citizen and these were analysed using Bamberg's narrative analysis framework of three positioning levels.

(a) Chin Land: No respect from the local people

In extract 5.1, Chin Land presented two examples of how refugees feel like outsiders and non-citizens.

Extract 5.1:

1 I: How about… do you feel you fit in with the Malaysian community? Or do you feel like maybe you are a bit outsider, not so welcomed? Or you…

2 R: Yea, Malaysia (.) yea, we are (.) not too connected with Malaysia people. But we are only communicated in our refugee to refugee.

3   So, sometimes we go outside yea… (.) they may be very look down, maybe we are refugee.

4	I:	Yea, you feel that?

4   I: Yea, you feel that?

5   R: Yea. So but.. (.) but never mind we are ((laughs)) we are refugee.

6   So, (.) because of we are, I feel but (.) we are not, no longer stay in Malaysia.

7   So we are encouraged again, we are free to other country because of the… yea.

8   I: So, when you say sometimes you feel that people look down, is it because (of) something they say or just their behaviour?

9   R: No, behaviour or sometimes say on the bus, on the [uh..

10   I: [Ah, what do they say?

11   R: So, some my people are (.) are working, uniform, very bad smell.

12   Like that why you before… taking a bath, you go on the bus like that

13   so… our people are need to work.

14   Our, no, our own car not, NOT under the office, not under the air-con. So, our people are working at construction, under the sun.

15   After that, they go back home. Maybe very- some are dirty and maybe a bad smell. This is why cannot- we do nicely.

16   I: Anything else that makes you feel not so welcomed?

17   R: Mm… (.) So, how do you say? So sometimes my people, out refugee are go into the shopping also, if the high price shopping, we can go in.

18   So, the boss, the owner also don't care. So, it mean look down and they (refugees) have no money, cannot buy because of cannot, aiyah, they, the boss also not welcome too much.

19   And at that time, they feel… we feel so… we also the same… why, and the same people can live↑.

20   I: Mmm…

21   R: Some people want to buy also, can buy also. So at the time not welcomed to the shop.

22   So, restaurant also like that. When we are go into the restaurant, so the boss will be maybe, refugee will be no money, not really not welcome, not accept to must welcome. So, this is…

23   R: So, they don't let you sit in [and order?

24   I: [Yea, you sit in..

Positioning level 1 (the story)

Lines 1-10 made up the abstract or preface of the story, or what this study refers to as *pre-story interaction*. In lines 2-3, Chin Land attempted to establish the main point, namely that refugees are 'not too connected' with Malaysians and more than that, they are 'looked down on' by Malaysians. On a story level, he presented two stories about how this is evident in lines 9-15 and 17-24. In both stories, two groups of characters were set against each other, 'my people' or 'our people', i.e. the Chin refugees, and Malaysians, who come into contact with them.

The first story related to how Malaysians reacted to refugees on the bus (line 9). The refugees were positioned by Malaysians wearing work uniforms that have a 'bad smell' (line 11). The Malaysians on the bus were voiced complaining about the smell and questioning why the refugees would go on the bus without first taking a bath (line 12). In lines 13-15, Chin Land stopped the story to explain what the situation for refugees was like, and this is founded on the argument that refugees 'need to work' (line 13), with the use of the verb 'need' to express necessity. The next two lines expressed the conditions under which this necessity is carried out, i.e. 'our people are working at construction, under the sun' and 'not under the office, not under the air-con' (line 14), and the result of these conditions, i.e. 'some are dirty and maybe a bad smell' (line 15). Here, refugees were positioned through Chin Land's perspective as a narrator as needing to work in tough working conditions and hence, could not help their bad body odour. On the other hand, the Malaysians on the bus were positioned as lacking understanding about the refugees' situation and prejudiced towards them because of their body odour.

The second story in lines 17-23 gave an account of refugees trying to enter shops and restaurants in Malaysia and perpetuated this positioning. The refugees ('we') were again in opposition to 'they', who were identified as 'boss' and 'owner', referring to local shopkeepers and restaurant owners. Refugees were positioned by these bosses as having

'no money' (lines 18, 22), which was the reason why they were looked down upon (line 18) and not welcomed by the shopkeepers (lines 18, 21, 22). This included refugees who may have the means to make purchases and this was mentioned in line 21 ('Some people want to buy also, can buy also').

Positioning level 2 (the telling)

Chin Land's stories were prompted by the interviewer's question in line 1 about how whether he is able to fit in with the Malaysian community. She positioned Chin Land as an outsider and this was seen in the follow up question she offered as a suggestion in line 1 ('Or do you feel like maybe you are a bit outsider, not so welcomed?'). He used the pronoun 'we' instead of 'I' during this entire extract, signalling his positioning with the collective Myanmar refugee community. In reply to the interviewer's question, he replied that refugees ('we') did not feel welcomed (line 2) because sometimes the local people looked down on them (line 3). The interviewer then shifted the focus onto to him in line 4 by asking, 'Yea, you feel that?', and Chin Land's initial response, 'Yea', was followed up by, 'but never mind we are ((laughs)) we are refugee' (line 5). The use of the conjunction 'but' at the start of the clause and the occurrence of 'solo laughter' (Holt, 2010) was self-deprecatory in nature and an attempt by Chin Land to mitigate the force of the face threatening act posed by the interviewer's direct question. The interviewer asked him if he personally felt like people looked down on him (through the use of 'you' to address Chin Land) and Chin Land's response ('but never mind') and laughter allowed him to avoid directly answering the question. Instead, he positioned refugees as unimportant.

The interviewer tried to elicit a narrative account about it from him in line 8 and Chin Land mentioned the refugees' experiences with Malaysians on the bus (9), so the interviewer encouraged him in line 10 ('Ah, what do they say?'). The first story was told

in direct reply to this question, while story 2 was told in reply to the interviewer's probe question in line 16. In line 19, which formed his evaluation of the incidents in this narrative extract, Chin Land questioned this discrimination that refugees felt on the basis that they are the same as the locals ('we feel so... we also the same, why, and the same people can live↑'). The 'we' in 'we also the same' included refugees and Malaysians into a common identity, namely people who can live together. Chin Land formed this latter point as a declarative clause ('the same people can live↑', which elicited the interviewer's acknowledgement in line 20.

Positioning level 3 (the Self)

In this extract, Chin Land constructed the refugee identity based on the themes of unwelcome and discrimination. From the perspective of positioning, a refugee in Malaysia was positioned as likely to encounter moments of unwelcome, prejudice and discrimination from the local people and the two stories were told to illustrate this point. The first story illustrated how refugees were often misunderstood and victims of prejudice from the locals, who did not understand their desperate situation. The second story presented an example of how refugees were discriminated against by local business vendors. Yet, he implied that this was something anyone, who claimed the refugee identity had to accept and this was best exemplified by his statement in line 5, 'but never mind... we are refugee'. What emerges is the refugee being positioned in an inferior position compared to Malaysian citizens not only through Chin Land's positioning of refugees on both story and interactional levels but also through his voicing of Malaysians, who positioned refugees as non-citizens. As non-citizens, they are not criminalised or vilified but continue to remain outside the respect and regard of citizens.

(b) Mohamed: 'How can you afford driving a CAR when you are a refugee?'

Mohamed is a refugee from Somalia, who had been living in Malaysia for 8 years at the time of the interview. Extract 5.2 is a narrative of his experience with the police.

Extract 5.2:

1	I:	OK, um how about experience with people like the police or RELA?
2	R:	Um police, lately I'm having problem with the police because every time I go out,
3		they keep asking me where I'm from, asking me (for) my passport.
4		Uh the end of last month, my friend was driving uh we- we are from same home town.
5		He was driving a car, he left his licence…
6		the police go and ask and they be like… they ask us where is our driving licence and where is our UN- where is our identity, registration, licence,
7		they asking (us to) give them the UNHCR card.
8		They ask, 'How can you afford uh driving this car?'
9		I told them, 'I'm <u>not</u> driving this car, my friend is driving and he's also a UNHCR refugee.'
10		So… they ask- they keep asking, 'How can you afford driving a CAR when you are a refugee?'
11		Um… it was difficult at that time because they police, they ask us to stay there like three hours.
12	I:	In the station, is it?
13	R:	Not station, in the road. It was a roadblock. (.) They took 300 from us.
14	I:	And then after that they let you go?
15	R:	Yea they let us go.
16	I:	How did you get the car anyway?
17	R:	Uh my friend, he was playing football uh he's a- he get from another student. He rented like two days.
18	I:	Oh, so it's not his car, [he just rented it?]
19	R:	[Yea it's rented.]
20	I:	So, this was recently, this story?
21	R:	Yea, yea. Recent.
22	I:	You said previously, no (encounters with the police)?

23 R: Yea. <u>Next</u> day, I was walking around [unclear] and the police was sitting there.

24   We just- everybody was moving around, minding their business and I was walking,

25   so the police and the police asked me to come

26   and they asking me how I… my passport, I- I said I have no passport, I have this card.

27   He keep- they look at the card and they asked me how long I've been here.

28   I told them I've been here five years,

29   they asked me why I've been here five years, why didn't I move to another country.

30   I told them uh it's not up to me, it's up to um UN.

31   And after that they asked me how long I'm planning to stay here.

32   I told them that I'm <u>not</u> planning to stay here anymore, not ONE more day, it's up to UN again.

33   And after that, they asked me if I work in here, if I have a job or something like that

34   and I-I told them no, can't work here.

Positioning level 1 (the story)

Two stories were embedded into this narrative sequence, the first in lines 2-21 and the second in lines 23-34.

Mohamed began his story with the abstract or story preface in lines 2-3 and here he positioned the police as giving him trouble because of their persistent questions about his country of origin and documents. He begins the story in line 4 and the main characters are his friend and himself. The friend is described as coming from the 'same home town' as him and driving around despite not bringing along his driver's licence (line 5). The police take the place of the other character and was voiced by Mohamed as asking them many questions. Mohamed positioned himself as the spokesperson for both him and his friend as the latter was not voiced at all in this story. The police asked them for identification (line 6) to ascertain their identity and it was implied in line 7 that they were

aware that Mohamed and his friend were refugees because they asked for their UNHCR cards.

The complicating action occurred in line 8 when the police were voiced asking them, 'How can you afford uh driving this car?'. Mohamed's response displayed aversion as he deflected responsibility for the car onto his silent friend (line 9). At that point, he did not divulge the reason why the police stopped their car but merely absolved himself from responsibility ('I'm <u>not</u> driving this car') and emphasised that the driver was also a refugee. Mohamed's positioning of the police as persistent is seen in line 10, where he used the verb 'keep' with 'asking', along with the claim that the police kept him and his friend there for three hours (line 11) and this caused them difficulty. The police were positioned as being a problem, while Mohamed positioned himself passively as being put in a difficult situation. The voicing of the police allowed Mohamed to present their perspective of refugees, namely that refugees do not have money and thus should not own property such as vehicles (lines 8, 10). This was amplified when Mohamed mentioned in line 13 that the police stopped them at a roadblock and 'took' RM300 from them, implying that the police extorted money from them. Not only were the police positioned here as not affording basic rights to refugees, they also took advantage of the situation by extorting money from them.

Further on in the narrative, Mohamed described the next time he had a run in with the police, which was the 'next day' after the initial incident (line 23). The police were positioned as picking him out of the crowd, who was described as 'minding their business' (line 24). There was an unusual tension between Mohamed and the police and he described this through the voicing of both characters during their conversation. The police were described as positioning Mohamed as a foreigner, thus explaining their preoccupation with identification documents but Mohamed did not have a passport, only his UNHCR card (line 26). Although they police did not arrest him, they were still

described as positioning him as not belonging to the country. The indirect questions attributed to the police in line 29 'they asked me why I've been here five years, why didn't I move to another country' and line 31, 'they asked me how long I'm planning to stay here', positioned Mohamed in the eyes of the police as someone, who should not be in the country.

In responding to the police's question in lines 30 and 32, Mohamed positioned himself as someone at the mercy of the UNHCR's decision to resettle him ('it's not up to me, it's up to… UN'). In line 32 specifically, he also revealed how he took up an outsider position when expressing that he did not want to stay ('I told them that I'm <u>not</u> planning to stay here anymore, not ONE more day').

Positioning level 2 (the telling)

Mohamed's narrative on the police began when the interviewer asked about his experiences with security forces in line 1. The structure of the interviewer's question positioned refugees including Mohamed as people, who would commonly encounter security forces. Instead of framing the question using the auxiliary verb 'to do' with the verb clause 'have experience' (e.g. 'Do you have any experience…'), the interviewer asked, 'how about experience with people like the police or RELA?', in order to leave the question more open. In framing the question this way, the interviewer assumed that he would indeed have had an experience involving security forces. Mohamed ratified this by specifying which security unit he had encountered in line 2 (police) and positioned this experience as a negative one right from the start ('lately I'm having problem with the police'). He reiterated this in line 11, calling the situation 'difficult'.

The interviewer alluded to the police's positioning of Mohamed in her question, 'How did you get the car anyway?' (line 16), the adverb 'anyway' here reverting the focus of the conversation back to the two refugees and the car, instead of the police. The

interviewer's curiosity revealed that she also found refugees possessing a vehicle to be an unusual occurrence and therefore, aligned her positioning of refugees more with the police than with Mohamed.

Positioning level 3 (the Self)

This short extract presents another example of how refugees draw on the identity theme of the refugee as homo sacer. Part of being identified as bare life in this context is first, being excluded from the community; second, living outside normal Malaysian law; and third, the denial of rights to assets and property. In this extract, Mohamed was able to illustrate this by using the narrative about his encounter with the police to position himself as a person facing problems and difficulties as a result of being identified as a refugee. The first two factors emerged from Mohamed's account of how he is identified and pulled out of the crowd of people 'minding their business' (line 24), and also targeted for questioning and extortion. The police's recognition of his UNHCR card did not offer him any protection because he existed outside the jurisdiction of the local law. Instead, the police seemed to take advantage of this situation by extorting money from him and his friend.

Mohamed positioned himself as living outside Malaysian law and under UNHCR laws. His desire to be resettled, however, was dependant solely on the UNHCR and until that happened; he had to continue living in Malaysia. The third factor, namely that refugees were denied the right to own property, emerged in how he positioned himself in the story through the eyes of the police and also how he is positioned by the interviewer on an interactional level. In both cases, the surprise over Mohamed's friend's possession of a vehicle was apparent because refugees were not expected to be able to own vehicles.

5.2.2 Illegal migrants

Another positioning frequently taken up by refugees when drawing on the homo sacer identity theme is the positioning of refugees as illegal migrants. The previous positioning of being non-citizens (section 5.2.1) meant that refugees were excluded from the general social life of the country and treated as outsiders. This focus on the theme of exclusion foregrounds the refugee's status as an outsider and passivation as a social actor. The analysis in Chapter 4 revealed that the representation of refugees as illegals was based on the discourse that refugees brought criminal and social problems. This representation assigned a more active role to the refugees as the ones doing the offending. Similarly in the narratives of refugees in the study, the illegal migrant was positioned in a far more active role than the refugee. This positioning has significant differences from the previous positioning as non-citizens and these will be discussed in this section through the examples given. Refugees chose either to position themselves as illegal migrants or to resist this positioning. However, in practice, this positioning was not so straightforward, and at times they struggled to position themselves as one or the other. At times, some refugees took up both positioning simultaneously.

5.2.2.1 Illegal migrants

For some refugees in this study, being illegal was linked to work opportunities. As illegal migrants, they were not allowed to work by law, yet the reality was that many refugees either worked illegally or were constantly seeking work opportunities.

In example 5.7, Ah Dim's positioning of herself as an illegal was a direct result of not being able to work, despite being officially recognised by the UNCHR. The character 'they' referred to here was implied generally to be the Malaysian government, who refused to recognise the UNHCR card as eligibility for work in the country. In other words, because she was not allowed to work, she felt that she must therefore be illegal.

Example 5.7:

> 'They said even we have UNHCR card, we are not allowed to work here. I still feel illegal.' (Ah Dim)

In example 5.8, Prince, a Rohingya refugee from Myanmar, aligned himself with refugees, who he positioned as illegal migrants because of the illegal work they did.

Example 5.8:

> (1) 'But here, can do a job, even though it's kind of illegal=it IS illegal for us, for Rohingyas to do job. (2) But that is the only way for us to survive, I mean what else can we do… (3) So, we have=even though it's illegal, to support ourselves, our family, we have to do this, we have do a job even though it's illegal. (4) And yea, majority, all of us, I mean Rohingya, we are doing a job, which others see as illegal. (5) But we, even though it's illegal, we have to do it. We have no other choice.' (Prince)

Using the pronoun 'we' and 'us' in this extract, Prince identified the work that Rohingyas do as 'illegal for us' because refugees are not allowed to work (1). The reason for working was given in (2) and (3), namely that it was the only way they could support their families and survive. In (4), he framed this positioning in the context of the positioning of the Rohingyas by 'others', who also viewed the work the Rohingyas do as illegal. The use of the adjectival phrase 'only way' (2) and the verb of obligation 'have to' expressed necessity and this was reinforced by his statement in (5): 'even though it's illegal, we have to do it. We have no other choice.'

The link between work, illegality and refugees was that as refugees in Malaysia, they would not be able to work. In Ah Dim's case, her ineligibility for work only served to reinforce her illegal status. In Prince's perspective, in order to work and legitimise the work they did, refugees had to accept the position of an illegal migrant out of necessity rather than choice.

5.2.2.2 Legal migrants

Some refugees clearly and consistently positioned themselves as refugees, who are distinct from all other illegal migrants. For those who took up this positioning, there was a clear difference between refugees and illegal migrants, who entered Malaysia in search of economic opportunities.

Just like Ah Dim and Prince in section 5.2.2.1 above, Aung Aung, a Kachin refugee from Myanmar, discussed the issue of legality by establishing the link between work and the refugee. He differentiated between economic migrants, who came to Malaysia in search of work, and refugees in extract 5.3.

Extract 5.3:

1 I: But would you call yourself illegal?

2 R: No. Me refugee, because I didn't come here to work. I just came here uh to get uh refuge.

3 I: Ah, to seek refuge. So do you think that it is right if the government said you are illegal?

4 R: Again, what shall I say? Those uh those came here to work, and then overstay, they will say illegal.

5   But just for the finding the shelt-, finding to get the refuge, it is not supposed to say illegal.

Here, Aung Aung provided a negative response to the interviewer's question in (1) and called himself a refugee (2). He supported this claim by giving the reason, i.e. 'because I didn't come here to work. I just came here uh to get uh refuge.' (2). The interviewer ratified his answer in line 3 ('Ah, to seek refuge.') and then asked his opinion about the government calling refugees illegal. He again mada a distinction between illegal migrants, who come 'to work, and then overstay' (4), and refugees, who are seeking refuge (5).

Siu Hu, in example 5.9, positioned refugees and asylum seekers as different from illegal migrants because of the motivating or push factor, i.e. persecution in their country of origin.

Example 5.9:

> (1) Yea… uh between illegal and asylum seeker I just want to say a little bit.
> (2) Because uh illegal mean if we come to Malaysia, we don't have right to- yea
> we don't have right to come here by- without permit. (3) Because of our Chin-
> because of refugee, so refugee mean you cannot stay in our own country in fear
> of the government maybe, in fear of religion problem or anything can be. (4) So,
> if we cannot stay in our country, so they have to move to- we have to go to another
> country to have a better life or for asylum. To seek asylum. (5) So, this is a- we
> come here to Malaysia… so, we are not <u>illegal</u> but we are person who is looking
> for a better place. (Siu Hu)

At the time of the interview, Siu Hu was on the verge of being resettled to Canada, so it was unsurprising that his positioning of himself as a refugee with regards to illegality was clear. He made a distinction between the 'illegal' and 'asylum seeker' (1) and defined both categories in (2) and (3) respectively. The persecution asylum seekers faced as described in (3) legitimated the asylum seeker's forced migration to another country or as Siu Hu said, 'To seek asylum' (4). In his summary statement in (5), he aligned himself with the asylum seekers he mentioned in (4), seen through his use of 'we', and positioned them as 'not illegal' but people who were 'looking for a better place'.

Khai Pu distanced himself from illegal migrants and described the important difference between a refugee and an illegal in examples 5.10-5.12:

Example 5.10:

> Maybe it's, those are, I mean, illegal like those who are from, uh, like a
> neighbouring country especially, uh, we can say from, uh, other country they
> come here with the… Overstay. They overstay and stay. That is they prefer, they
> want to continue staying here without a passport or without the permit. It is their
> decision that they stay here.

Example 5.11:

> But then as refugee, we don't have, we have no decision. We are being put into
> that situation so it is a totally different. That's why sometime if for those who are
> illegal they can be legalized, they can go back. But refugee cannot be legalized.
> We stay also don't have passport, we don't have IC, nothing.

Example 5.12:

So we [unclear] our situation is, uh, totally different from those who are illegal. (…) Illegal can be legalized any time if they want. They have money, they can do if they want to.

In 5.10, he described what an illegal was, i.e. those from 'a neighbouring country', who 'overstay'. He emphasised that illegals make the decision stay in Malaysia illegally, without documents ('It is their decision that they stay here'). The refugee, in contrast in example 5.11, does not have this decision because their situation is 'totally different'. He identified yet another difference between both groups, namely that illegals can be legalised a legal migrants, whereas refugees cannot be legalised. In 5.12, Khai Pu mentioned another aspect that allowed illegals to be legalised, money ('They have money, they can do if they want to').

5.2.2.3 Both legal and illegal migrants

There were numerous instances when the refugees in the study revealed their struggle to identify themselves as either full legal or fully illegal, preferring to position themselves as both. Several examples are presented below and it is interesting to note that this complex positioning as both a legal and illegal migrant emerged largely as a co-construction between the refugees and the interviewer.

One such example can be seen in the following conversation between Chin Land (Myanmar) and the interviewer.

Extract 5.4:

1   I: So, would you say you are the same like all the other illegal immigrants, those that come here to try to work but they have no papers?

2   They got no work permit… do you think=

3   R: =But we are (.) they, yea… they are also illegal. But they are (.) not under UNHCR.

4   Maybe a little bit different.

5   So, we are UN people, they are real (.) how to say, illegal.

6		They are under the government, so they are coming by aeroplane, passport, the permit.
7		It's mean they are the government on Malaysia [unclear].
8		So, we are, we are running by the jungle, maybe a little bit different.
9	I:	Yea, but when the government says illegal immigrant, they mean people who come here to work but have no work permit.
10		They might have passport but they have no work permit, not allowed to work here.
11		So, they work illegally lah, hiding.
12	R:	Yea, yea. They are hiding=
13	I:	=So, when the government calls refugees illegal immigrants, do you agree that they should do that?
14	R:	Well, I don't understand also the… yea, (we are) maybe half ((laughs)) maybe legal.
15		Because of we are the government call… not recognise.
16		So the government call we are illegal.
17		So, the government at the top… so, if the government call illegal so all the people, they are also thinking illegal also.
18		We cannot know rights, cannot anything. We cannot do anything also.

The interviewer in line 1 asked Chin Land to compare himself to other illegal immigrants. The subordinate clause (1) and the following sentence (2) formed the interviewer's definition of illegal immigrants, i.e. 'those that come here to try to work but they have no papers' and 'no work permit'. This lack of official documentation applies to refugees in the Malaysian context as well, therefore the question urged Chin Land to explain how refugees are different. Chin Land initially responded in line 3 with 'But we are' before repairing his sentence to focus on 'they'. The 'we' in the initial response referred to refugees, while the 'but' indicated his disagreement with labelling refugees as illegal immigrants as implied in the interviewer's question. In the repaired response, he said, 'yea… they are also illegal', which was immediately followed up by, 'But they are (.) not under UNHCR' and 'Maybe a little bit different' (4). The important element that

separated both types of migrants in Chin Land's view was the UNHCR. Illegal immigrants were described by him as not being 'under UNHCR' but under the Malaysian government (6-7), while refugees were described as 'UN people' (5). The other type of migrant was described as 'real' illegals (5) because they did not have protection from UN and international law as refugees did.

The interviewer asked the question in lines 9-11 and 13 about Chin Land's opinion about whether he agreed with the government's categorisation of refugees as illegal immigrants. His initial response about not understanding the situation ('Well, I don't understand…') is repaired with admission that refugees are 'half… legal' (14) and recognition of the government's stand with regards to refugees ('we are the government call… not recognise') in line 15. Because the government 'calls' refugees illegal, Chin Land concludes that the government also, therefore, thinks of refugees as illegal. The consequence of this is stated by him in line 18: 'We cannot know rights, cannot anything. We cannot do anything also.' In this extract, Chin Land moves from positioning himself as an expert, who is able to differentiate refugees from illegal migrants (lines 3-8), to a 'half legal' individual, disempowered by the dominant discourse on refugees perpetuated by the Malaysian government (lines 14-18).

Another example of the positioning as both legal and illegal can be seen in extract 5.5, which is taken from the interview with Francis, a Zomi refugee from Myanmar, who had been living in Malaysia 8 years at the time of the interview and was working with a local NGO as liaison and co-ordinator for refugee communities.

Extract 5.5:

1   I: Okay, so the question is ob-obviously there's two legal systems right now in the country for refugees. So also for yourself you're legal under UNHCR, under international law but under Malaysian law that you are considered illegal *lah*. (…) Do you feel like you're illegal in this country with these two double status thing?

2   R: I feel (.) how to say? if I say... I don't know. I'm, I would say I'm not illegal.

3		And then on the other (hand), I would say illegal because, uh, from the government view I'm illegal. But from the, from my view I'm not illegal.
4	I:	Yea.
5	R:	You know? You get what I mean?
6	I:	Yes.
7	R:	If I see myself from the government side, I'm illegal. If I see myself from the, if I see myself from myself, my part, I'm not illegal. I'm seeking for protection.
8	I:	Yea, so you consider yourself not illegal but yet you know, when you go through life you actually are living life as an illegal as well.
9	R:	Yea.
10	I:	Because you can't, you don't get any kind of documentation. You can't get services=
11	R:	=Mmm ((agreement)), I can't get any service.
12	I:	Or citizenship benefits, right?
13		So in that sense, it's still illegal *lah*.
14	R:	Mmm, yea. Illegal, yea. I cannot apply anything.
15		So if the people say what citizen you belong? So in card, (in) terms of citizen I'm still illegal, mmm.

This topic actually comes up as a result of the interviewer's question about 'these two double status thing'. The interviewer positions Francis as caught between two legal systems and asks if he feels illegal. Francis first presents his own positioning of himself as 'not illegal' (2-3) but acknowledges that he positioned differently by the government (3). His defines his legality as a refugee based on what he essentially needs as mentioned in line 7 ('I'm seeking for protection'). Throughout the entire extract, Francis voices two main characters. First, himself as a refugee. Second, the Malaysian government and people.

The interviewer repeats Francis' argument in line 8 but then positions him as 'still illegal' (13) because he has no access to documentation, services (10) and citizenship benefits (12). Being presented with this positioning of an illegal, Francis then concedes

the point to the interviewer in line 14 because he 'cannot apply anything'. He highlights the lack of citizenship and documentation as the reason why is still considered an illegal (15).

For Jemy, another refugee from Myanmar, her positioning of legal refugees is linked to resettlement. Extract 5.6 is a short extract from her interview.

Extract 5.6:

1 I: Is there a difference between <u>you</u>, a refugee, and illegal immigrant, the one that… comes here to work, without papers?

2 R: Uh… without any documents is more worse than the refugee people

3   because refugee has uh, some- they have…[unclear] documents already, uh,

4   even the illegal uh- even the refugees but since we got the- the UNHCR card, uh, that's a… uh recognized by UNHCR, so…

5   those who do not have any documents are more worse than those refugee.

6 I: So you are very- you feel very safe with your UNHCR card?

7 R: Actually not very.

8 I: Not really?

9 R: Un- unless, I- we have already resettle, this is your country already, you're already resettled here.

10   And then the- the the specific country governments has accept us already uh take all responsibility for the specific refugee.

11   Then by that time, feeling safe already, and then relaxed already.

12   But, as of now, those who waiting for the processing, and those who waiting for the UNHCR card, they will feeling of- uh, the same place that- scary feeling, and very… insecure.

13 I: So would you say you're illegal?

14 R: Uh…yeah, until we are uh…

15 I: Resettled lah.

16 R: Yeah, resettled in other country.

17   If uh- when we already resettled in other country, uh considered that we are already citizens of- uh, <u>when</u> the times come.

18   After that- the specific times they have uh… determined that uh… how many uh months or year, after that we're already citizens, even the second citizen[ship.]

19   But uh, consider as a citizen, so, it's uh, much more better future.

The interviewer's question to Jemy in line 1 focused on the difference between her, a refugee, and an illegal immigrant. This placed Jemy in the position of having to explain how she was not an illegal immigrant. Jemy accepted this request and proceeded to explain. She characterised illegal immigrants as 'those without any documents' (2) and refugees as people who have documents (3) recognised by the UNHCR (4). She positioned those without documents 'worse' than refugees (lines 2 and 5).

The interviewer then challenged this position in line 6 ('…you feel very safe with your UNHCR card?'). Jemy responded with, 'Actually not very', and then goes on to explain how refugees are not 'safe' until they are resettled (11) and until then, they feel insecure (12). The interviewer then asked, 'So would you say you're illegal?' in line 13. Jemy responded from line 14 onwards to take up this positioning but conditionally, namely that she is illegal until resettled. The explanation for this in line 18 links resettlement to obtaining citizenship, even if its 'second' class citizenship because 'it's… much more better future' (19).

5.2.2.4 Narrative accounts on being illegal migrants

The following two extracts come from the interview with Aung Aung, who at the time of the interview was an asylum seeker and had been living in Malaysia for about three years. In both extracts, he presents the struggles and challenges refugees face as a result of being positioned by others as illegal migrants.

(a) Experiences with the police

In Extract 5.7, Aung Aung described his experience with the police while trying to work. As refugees are not officially recognised, they are not allowed to work. If they do work, it is as an illegal migrant.

Extract 5.7:

1 I: So, maybe you can talk a bit about living in Malaysia. Because you worked in a restaurant, and then…

2 R: Yes, in the restaurant, I worked uh about two weeks.

3 But near there, we were living (.) uh in a big block, I think over 20-storeys there. I think under the block there, uh there were some area police.

4 They, every day they are watching who is coming in, who is coming out.

5 Then they they notice who is, who is the stranger or something like that.

6 Then uh that's why we, I mean I, me and the- my friends, we are trying to uh, what shall I say, trying to... if this is police here, then we try another way.

7 I: Avoid?

8 R: And then if he's here, then we will try another way. Yeah, trying to avoid.

9 But two weeks later, at night when I came back uh with my friend, then we met the police, there we we could not avoid him.

10 Then he uh asked our our IC.

11 Then my- my friend he has got the UN card, so he is no problem.

12 But me, no UN card, and then that's why he, he told me to arrest me.

13 But my friend and he, they talk talk talk, and then we had to give the uh money. 30 Ringgit.

14 And then, he let us- uh let me go.

15 So, I was very afraid and I dared not to live there anymore.

16 That's why next day I ran away from the restaurant.

17 I also didn't take the- my wages for two weeks. Also left there.

18 I just ran away to my friend.

19 And then I go to the Hartamas. There I worked in a restaurant again.

20 Then in that restaurant I worked only two days because boss didn't like me.

21 He said, 'You are very slow.' ((laughs))

22 That's why he fire- he fired me. Only two days.

23   And then, moved to uh another restaurant again. There worked uh just a few
      days also.

24   Because there I met the police again.

25   The, at that time only me, that's why they asked me the IC.

26   And no IC, that's why I just give them all the money what I had.

27   So I think it's about 50 ringgit, maybe 40 or 50 ringgit.

28   Give all the money and then they let me go.

29   That's why. I was feeling very terrible.

30   You know, every where police police.

31   And then working in the restaurant, working outside is very dangerous. So,
      very terrible.

In Extract 5.7, Aung Aung responded the interviewer's question about his experience living in Malaysia and used his working experience as a starting point to illustrate the challenges refugees face when they are positioned as illegal migrants. This narrative is narrated almost entirely by Aung Aung without much interruption or involvement from the interviewer. Thus, the analysis will focus more on the story level of the narrative.

The main characters in this extract were Aung Aung and different police officers, who were collectivised as 'the police'. Secondary characters were his refugee friends and the local bosses he worked under. Two similar incidents were narrated one after the other in this extract. The first occurred in lines 2-18 and the second in lines 19-28. In the first story, the 'area police' (3) are described as watching people coming and going (4) and taking note of who are 'strangers' (5). This was the reason given in lines 6 and 8 why Aung Aung and his friends tried to 'avoid' the police by going 'another way'. Consequently, he positioned himself within the story as a 'stranger', who had no documentation, which explained the eagerness to avoid the police. The complicating action of the story occurred in lines 9-12, when the refugees could not avoid the police. Aung Aung differentiated his friend, who had a UN card (11), with himself in line 12 ('But me, no UN card, and then that's why he, he told me to arrest me.') and this

difference in positioning was also practised by the police. Aung Aung got into trouble with the police because they positioned him as an illegal migrant. The resolution occurred in lines 13-14, in which his friend 'talked' to the police and offered him a RM30 bribe (13), resulting in Aung Aung's release (14). He evaluated the situation in lines 15-16 and provided the explanation for his reaction, ('I was very afraid and I dared not to live there anymore') and subsequent action, i.e. to run away from the restaurant, even leaving behind his wages.

The second story occurred in a different location, Hartamas (19), but was a continuation from the first story. Here, Aung Aung continues to be the focal character and is positioned in a passive role compared to the 'boss', who was portrayed as not liking him (20). The boss was voiced in line 21 calling Aung Aung 'very slow', which led to Aung Aung being fired (22). His third job mentioned in line 23 only lasted a few days and the reason for this was his run in with the police (24). Just as the first story, Aung Aung's character is positioned in a passive role with regards to the police, who were positioned as agents in asking for his IC (25) and indirectly extorting money from him (26-28). His character was described as having no IC, which was the reason identified for the bribe he gave the police ('that's why I just give them all the money what I had' in line 26). The resolution to the story is found in line 28, 'Give all the money and then they let me go.'; the evaluation is found in lines 29-31 ('That's why. I was feeling very terrible.').

In this extract, it is clear that Aung Aung positioned himself as an illegal migrant. In the story, he did not possess a UN card at the time and subsequently lived in fear of being identified or targeted by the police. His positioning of himself within the story as being aware of this illegal status prompted his attempts to avoid detection as well as his eagerness to offer the police bribes in order to escape potential punitive action.

(b) Experiences with Malaysians

In Extract 5.8, Aung Aung presented a story as an example of how refugees are treated by Malaysians when they are positioned as illegals. Again, the extract hardly involved the interviewer and will be analysed below on a story level.

Extract 5.8:

1   I: What about Malaysian people? Do you have much contact with Malaysians?

2   R: Less contact. Since um we are illegal, I think the Malaysian people, I mean, not all, <u>some</u> Malaysian people they could be uh, they could see us something,

3   maybe we are intruder or so on, something like that.

4   And maybe then they are not so friendly.

5   And then one thing our weak point is, we (.) we didn't speak Malay language.

6   Because uh as for me, working in the community, dealing with the uh community members, so every time Kachin language, Kachin language, so no time to learn the Malay language. So, not speaking Malay language is one big problem.

7   I: How about uh, do you have any experiences with Malaysians? Good or bad? Maybe you can tell one or two stories if there is anything?

8   Yes. From the school, we have Faisal Cup activity (football tournament for refugee schools),

9   then I had to- call- took the children to the uh field, every year we take practice in the Setapak. There we have a field.

10   So, we play, okay, this is the field, and we play here: this is the goal post, and we play here.

11   Then later about six o'clock in the evening, then the local Malaysians, they come to play, because the field is their field.

12   So we are just strangers. And we play here.

13   When they come here, they, let us, or they make us go, go away.

14   So they play again, then we cannot.

15   Actually uh, I mean logically, if we come first, we can play there.

16   They come later, then they can play another field area.

17   But, it is not like that. They come, you go. Like this.

In responding to the interviewer's question in line 1 about contact with Malaysians, Aung Aung positioned himself as 'illegal' (2) and therefore, perceived as 'intruder' by the Malaysians (3). The other reason he provided was the language barrier problem between Malaysians and the Kachin people, who did not speak Malay (5-6). The interviewer then asked for an example in line 7 and Aung Aung described an incident on the football field. Aung Aung positioned the main character, 'we', which included himself and the refugee children, as 'strangers' in line 12. In contrast, the 'local Malaysians' were positioned as possessing ownership of the field in line 11 ('they come to play, because the field is their field'). The locals were positioned in a more agentive role compared to the refugees as seen in line 13: 'they make us go… away'. The refugees then had to stop playing and make way for the locals. Aung Aung evaluated the narrative in lines 15-17 through the use of 'logic', i.e. use of the field on a first come first served basis. But as he concludes in line 17, in actual practice, this logic cannot be practised because of the illegal position of the refugees. Being positioned as illegals meant that the refugees lost the right to claim any kind of ownership over the playing field, thus rendering that logic meaningless.

5.3   The refugee as victim

The representation of refugees as passive or victims is a common representation found in macro discourses on refugees in refugee related studies including the analysis presented in Chapter 4 of this study. Malkki (1996) critiqued the representation of refugees in discourses on human rights intervention that 'depoliticize' and 'dehistoricize' refugees as a tragic 'sea of humanity'. Her argument posited that depoliticizing refugees and reducing them to victims constructs refugees as requiring to be characteristically 'helpless'. She quoted Stein (1981), who argued that this 'helplessness' has become a pre-requisite for any kind of humanitarian aid: 'refugees are helped because they are helpless; they must display their need and helplessness' (p. 327). This study argues that this discourse has a significant influence on how refugees construct narratives of their lived experiences as they position themselves within the larger discourse of being a 'helpless' victim. The display of their helplessness allows for the legitimation of their situation as deserving of refugee status and therefore, also of humanitarian aid.

5.3.1   Passive victim

A crucial aspect of being a victim is the sense of passivity or the lack of agency afforded to a victim. The inability to be an agent that can act decisively for his and herself contributes to the characteristic of being helpless as mentioned in the section above. This section discusses the various ways the refugees in this study positioned themselves as passive victims, who are deserving of their refugee status because of their perceived helplessness. The examples and longer narrative extracts presented in this section illustrate how refugees position themselves as such in different circumstances such as exploitation, abuse, discrimination, and prejudice.

In extract 5.10, Siu Hu spoke about how he was exploited by a 'very clever and very cruel' Malaysian boss (4), who refused to pay his 2-month salary (5). In lines 5-6, he explained why refugees needed to work, i.e. because they did not receive any monetary aid ('don't have any sponsor') and had to work to support themselves, thus highlighting the vital importance of the salary he did not receive.

Extract 5.10:

1 R: So, in Malaysia… uh before I join the school I was working in uh with Malaysian boss. So, I was working two month.

2 I: What is this, a restaurant or what?

3 R: No… no restaurant. It's a construction, in Putrajaya. You know right, Putrajaya.

4   So, I was working there few months. The boss is very clever and very cruel.

5   So, after we work two months, we cannot work contract him anymore, so he don't want to pay our salary.

6   For Chin refugee, our refugee, if we can't work today what we- we don't have any sponsor. We don't have sponsor from UNHCR also.

7   So we must work for ourself.

8   So, for two days… uh sorry for two months, our salary he didn't pay us.

9   So, I was very sad at that moment.

The next two quotes are attributed to Aung Aung and in example 5.14, he spoke about refugees being victims of abuse.

Example 5.14:

   Refugee is, refugee is (.) abuse. Abuse by the someone bigger, and then uh cut out all the, all the rights that he should have. Yeah, this. (Aung Aung)

In Aung Aung's perspective, as victims, refugees are subjected to abuse from 'someone bigger', who takes away their rights. This passive position as victims that refugees find themselves in is also reflected in his next quote in example 5.15.

Example 5.15:

> …what shall I say? We have <u>no more choice</u>. … So what is happening to us is just <u>accept or avoid</u>. Yeah, that's all. We are, what shall I say, we are totally <u>passive, passive person</u>. (Aung Aung)

The 'totally… passive person' was described as someone without any choice, who either had to 'accept' his fate or try to 'avoid' it and thus was positioned without agency.

The next three examples consist of longer narratives from three refugees from Myanmar, who all had experiences in which they felt like passive victims. In example 5.16, Julia spoke about how being a refugee meant having many problems and troubles caused by her government that she could not solve.

Example 5.16:

> (1) Okay, refugee mean that like, people like us, people like me… because I have, uh, trouble in my country I cannot stay in my country, so I come out from my uh country, I <u>need</u> to come out from my country. (2) So, uh... it's been like a, for me it's like, uh, I have got <u>many</u> trouble that I cannot solve, I cannot solve with the govern- it's like me for BIG problem and so that… I need to stay... under not, not under our government policy, uh, uh, I mean that, uh, LAW. (3) So I need to away from them. (4) Because they can, they can… even though I didn't do anything wrong… (5) They can easily put me into the jail or maybe they can kill me. (6) So that's why I need to run away from, I <u>must</u> run away from them so I need some place to shelter… which can give me safe. (7) So that mean like refugee people needs and what is the refugee mean, uh, that's my opinion. (Julia)

In line 1, Julia positioned herself along with other refugees, who were identified as 'people like me' and 'people like me' and having 'trouble in my country'. This trouble necessitated the leaving of her country. In (2) she reiterated the untenable position she found herself in because of the problems she had that made it impossible for her to continue living under the government laws and policies and she explained it in line 3 ('So I need to away from them'). In lines 4-5, she stated what would happen to her in Myanmar 'even though I didn't do anything wrong', which is put her in jail or even execute her. In

this narrative, Julia positioned herself as devoid of any agency to change her situation and thus fleeing was the only way she could seek shelter and safety (6).

Aung Aung in example 5.17 told a personal story about being robbed in an apartment elevator.

Example 5.17:

(1) I also met one robbery also in the Setapak. (2) There, there we have our school, another branch. At night, and I came back from school. And then uh in elevator, our school apartment is on 13th storey. (3) And I came down, then unfortunately only me there. (4) And then, on the 5th-storey, the elevator stopped, and then opened. (5) And then three guys, taller than me uh, they just came in. (6) One person just pressed the door, so that the door not to close. (7) Two person come to me and then just digging my pockets and then took my phone and then all the monies that I got. (Aung Aung)

Line 1 formed the story preface and (2) the orientation of the narrative. The complicating action begins in (3). Aung Aung's used of the adverb 'unfortunately' here alluded to his bad luck of being alone during the encounter. The antagonists of this story, 'three guys taller than me', were mentioned in line 5. Aung Aung positioned himself here as a passive victim in two ways. First, he is outnumbered by the robbers three to one. Second, he is helpless against their planned collaborative assault on him and this can be seen in the role of Actor assigned to the assailants in the material processes in lines 6-7 ('One person just pressed the door', 'Two person come to me', 'digging my pockets' and 'took my phone and then all the monies that I got').

In example 5.18, Siu Hu told a story about tragedy that befell a fellow refugee and his family.

Example 5.18:

(1) One family- a family… that guy has- uh the father has uh three children. Three children. (2) He is working as wiring. So he can get can 40 ringgit in a day... Construction. (3) So he can only get 40 ringgit in a day to provide his family very difficult for him. (4) So, by the way he's uh… so… nearby his house, there is a bus stand. (5) So… uh… one of his friend is a- visit him. So, when he go back he

follow his friend up to bus stand. (6) So, unfortunately there is uh wicked people in Malaysia, they are- they killed him. Yea. (7) So, he left his family… there is no reason why they killed... (8) And this family uh his family also still they are in Malaysia… right now. (Siu Hu)

In lines 1-3, the characters of the story, the father and his three children, were introduced in the orientation portion of the story. The repetition of 'three children' and the father's low salary '40 ringgit' as well as Siu Hu's evaluative statement in (3) served as a background to heighten the tragedy of the situation that was about to follow. The complicating action occurred in lines 4-6 where the father was murdered by 'wicked people' while waiting at a bus stand. Another evaluative statement in (7), 'there is no reason why they killed', emphasised the father's position as an innocent bystander in the incident. The other victim in this story was of course the father's family, who were 'left' by the father because of his death (7) and still stranded in Malaysia (8).

Extract 5.11 is from the interview with Chin Land from Myanmar and touched on the same theme of the passivity of refugees as victims.

Extract 5.11:

1 I: Yea, so… but even the good agents, if you don't pay them then what happens?
2 R: Yea. (.) Cannot pay.
3   We are… before arriving here, they still lock (us) in their room.
4   If, until they are not yet paid, they still lock (us) in one month or two month.
5   So, (.) yea, like that. So… cannot run away from agent also.
6   We are… in Myanmar, we are under control (by) the army, military.
7   On the way, we are controlled by the agents.
8   So, Malaysia ((ironic laugh)) we are no passport, no documents,
9   so we're every time, we are afraid. Worry, in stay, not safety.

In extract 5.11, Chin Land positioned himself as a passive victim while explaining what happened to refugees, who were smuggled into Malaysia by trafficking agents, upon arrival in Malaysia. The discussion that preceded this interactive exchange touched on

the difference between 'good' and 'bad' or unscrupulous agents. The interviewer asked Chin Land how 'good' agents who behave if they were not paid. Chin Land aligned himself with the Myanmar refugees through the constant use of the pronoun 'we' and 'we' were passivated in comparison to the agents (they). The agents were assigned the role of Actor in 'locking' refugees in rooms until payment was made (3-4). The refugees, in contrast, were the goal in 'locking' in rooms (3-4) and subjected to control by the army (6) and agents (7). In Malaysia, the refugees' lack of documentation (8) was the cause of their fear and worry (9).

5.3.2 Positioning analysis on the refugee as a passive victim

In this sub-section, two extracts are analysed using Bamberg's positioning framework.

5.3.2.1 HKAWN

Hkawn in Extract 5.12 described an unsavoury incident, in which a stranger took advantage of her daughter.

Extract 5.12:

1   I: Okay. So how do you find Malaysia? You like it, don't like?

2   R: Yea, here, uh… We, we don't like but ((laughs)).

3   I: Why don't like?

4   R: Oh because, uh… No, here is, uh, we need to scared here also.

5   I: Scared?

6   R: Because we don't have anything to show or always hear the police and all, you know?

7   But when I go with my two children, they don't ask me anything.

8   But from… childhood, always scared so now also scared when I go here there.

9   And also here we don't have anything to show, that's why- even here also not safe for us.

10   Uh, once, uh, here we, uh, we were, uh, sitting here, that one man came.

11   They know that this is a refugee school, refugee pre-school, they know that.

12   That they came and one man said that 'Somebody, uh, wan-, uh, somebody wants to, uh, give you something, uh, can you give a- a- address?', they said.

13   So the- uh, there was the director so- I said, 'You can ask to her, uh, I'm just, uh, teaching in the pre-school.'

14   So while she (the director) was writing the address then my, my daughter and, uh, the one who is cooking here, both of them were <u>standing</u> there.

15   At that time, that <u>man</u> was, uh, just touching their body. I did not know that.

16   I: Oh↑↓.

17   R: You know? I did not know and so,

18   they're also kids, uh, so t- they- 'why this man is, uh, touching my body?' Just thinking but did not say anything.

19   As soon as that, the man left… uh, they just told about that.

20		In front of me, that man uh was sitting, uh, but in front of him there, there was a table so, uh, I, I could not see what he was doing.
21		Uh, so at that time… as a mother I'm, I was getting so angry but I couldn't do anything.
22		Because I could not report to anyone.
23		What- whatever may happen, we have to bear with here also. The things, uh, like that.
24		Uh, so, uh… here also for us is, uh… uh, how to say, hard to stay ((laughs)).
25	I:	Difficult?
26	R:	Yea, difficult. Yea.

On the level of the storyworld (positioning level 1), the story about Hkawn's daughter was co-constructed by her and the interviewer. Lines 1-9 formed the abstract section of the story, in which both speakers discussed the topic of Hkawn's affinity to Malaysia. Hkawn focused on the issue of lack of safety as the reason why she did not like living in Malaysia (9: 'here also not safe for us'). She began the story in line 10: '…once… we were… sitting here, that one man came…'. The orientation in line 11 set the scene at the refugee pre-school and the antagonist, who was identified in line 10, was voiced in line 12 asking the school for its address. The other characters in the story were also identified in lines 13-14: Hkawn, her daughter, the school cook and the director the school.

The complicating action occurred in line 15, when the man touched 'their' bodies, referring to Hkawn's daughter and the cook. Hkawn's use of the referential word 'kids' in line 18 to describe them emphasised their vulnerability and the fact that they did not say anything immediately pointed to the passive position the girls took up. The internal evaluation that occurs in line 15 through the explicative 'at the time' as well as the repetition of 'I did not know' in lines 15 and 17 further cemented the passive and disadvantaged position the two girls were in because even Hkawn as the adult character in the story could not protect them due to her lack of awareness about what was happening. The girls only spoke up about what happened after the man had left (line 18).

In line 20, she explained further how she was unaware about the man's action, namely that there was table obstructing her view. In line 21, she positioned herself 'as a mother', understandably reacted angrily to what had occurred. The resolution in lines 21-22 had an unsatisfactory outcome because Hkawn is unable to do anything about it. Her evaluation and coda of the story in lines 23-26 ('whatever may happen, we have to bear with here also') further highlighted her helplessness and supported the point she made earlier that refugees lived in an unsafe environment in Malaysia.

In terms of positioning level 2, the interactional level, the interviewer positioned Hkawn as an outsider and began by asking Hkawn her opinion about Malaysia in line 1, with further prompt questions in lines 3 and 5, which were repetitions Hkawn's responses in lines 2 and 4 respectively. Hkawn positioned herself alongside the collective refugee group, as seen through the use of the pronoun 'we' (lines 2, 4, 6). In lines 7-9, Hkawn spoke about herself personally ('I') when explaining why she did not feel safe in Malaysia and when the interviewer did not respond, she continued with her story about the incident involving her daughter. The interviewer only responded in line 16, reacting with surprise to the complicating action in the story and this can be inferred from the rising and falling tone when she uttered, 'Oh↑↓'. Hkawn responded with 'You know?' to reinforce and ratify this reaction to the surprising turn of events. The interviewer's response in (16) ratified the inappropriate nature of the man's behaviour that Hkawn wanted to point out. She then proceeded to reinforce it by highlighting that the two girls were just 'kids'. In lines 21-22, Hkawn focused on positioning herself as a mother but one, who is helpless because she is unable to do anything as seen in line 22 ('Because I could not report to anyone.'). In line 23, she entered into the coda, which is evaluative in nature as well: 'whatever may happen, we have to bear with (it) here'.

In terms of the positioning of the Self, the identity of the refugee that emerged from Hkawn's positioning within the storyworld and in her interaction with the interviewer is one of a passive victim. More than that, it highlighted the vulnerability and helplessness of refugees when people take advantage of them.

5.3.2.2 FARTA

In Extract 7, Farta from Somalia explained how refugees were victims by telling a story about an incident involving his refugee friend.

Extract 5.13: Farta

1	R:	Yea, the refugees are victims.
2		Because particularly in- in Malaysia, they live in uh where people mostly, they don't aware, what is a refugee.
3		At the same time uh there are even the police… for example, one time, one of my friend was arrested by the police.
4		And he uh just he managed to call me, you know, my friend, in the jail.
5		Then at that time, uh… I… gave- I just uh… I gave, I gave the (my) phone number of (to) the jail.
6		So, one of the officers when they are call uh I talk to the officers, I said, 'We are refugees.'
7		He said, 'What is refugee? In <u>Malaysia</u>, we don't recognise refugees.'
8		Then I said, 'OK… wh- what to do? What we do? What help-
9	I:	What can you do?
10	R:	Yea, what you can do?
11		He said, 'No, no, no. He will have to prepare a- another- you have to prepare a new passport.'
12		At that time, my friend was holding a UN card number and they just prepare to send him (back) to his country.
13		Then (I said), 'How? He- he- he could be killed.' That's what I said.
14		That's when he said, 'I… I don't bother myself.
15		But our… rule and regulation is not… just to- give consideration to the refugees. So, we have to…'
16	I:	Deport him?

17	R:	Yea, we have to deport to the-
18	I:	So, was he deported?
19		Yea! He was deported.
20	I:	And now what happened?
21	R:	Uh… nothing. Still I don't know uh… uh… I think he's OK… so far. (.) Hopefully he's OK.

In this extract, Farta positioned refugees as victims (1) because not many people in Malaysia know who they are (2), even the police. The rest of his narrative about his friend served to support and illustrate the effect of this positioning. In the storyworld, Farta's friend was arrested by the police and Farta was referred to the police by his friend to vouch for him. The conversation between Farta and the police was voiced starting from lines 12, where Farta tried to explain that he and his friend were refugees. The police was quoted responding in ignorance in line 7 and stating Malaysia's stand on refugees ('In Malaysia, we don't recognise refugees'). Because the friend did not have a passport (11) but only a UN card, the police wanted to deport him (12). Farta voiced himself trying to appeal on behalf of his friend in line 13 (''How? He- he- he could be killed.' That's what I said.') but the police ignored his pleas, citing that under the law, no consideration could be given to refugees (14-15). The friend ended up being deported back to his home country (19) and Farta stated he had no idea if his friend was 'OK' (21).

In terms of the involvement of the interviewer, she does not interrupt his narrative until line 9, when she asked Farta, 'What can you do?', referring to how he could help his friend in jail. Farta repeated her question in a rhetoric manner to emphasise the hopelessness of the situation. He went on to describe further the police's nonchalance about the fate of his friend. After the establishing that the friend had indeed been deported (18), the interviewer asked about the current fate of his friend and Farta underscored his uncertainty with hopefulness.

Farta's narrative illustrated a scenario, in which refugees were not recognised or acknowledged, and the extreme negative effect that had on the eventual fate of the refugee. The helpless tone of the story reinforced his positioning of refugees as passive victims.

5.3.3 Reliant on kindness of others

Another theme that emerged from the narratives relating to refugees as victims was the theme of refugees being recipients of goodwill and kindness from other people. Alongside acknowledging their helplessness, refugees also frequently spoke about how other people have shown them kindness and this section will present a few examples.

Siu Hu, in example 5.19, positioned refugees as benefactors of the Malaysian government's and police force's goodwill in not taking punitive action against despite their illegal status.

Example 5.19:

> (1) And also in Malaysia, the government is very good. (2) Even they are not agreed to stay refugee in Malaysia, but they understand our situation. (3) So, police also sometimes they are very good to us. (4) If you say according to the law, you must be arrested and sent back to our own country. (5) But they don't do it. They don't do it, this one if we hold UNHCR card. (6) They don't do this because they understand our situation. (Siu Hu)

Here, Siu Hu accepted the government's positioning of refugees as illegals but acknowledged the consideration they gave refugees in line 2 ('they understand our situation'). The police was also evaluated as 'good' (3) because they did not arrest and deport refugees despite the law being the case (4). Instead, the government was positioned as making allowances for refugees with the UNHCR card (5). Line 6 is Siu Hu's evaluation of this behaviour, a repetition of the point he made in line 2.

In extract 5.14, Farta from Somalia, told a story about how the school he taught at was given a treat from the Minister of Youth & Sports one year during the Eid al-Fitr or Hari Raya Aidilfitri festival.

Extract 5.14:

1   R: Even uh last year, not do- yea, last year, there was uh… Eid al-Fitr, it was Eid al-Fitr, uh… I think it was Eid al-Fitr… <u>before</u> Eid al-Fitr, in Ramadan, last week of Ramadan, not 2013, this is 2012… um we received an invitation from the Minister of Youth and Sport.

2   I: Ah! Really? What's his name? Because now it's Khairy Jamaluddin. Not him, right?

3   R: No, no, no, not him.

4   But uh the angel- the one I'm talking is uh Malaysia Youth volunteer, he came here to do the programme.

5   At the same time, (.) he invited us, the Minister invited the school to attend the, you know what they called the 'open house'.

6   I: A:h, yea.

7   Open house.

8   At the same time, HE… uh just gave us, EVERY student a uniform, a uniform.

9   Given by the Minister of Youth and Sport.

10   So, we have to appreciate him because uh he did- uh great job to the community.

11   And the- the- at that time, at the stage he was shaking hands with us, EVERY child.

12   Two or three person from uh Putrajaya, they came here to pick up <u>all</u> the students and bring in there because there was a ceremony. A open house ceremony.

13   So, <u>all</u> the employees, all the staff in that… you know, ministry, they did some fundraising, around two or three thousand ringgit.

14   They donate (to) the school. So, that's the good thing even. Yea, the- it was the good thing.

In this story, Farta identified several characters as the protagonists, who show goodwill to his refugee school and students: i) the 'angel', the 'Malaysia youth volunteer' (4), ii)

the Minister of Youth and Sports (1, 5-9), and iii) government employees, 'two or three' people from Putrajaya (12) and 'all the staff' (13). The main event in this story was the Ministry's open house function and Farta not only identified the people involved in making it happen but also provided his evaluation of them. The youth volunteer was described as an 'angel'. The Minister's generosity was highlighted in lines 8 and 11 with the intensifying determiner 'every', e.g. 'HE… gave us, EVERY student a uniform' (8) and 'shaking hands with us, EVERY child' (11). The emphasis here was on the Minister's attention to each refugee child invited to the event. The government employees were credited with fundraising for and donating money to the school, which Farta evaluated in line 14 as a 'good thing'.

In the story in extract 5.15, Farta spoke about the kindness of the university, UITM, in organising a sports event for the refugee children and sponsoring them transportation, food and attire.

Extract 5.15:

1   Even some uh universities like uh… University of… UUM, University of UITM and many others, they came here to do the programme for the kiddies.

2   Because the:y… they organised last time uh UITM Shah Alam, they organised a big tournament about the refugee schools.

3   So, everything, even the T-shirt, even our bus everything, our drinks, three times food, they just did uh… sponsored it.

4   And we can attend that… that… (.) sports event.

5   And lucky for me, we became second team…

6 I: Ah, to win.

7   To win and you can see our uh our… our…

8 I: Medal?

9   Yea, medal is there. We get RM700. Yea, first to win.

10   So, just to… you can see Malaysia the- the good thing is more.

The protagonist in this extract ('they') was identified as the universities (line 1) and their act of kindness was described in lines 2-3. The beneficiaries, 'we', were Farta and

the refugee school, who were able to attend the sports event (4). Farta described himself

and his team as 'lucky' in line 5 because they were able to win medals and prize money

(lines 6-9). He concluded this narrative by describing Malaysians as having more positive

than negative qualities (9).

5.4 The Refugee and the Idealised Self

Most refugees spoke about a projected or idealised Self that they hoped to become. Speaking about the future or in the future tense was a common occurrence in the narrative data set. This is an unsurprising identity theme because one of the questions in the interview related to their hopes and fears.

A common aspect related to the idealised Self is the hope to possessions that refugees did not yet have. In example 5.20, Jemy, a female refugee from Myanmar, spoke about a hypothetical future.

Example 5.20:

> (1) So… the first dream also the… hope also to settle, the second also settle, the- third… also… to settle in another country … (2) with uh… yeah, with a complete family oh uh- with a family, yeah, family, (3) also and uh, have a good job. (4) Then…when I have a good job, I will have a more…uh earning, (5) then, we'll have a good future, right? (Jemy)

Jemy's first, second and third dreams were all the same thing, i.e. to be resettled in a third country (1). Having a 'complete family' (2) is another hope she had as well as 'a good job' (3). The latter hope is to obtain a good earning (4), which was described as instrumental to 'a good future' (5). In the next example, Jemy continued to elaborate on this point.

Example 5.21:

> Paragraph 1
>
> (1) Every- whatever, and what uh…what kind of… s- wherever I'll be, whatever I do, it's always wants to be successful person, yes, whatever I do, I really want to be success in that specific job… that's my <u>eagerness</u>. ((laughs)) (2) I don't know… how God has plan for me, but in my minds, I always… uh, have a big dream.
>
> Paragraph 2
>
> (3) Uh… as a refugee life, here staying in Malaysia, I don't feel that I am successful here (h). (4) But in future, I'm hoping that I… um… because, since I'm a work- uh I'm very working hard, so, I hope I will have a successful… in a… the- every job, whatever I'm going to do. (5) That's all for my staying in Malaysia,

the- fearful and I- uh, um I… fear to lose my future and (.) success… fear to lose the success. (6) Because, staying here, just teaching the children is… I don't feel that… my life is uh… <u>improving</u>, <u>or developing</u>, any… way… (Jemy)

In example 5.21, Jemy linked her hopes to success. In paragraph, she outlined her ultimate desire to become a 'successful person' (1), positioning herself as someone with 'a big dream' (2). In paragraph 2, Jemy compared her situation in Malaysia to the dream she had, namely that she did not feel her life was successful (3). Line (4) starts with the conjunction 'but', signalling the start of her argument through the presentation of the hypothetical future she hopes to have. In lines 5-6, she again expressed the difference in her situation in Malaysia that her life was not 'improving… or developing any... way' (6).

Julia, another female refugee from Myanmar, spoke about obtaining citizenship in example 5.22.

Example 5.22:

(1) (I hope) to get uh citizenship from c- some coun- from one country. (2) To get a stable life… like, like a normal, normal life. (3) Like, uh, other people can- with a family and very happy and there is no worry about anything. (4) Just want to… <u>do</u> what we need to do as working or maybe, uh, doing involving in the church or whatever. (5) Just like a very normal people. (Julia)

For Julia, obtaining citizenship (1) was a means to having a 'stable' and 'normal life' (2) and being a 'very normal' person (5). She described this normal life was as people, who had families and were happy because they had no worries (3). Being normal also entailed being able to do whatever she needed to do, be it work or being involved in church (4). The idealised life extended beyond merely having possession but also to the sense of being. Another example from Jemy's interview illustrates this desire for an idealised sense of being.

Mohamed also expressed a similar desire to become a 'normal' person and this section will end with the following extract from his interview.

Extract 5.16:

1   R: My hope is to get out of here as soon as possible and to uh (.) to become a normal person.

2   I'm <u>not</u> normal right now. I feel like I'm… <u>less</u> human.

3   I: Can you explain a bit further?

4   R: Because uh they calling me (a) refugee, I'm guest in here OK.

5   I don't know what is the meaning of the refugee.

6   Refugee is uh someone move to another country, is that right?

7   I: I don't know, what do <u>you</u> think a refugee is?

8   R: Yea, but- I- in here- when I'm in my country, everyone who come (to) our country, we call them guests.

9   Um we are the host, we have to host them well. I was <u>expecting</u> that.

10   In here, I feel like I'm someone else.

11 I: Someone else. When you say you feel like you're treated less than human, do you mean the way people talk to you or the way they look at you or just-

12 R: No, I want to- uh when- when they realise I am a refugee, they treat me different than they should treat me.

13 I: So, you're talking about normal Malaysians?
         [Or anyone?]

14 R: [Normal   ] Malaysians. Even MY people when they refugee, I'm not a student, they treat me different from previously.

15 I: How do they treat you differently?

16 R: Different, the way they talk to me, the way they behave, EVERYTHING will <u>change</u>, <u>suddenly</u>.

17 I: Hmm… that's interesting. Even your own Somali…

18 R: Yea, they are all Somalis because most of them are not refugees, they are students.

19   They are expecting me I'm a student, they talk to me like I'm a student.

20   When I told them I'm not a student, I'm uh a refugee, ALL of a sudden, everything will change.

To justify his desire to become a 'normal person', Mohamed presented a story in this extract about the effects of being identified as a refugee. The story really began in line 12

but in lines 1-11, Mohamed and the interviewer jointly constructed the abstract or preface of the story. In line 1, he spoke about his hopes, namely to get out of Malaysia as soon as possible, so that he can become 'a normal person'. He compared that hope with his current position in line 2: 'I'm <u>not</u> normal right now. I feel like I'm… <u>less</u> human.' When pressed to explain this further (3), he referred to his positioning by 'they' in line 4 as a refugee and a 'guest'. He then expressed uncertainty over the meaning of the word refugee but upon receiving no guidance from the interviewer (7), he presented a chronicle of visitors to his country of origin, Somalia, who were treated as 'guests' (8). He aligned himself with the people of Somalia ('we'), called 'hosts', who are evaluated as hosting their guests well (9). As a result, Mohamed expected to be treated similarly in Malaysia but instead said he felt like 'someone else' (10). This statement prompted the interviewer to seek clarification with the question in line 11.

In line 12 is the orientation of his story ('when they realise I am a refugee'), which also functioned as part of the complicating action including the following clause ('they treat me different than they should treat me'). The character responsible for this behaviour was identified in lines 13-14, i.e. both Malaysians and Somali people in Malaysia. Mohamed evaluated these characters as talking and behaving differently towards him. These Somalis were positioned as 'students', not refugees and in line 20, he described being rejected by these students upon disclosing his refugee identity. This story of rejection was told to explain his positioning of himself as feeling like 'someone else' and not normal.

5.5   Discussion and Summary

Chapter 5 set out to present findings from a thematic analysis on the narrative data set. Of the three identity themes discussed here, the former two themes, i.e. the refugee as homo sacer and passive victim featured most prominently in the narratives among the refugees interviewed in this study.

It is argued that a useful concept for discussing the identity theme refugees frequently used to describe and position themselves was the refugee as *homo sacer* or living the bare life according to Agamben (1998). Refugees are homo sacer because they are not legally recognised and thus, live outside the law of Malaysia. This *zone of indistinction* that they live in while waiting indefinitely for resettlement is not a physical zone but a political and social zone. The denial of basic rights usually afforded to citizens forces refugees into unpredictable, challenging and often dangerous situations. It is hoped that this chapter has demonstrated through the first-hand narrative accounts of refugees what exactly these zones of indistinction look like for refugees living in Malaysia.

Firstly, homo sacer do not have possessions in the sense of basic citizenship rights such as passports, access to affordable healthcare, property and money. But they also do not possess the more intangible aspects of human life such as social mobility, getting wishes fulfilled, safety, and freedom. The second aspect of being homo sacer is a consequence of the first: the loss of identity. The lack of documentation and rights leads to refugees being unable to define what they really are. They are stateless and outsiders, not belonging to any place, state or community.

Section 5.2.1 presented arguments put forward by refugees for their positioning by local Malaysians as non-citizens. This positioning was one that the respondents in this study acknowledged and accepted reluctantly simply because they did not have a choice. The non-citizen was described as being excluded from the local community and denied rights normally given to citizens. More than that, these refugee narratives illustrated the

effect of this positioning on their sense of Self. Being positioned by others as a non-citizen had a disempowering effect not only on how they made sense of themselves but also in being able to construct alternate ways of being.

Despite acknowledging that they were formally recognised by the UNHCR, refugees also acknowledged their positioning by Malaysians as illegal migrants as discussed in section 5.2.2. The illegal migrant positioning is closely linked to the non-citizen positioning in that it also deals with the issue of exclusion from society. However, as discussed, this positioning is problematic because as the findings in Chapter 4 have shown, the representation of illegal migrants is linked to crime and social problems. Accepting this positioning implies that refugees also have to accept being viewed as criminals and social misfits. The sections under 5.2.2 presented ways the refugees in this study dealt with the positioning of the illegal migrant, namely by either embracing or resisting it or negotiating a middle ground, i.e. being both legal and illegal at the same time.

The other main theme that emerged in the analysis was identity theme of the refugee as a passive victim. Victimhood or vulnerability is common in refugee discourse (Malkki, 1996) and in the context of this study, often goes hand-in-hand with the identity theme of the homo sacer. Being stripped of rights and protection, refugees often found themselves at the mercy of others, whether for good or evil. The salient effect of this positioning is the lack of power to change their circumstances or even to obtain aid from others. Pupavac (2008) argued that the representation of refugees as traumatised victims questions their ability to have any moral agency and reduces their capacity for self-determination. It implies that they will constantly require external advocacy or protection and the analyses in sections 5.3.1-5.3.3 concurred with Pupavac's argument. Refugees were either recipients of the goodwill of others or not at all. On their own, they had no way to solve their problems and nowhere to turn to for help.

It is hoped that Chapter 5 has shown how giving voice to refugees to respond to some of the representations of refugees as found in Chapter 4 is able to deepen the discussion on how refugees are and should be represented in discourse. The narratives of refugees have illustrated that particular representations or positioning of refugees are highly complex, often not what it seems, and require greater rigour and breadth of analysis to complement and build on the analysis of representations in media texts.

CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDIES OF LONG-TERM REFUGEES

6.1   Introduction

This chapter presents in-depth analysis of selected refugee narratives based on the positioning framework by Bamberg. Each narrative excerpt by a refugee is discussed according to the three positioning levels, which is then followed by a summary section that discusses how all these positioning levels contribute to the construction the refugee's individual identity. As discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.6), the analysis of the narratives were guided by five analytic steps, which corresponded to the three positioning levels.

Narratives from three long-term refugees will be presented and analysed in detail in this chapter. Their narratives are listed under the following three main sections: Prince (6.2), John (6.3) and May (6.4). Under sections 6.2-6.4 are further sub-sections consisting of selected narrative excerpts attributed to each refugee with heading titles derived from the topic of that particular narrative extract. Each narrative excerpt will then be analysed according to the three positioning levels in Bamberg's narrative analysis framework, namely positioning level 1 (the story world), positioning level 2 (the telling), and positioning level 3 (the Self). Sections 6.5 and 6.6 form the discussion and concluding section respectively.

The term *narrative* used on its own in this chapter will refer to the narrative as a genre, i.e. the text in 'storied form' (Reissman, 2008). *Narrative excerpt* will refer to a section from the interview that has been selected for analysis. Such excerpts may contain various types of narratives: stories of personal experience, chronicles, heritage narratives, or narrative references. Excerpts may also contain more than one *story,* in the sense of a 'bounded event' (Bamberg, 2004).

6.2   PRINCE

Respondent background

At the time of the interview, Prince was an 18-year-old Rohingya refugee living in Sentul, Kuala Lumpur. He was born in Malaysia after his parents arrived in the country over 20 years ago and had spent most of his schooling life at the community school in Sentul set up by an organisation that served the urban poor in KL, including refugees. I met him at a sports event for refugee schools organised by the organisation in collaboration with the UNHCR and after speaking briefly about the research I was carrying out, he responded, eager to tell his story. We met some weeks later at his school after school hours for the interview.

Personal reflection

Prince was generally a friendly and open young man, so it was not difficult establishing rapport with him. Before the interview started, I told him I was interested in hearing his stories about life in Malaysia and he seemed very eager to tell his story. His spoke fluent English in what I consider to be a Malaysian accent, which was very similar to my own accent.

Throughout his interview, I observed a recurring theme in his narratives, which was his struggle to reconcile two main identities: Rohingya refugee and Malaysian. His Rohingya heritage was something he learnt from his parents and embraced as part of his identity but yet he remained a stranger to the Rohingya culture and history because he had never been to the Arakan state where the Rohingyas lived in Myanmar. As someone who grew up in Malaysia, he identified with the people, culture and environment but yet struggled with the awareness that he did not truly belong to Malaysia. There were numerous occasions when he would joke with me or make reference to culturally familiar issues to any Malaysian.

Prince's narratives

Five main groups of characters consistently appeared throughout Prince's retelling of stories. The first character was people living in Malaysia including both Malaysians and non-Malaysians. The second character was his parents. The third character that appeared was the Myanmar government or the Burmese majority in Myanmar. The fourth and fifth groups were Rohingya refugees both in Myanmar and Malaysia and resettled refugees respectively.

Excerpts from his interview are analysed below according to the three positioning levels and discussed in the following sections (6.2.1 to 6.2.4). The sections that follow are discussions about the kind of identities, with which Prince chose to represent himself.

6.2.1 The origins of the Rohingyas and leaving Myanmar

This section discusses how Prince positioned himself and others in Excerpt P1 that deals with the Rohingyas' situation in Myanmar and his parents' flight to Malaysia.

The excerpt is lengthy but can be divided into the three sections that consist of natural divisions in the narrative:

Section 1:   Lines 1-23   The background of the Rohingyas in Myanmar

Section 2:   Lines 24-39   Prince's parents escape to and life in Malaysia

Section 3:   Lines 40-58   The ethnicity of the Rohingyas

Excerpt P1

1   I: So, can you tell me a little bit about how you- about how you became a refugee? We can start with your parents lah since, you know, you were born here.

2   P: Okay um. I have, my parents have been here for more than two decades or more.

3   To be precise about twenty (.) four years, they have been here. They have been here for 24 years. Okay, they were here=they've been here aroun- in about 1990s.

4   Yea, that's how my- umm… they got settled over here-

5   I: Why did they come=

6   P: =They reason why they came is because of the homicide.

7   My parents said it was (.) Rohingyas weren't, wasn't treated umm equally because they were Muslims. M=Majority of them, actually all of them were Muslims.

8   And they were staying in a Budd- country, which has umm, I mean, which has been… how to say… All of them, most of them are (.) Buddhist.

9   There are just a few of us, who are Rohingya over there, staying. And the few is, if I wanna say, a few it is, it has about hundreds of thousands.

10   But compared to those who are there, like the citizens who are there, Burmese citizens, there are a lot.

11   So, it is… they are compared little, like minority of us.

12		So, they don't really like us because first, is our, because we look different from them.
13		We don't=we don't look like Chinese obviously, ((laughs)) our eyes weren't like, kinda like that (shows squinty eyes). And well, our skin colour, we weren't as fair as them. We were kind of like a bit dark. So, we were very extinguish=distinguished from them. We look very different from them.
14		And actually the, the main reason why we have been eliminated from there, discriminated from there because we're Muslims. Umm, the country was, majority of them umm, were Buddhist but we were Muslims.
15		So (.) they have been, we… they didn't treat us right. That's what my parents said.
16		And they've (Rohingyas) been tortured.
17		They said they wanna eliminate all these umm, Rohingyas, who are staying there. They wanna like remove all of them, they just wanna have those who are belong to them.
18		And they don't see us as part of… (Myanmar) and they took, they, there are many ways they did that. One is they (.) they say that we are terrorising them.
19		And second is that we are taking over the place, which is not true at all. If you see us, we just stay, we are in our Arakan state.
20	I:	So, all Rohingyas only in that one area?
21	P:	Yes, usually. Most of them are in that area.
22		And very few of them, who are very successful, they will like go to… they mi, umm, migrant to another state, which would um… they richer they get, they'll get accepted. If they get, if they are rich, then they'll get accepted in society.
23		But majority of us, we are Muslim and we are poor. And so, they don't, they don't really like us. They (Rohingyas) stay in poverty, all of them. Like dying of starvation, like rape and stuff, all these.
24		And my parents, my dad he escaped from there. So, he came to Malaysia to get settled and to get a, to get into a better environment, where he'll meet people, which won't treat him, this, who won't really discriminate him because of his religion, because of who he is.
25		But even when he came here, he said it was not so as difficult uh, when he was in Myanmar.

26		But he was, it was kind of difficult too because he was, he stayed here as a refugee, stateless. And yea, that's how he has been here.
27	I:	Your mother?
28	P:	Yea, they came together actually. Came together.
29	I:	So, did they have any children in…
30	P:	Yea, they do. I mean, I am one of them. I am the second so we have [five siblings
31	I:	[But any children born in Myanmar?
32	P:	Yea. No, no, no, no.
33	I:	All born here?
34	P:	No, wait. Yea, one is born in Myanmar. One is born in Myanmar.
35		And (.) my mom, she got miscarriage twins, when she was there (in Myanmar).
36		She got chased by Buddhist to get killed. So, she got chased that time and she fell while she was pregnant. So, she fell and she got miscarriage.
37		And one was born there and two got miscarriage and all of us=
38	I:	=How many=
39	P:	=All of my siblings are born here. So, we have five of us. Uh, I have an elder sister, me and 3 other younger siblings.
40	I:	Um, do you know much about where the Rohingyas originated, I mean like, from what I understand, they came from Bangladesh some decades ago.
41	P:	I don't=I'm not, I'm not really like into this. But I'm not=I'm not so sure where they are from.
42	I:	So, there's a question of, you know, what is their ethnicity actually?
43		[Are you like Indians?] Or Myanmars?
44	P:	[Yea, Indians.
45		Actually I can… ((laughs)) some of them, okay, when I go, when I go, when I go to tuition, because I'm studying, right… I go to tuition (.)
46		they can, they assume, some of them assume that I am Punjabi, Indian.
47		I'm not surprised when they call me that I'm Punjabi and some of them call me Indian.
48		Some of them ((laughs)) they even thought that I'm Bangladesh.
49		Some of them thought that I was… (.) the most like (.) interesting thing that happened was, one of the ladies, she thought I was Philippine. (Filipino)
50		I was like, what? I don't look like a Philippine.

51		I mean look at my skin colour and…
52		I don't know. Maybe she just guessed it.
53	I:	So, you don't know anything about Rohingyas? I mean=
54	P:	=No=
55	I:	=The origins?
56	P:	No, no.
57	I:	No idea where you all came from?
58	P:	No.. some of them also think I'm Malay.

6.2.1.1 Positioning level 1 (the story world)

On the story world level, four characters were present in this excerpt: (a) the Buddhist majority group in Myanmar, (b) Rohingyas in Myanmar, (c) his parents, and (d) people at the tuition centre. The positioning of these four characters by Prince as narrator, Prince as a character and by other characters in the story are discussed individually below.

(a) Buddhist majority group in Myanmar

The Buddhist majority group in Myanmar is an integral part of the story of the Rohingyas in Myanmar. The story is set up against the backdrop of their fractured relationship with the majority Buddhist group and this account is found in lines 7-19. Prince starts off his narrative to answer the question 'how you became a refugee' (1), by positioning himself as *focalizer* through the use of his own voice in lines 2-3, where the main characters in this account were his parents. In line 4, he uses a summary statement to evaluate the narrative in the previous two lines, 'that's how … they got settled over here'. He then shifts the *focalization* to his parents and speaks from their perspective ('My parents said' in line 7 and 'That's what my parents said' in line 15) to present the reason why the Rohingyas were not 'treated equally' (7), that is because they were Muslim. The use of *double-voicing*, where both the voice of his parents and his own are mixed, can be

seen from lines 7-23. His voice is displayed through his use of 'we' to align himself with the Rohingyas in Myanmar, while positioning the Buddhist majority as the other ('them').

He compares two groups of characters in Myanmar, the Buddhist majority (lines 8, 10 and 12) and the Rohingya minority group (lines 9, 11 and 13). The Buddhist majority are identified by their religion, their citizenship (Burmese citizens) and their physical features ('they don't look like us'). The Rohingya minority on the other hand are described through the use of numbers, i.e. 'few' and 'little' (11) even though he then estimates the number to be 'about hundreds of thousands' (9). Physical features are also mentioned to draw a comparison to the Buddhists. Rohingyas are described as not looking 'like Chinese', which he specifies as being slant eyed and fair (13). Prince illustrates his point by pulling his eyelids to show the interviewer slant eyes, a stereotype associated with people of certain Asian descent or heritage. This move is a form of racial categorization or what can be called in psychology, racial phenotypicality (Maddox, 2004), which is categorization based on certain salient features (e.g. skin colour, physical features). In line 14, he once again highlights the fact that Rohingyas were Muslims, citing that as the main reason why they were discriminated by the Buddhists in Myanmar.

The Rohingyas are positioned as patients, while the Buddhists are positioned as agents in a series of material processes in lines 16-17, such as 'torture', 'eliminate', 'remove', all of which depict the severity of the Rohingyas' treatment by the Buddhists in Myanmar. Line 18 starts with a statement of fact, 'they don't see us as part of… (Myanmar)' and then two ways the Buddhists arrived at this conclusion. Here, Prince used *ventriloquation* to not only speak through the Buddhists but to also insert his evaluation of their opinion. The Buddhists' perspective is presented via two indirect quotations and is followed by the subordinate clause, 'which is not true at all' (19). This clause reinforces Prince's shifting positioning of himself instead of his parents as the *focalizer* of that statement, who knows the actual truth: 'One is they (.) they say that we are terrorising them.' (18)

and 'And second is that we are taking over the place, <u>which is not true at all</u>. If you see us, we just stay, we are in our Arakan state.' (19). In the latter sentence (19), Prince counters the claim by the Buddhists that Rohingyas were 'taking over the place' by asserting that Rohingyas have only ever remained in their own state.

(b) Rohingyas in Myanmar

In lines 20-23, the focus turns to Rohingyas living in Myanmar. Prince introduces two groups of Rohingyas in Myanmar: i) 'them', the affluent Rohingyas (22) and ii) 'us', the poor Rohingyas (23). There is a stark contrast between the two groups. The affluent Rohingyas are the minority ('very few of them') and are successful enough to live in other states. Prince focalizes this perspective by asserting that they gain acceptance into the Myanmar society only because they are rich.

The group he aligns himself to is not accepted by the majority Myanmar group ('they don't like us') and is the 'majority of us', who are 'Muslim' and 'poor'. He describes their poverty as 'Like dying of starvation, like rape and stuff, all these.' (23). This representation of the two Rohingyas groups is then used to explain his father's decision to 'escape' from Myanmar in line 26.

(c) Prince's parents

As mentioned above, Prince positioned himself in this excerpt as a listener to his parents' stories about Myanmar, which he then retold during the interview. Thus, the narrative is considered a heritage narrative because it is told through the perspective of his parents. This can be seen in the two instances, when Prince refers to his parents as the authors of the story in lines 7 ('My parents said…') and 15 ('That's what my parents said'). Prince regularly positions himself within the narrative as a 'witness' to the events in Myanmar and he also regularly inserts his own voice and evaluation of these events.

Lines 24-39 focus mainly on his parents. Following on from the description of the situation in Myanmar in the previous line, Prince lists down a few reasons why his father came to Malaysia in line 26. Here he focalizes the narrative by speaking in his own voice. In line 25, he talks about his father's new situation in Malaysia and uses indirect quotations to speak in his father's voice, 'he said it was not so as difficult uh, when he was in Myanmar'. The next line, however, is his evaluation of his father's 'difficult' situation: 'it was kind of difficult too because he was, he stayed here as a refugee, stateless. And yea, that's how he has been here.' (26). In lines 35-37, he recounts the miscarriage his mother suffered in Myanmar and specifies that she was carrying 'twins' at the time (line 35). She is passivated as being 'chased' by the Buddhists 'to get killed', which caused her to fall and suffer a miscarriage (line 36).

(d) **People at the tuition centre**

The final group of characters that appear in this excerpt are the people at the after school tuition centre Prince attends. He does not name them specifically but merely uses 'them', so it is unclear if he means the students or staff at the centre or both groups. They are positioned as agents of mental processes, 'some of them <u>assume</u> that I am Punjabi, Indian' (46) and 'they even <u>thought</u> that I'm Bangladesh' (48), as well as the verbal process in 'they <u>call</u> me that I'm Punjabi and some of them <u>call</u> me Indian' (47). His laugh in line 48 indicates that not only does he find their assumption funny, but he also disagrees with it.

In line 49, he begins a narrative account of 'one of the ladies' who mistakes him for a Filipino, something he says is 'the most like interesting thing that happened'. The others mistook him as belonging to various South Asian ethnic groups but this lady thought he was Filipino, which are people from a different geographical area in Asia and ethnic

group. He distances himself from this assumption in line 50 by voicing himself as *animator* in the narrative, 'I was like, what? I don't look like a Philippine [sic].'. And then he says to the interviewer, 'I mean look at my skin colour… I don't know. Maybe she just guessed it.'. In doing so, he places an emphasis once again on skin colour as an essential part in thinking about identity, just as he did at the start of excerpt P1 when talking about the Rohingyas in Myanmar.

6.2.1.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

Prince's story about his parents is a response to the question in line 1, 'can you tell me a little bit about how … you became a refugee?' In the same line, the interviewer moves the focus from her initial question to his parents, saying, 'We can start with your parents lah since, you know, you were born here.' Thus, she positions Prince as a recipient of their experiences and Prince ratifies this position by using this as the starting point in his story (line 2 onwards). The interviewer's next question occurs in line 5, 'Why did they come…' and Prince's story with descriptions of the Buddhist majority and the Rohingya minority and the conflict that arose in the Arakan state contribute to answering the question why his parents had to leave. The complicating action forms the bulk of the story in lines 10-23. Line 24 forms the resolution to the story, 'So, he came to Malaysia to get settled and to get a, to get into a better environment…' and the coda in line 26, 'And yea, that's how he has been here.' Prince's account of his mother and her miscarriage (35-36) also follows the interviewer's questions in lines 27 ('Your mother?') and 29 ('So, did they have any children…').

The second story about Prince at the tuition centre follows shortly after the interviewer asks Prince where he thinks the Rohingyas came from ('do you know much about where the Rohingyas originated (from)') in line 40. After her question, she immediately offers a suggestion that they came from Bangladesh ('… from what I understand, they came

from Bangladesh some decades ago.'), which positions herself as possessing some knowledge about the Rohingyas. Prince responds in line , saying he is 'not really… into this' and 'not sure where they are from', positioning himself as not having that knowledge.

The interviewer is not satisfied with this response and presses on in line 42 with the subject of ethnicity, '... what is their ethnicity actually?'. She then suggests two options in line 43, 'Indians' or 'Myanmar'. Prince starts replying by saying 'Indians' and then launches into his story about the people at the tuition centre mistaking him for a range of other ethnicities in lines 45-52 (discussed in the section above). The story preface starts in line 45 with 'okay, when I go…'. The story comes to a close in line 52 when Prince evaluates the lady's behaviour ('Maybe she just guessed it.'). In line 53, the interviewer then asks, 'So, you don't know anything about Rohingyas?', to which he answers negatively (54) and this sequence of turns is repeated twice in lines 55-56. The interviewer asks him two more times, hoping to elicit his opinion on the matter. After the third time, he says no again and then 'some of them also think I'm Malay', referring back to the story he had just told. Here, he takes back the control over the conversation in two ways. Firstly, he refuses to provide a satisfactory answer or acknowledge that Rohingyas are like Bangladeshis as was suggested by the interviewer. Secondly, he resumes his storytelling of people mistaking him for a Malay, preferring to emphasise the ambiguity of his ethnicity.

6.2.1.3 Positioning level 3 (the Self)

In this excerpt, Prince positions himself in several ways. Firstly, he identifies himself as a Rohingya from Myanmar and the salient characteristics centre on the theme of persecution and poverty. Yet, this representation of Rohingyas is not based on knowledge he has first-hand and he admits that he doesn't know much about the origins of the Rohingyas (41). He gives the account of the Rohingyas from his parents' perspective, but

his evaluative statements within the narrative indicates that he has not just accepted his parents' version of the story but also used it as a means of defining who he is. He distances himself away from two main groups when retelling his parents' story: i) the Buddhist majority, and ii) affluent and privileged Rohingyas. This is achieved through the 'us' versus 'them' binary categories. He draws on and embraces the dominant refugee discourse of persecution to present the push factor for his family's forced migration to Malaysia (Goldlust & Richmond, 1974; Gordenker, 1987; Kunz, 1973, 1981; Richmond, 1993). This particular representation of the Rohingya refugees occurs frequently in Prince's narratives and embraces the well-established representation of refugees as what Malkki calls 'pure victims' by both international media and humanitarian agencies, with visual images of refugees in dire circumstances and in camps (1995, 1996). Malkki argues that as helpless victims, refugees need people to protect and speak out for them (1996: 388).

His positioning of the Rohingya identity is also interesting. Besides characterising the Rohingyas as poor and persecuted, he also described them as being physically dark skinned, different from Chinese (line 13) or Filipinos (lines 50-51). Skin colour was a significant feature for him but yet he did not want to label or liken the Rohingyas to any particular ethnicity. At the end of this narrative sequence, the question about the Rohingyas' origins and ethnicity is not answered and he also rejects the interviewer's suggestion to label them as Bangladeshi. Despite recognising the importance of 'skin colour' as part of his identity, Prince still rejected the labels that the interviewer and others in his story world wanted to use to categorise him.

The discussions in academic discourse and the wider public discourse in and out of Myanmar presently point to many theories and possibilities concerning the actual origins of the Rohingyas. Common theories include that they descended from Arab Muslim traders who came to the Rakhine area in the 7th century, or from Bengali migrants who

came over from East Pakistan and Bangladesh during the British colonial rule and some even alleging that they are more recent migrants from Bangladesh (Imtiaz Ahmed, 2009; Syeda Naushin Parnini, Mohammad Redzuan Othman, & Amer Saifude Ghazali, 2013; Ullah, 2011). Prince's uncertainty about the origins of the Rohingya reflects the larger ongoing debate surrounding Rohingya identity and their rights as minority citizens in Myanmar. A. Azis (2014) suggests that Rohingyas shun their representation as Bangladeshis for two reasons. First, they want to distance themselves away from the negative representation of Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Malaysian media as criminals. Second, being conflated into the 'Bangladeshi migrant' category reminds the Rohingya refugees about their own persecution and exclusion by the majority Buddhist government back in Myanmar.

6.2.2 Resettlement prospects

In excerpt P2, Prince talks about his desire to be resettled and how good his prospects

for resettlement are. He also mentions refugees he knows who have already been resettled.

Excerpt P2

1	I:	Okay, day to day do you find that there are any, um, challenges that may be a bit different from other people?
2	P:	Yeah, I feel like… I have a lot of challenges.
3		I'm growing up, I've… when I was young, I thought life was easy, this and that
4		but I'm like, since I'm growing up, I don't have the same oppor=I mean same… uh, compared to those who are here, citizens who are here, I feel I have more challenges.
5		First, I have to fight against, I mean I have to um (.) do well in my studies.
6		Second, once I have done good in my studies, what is next?
7		I don't have a good (.) uh, not really good, I mean I don't have the same status as the normal student, people, I mean, citizens here.
8		And (.) sometimes, actually most of the time, I have it in my mind that I wanna, I wanna go to a third country, I wanna migrate.
9		I don't want to stay here anymore because I've=we have been staying here for more than 20 years and what do we get?
10		Yes, we have a peaceful place, we have this, we have that,
11		but the most important that we supposed to have, we don't have it. Which is our legal status.
12		My parents used to say, 'We will stay here, we'll stay here until one day, one day we'll get the legal or we'll be recognised.'
13	I:	Are they waiting for resettlement?
14	P:	Yea, actually I applied for resettlement
15		because I said to my parents, 'If this is not happening, it will ruin my future, it will ruin my siblings' future'.
16		Because my siblings are still young. I have to think about them also.
17		I mean, I don't want them to go through the same thing that I'm going through right now.

18		So I said, 'If we go for resettlement, then we go to a third country. Then we'll be recognised'.
19		Because I have so many friends, even I... even have my uncle, my real uncle, my own… my mother's um brother, he have been there in US.
20		He just been there for one year=he have his green card, he have bought a car and he is stable now.
21		But if you wanna see ourselves over here, we can't buy anything.
22		We just can stay. Even we wanna buy, we can't buy because we are not recognised again, we are not recognised.
23		We are stateless, we are refugees.
24		So, it's very very hard for us to stay here, to a country where we are not recognised.
25		The only thing we can get here is just um… (.) harmony place where we can stay peacefully and yea.
26	I:	So have they applied for resettlement, your family?
27	P:	Yea we have applied.
28	I:	When was that?
29	P:	We have applied last year um in December.
30	I:	So, what are the [chances for Rohingyas?
31	P:	[It will take-
32	I:	Good ah?
33	P:	No. It's not good. I mean it is not so good ((laughs)) compared to those who are Chin um Burmese majority.
34		Because I don't know why, what's the reason, what's the reason why they don't want=
35		they don't really like take Rohingyas, of the Rohingyas they don't take, they take Chins.
36	I:	Do you think it has anything to do with you being Muslim?
37	P:	Probably.
38	I:	Because most of [the Western countries-
39	P:	[Yea, Western country because they think that uh, you know, 9/11 right?
40		((Interviewer laughs))
41	P:	Yea, which is (.) big question mark to, to Muslims
42		and because of that, they don't really um, they still look at them as Muslims.
43		So, they think=I assume la, I think that they also think Muslims,

44		those=whoever who are Muslims, they are not good people, they are terrorising people, they are extremists and this and that.
45		So, yea I think probably that would be the major factor why we are not selected.
46		Only minority of us are selected to go. So yea.
47	I:	Your uncle that went, he was single or he had a family?
48	P:	He had a family actually, he had a family and all his um children now, they are studying in a good col=um school.
49		Yea, even my (.) another aunty from my dad's side, she went to Norway
50		and her children now is um studying in a college. And they have citizenship.
51		So, sometimes I feel envy of them like (.)
52		I feel, I just feel like I deserve it. We work very hard, this and that.
53		Those who deserve it, they don't get the opportunity.
54		It's… it tears me apart when I see those people who goes there and they don't appreciate it,
55		they said, this, this place is uh, useless. It's the same.
56		Just because they don't know how to appreciate it, don't know how to manage it over there and grab the opportunity and use it,
57		they say the place is not nice, this and that, they wanna go to other places. So yea.

6.2.2.1 Positioning level 1 (the story world)

In excerpt P2, the main characters that appear alongside Prince himself are: (a) Prince's parents, and (b) resettled refugees abroad and Rohingyas awaiting resettlement in Malaysia.

(a) Prince and his parents

In line 1, the interviewer asks Prince what he challenges he faces that are particular to him and he compares himself to Malaysian citizens, who have opportunities that he does not have: 'I don't have the same status as the normal student, people, I mean, citizens here.' (7). He positions himself as a non-citizen, who faces many challenges: 'compared

to those who are here, citizens who are here, I feel I have more challenges.' (4). He also compares himself to his 'younger' self in line 3: 'when I was young, I thought life was easy' but notes that he realised otherwise as he got older: 'since I'm growing up' (4).

This leads to him expressing his wish to be 'migrate' in line 8 and he proceeds to provide reasons why in lines 9-11. Note the slippage again from 'I' to 'we' in line 9 to include himself with the collective refugee group. The mention of 'more than 20 years' (9) once again is an attempt to justify that he deserves a resettlement place based on the length of time he has already spent in Malaysia.

He brings his parents into the narrative by ventriloquating them in line 12 and here, they position themselves as residents of Malaysia: 'We will stay here, we'll stay here until one day, one day we'll get the legal or we'll be recognised.'. His first reply to his parents is found in line 15. Here, a hypothetical situation is introduced through a conditional clause, with the effect ('it will ruin my siblings' future') dependent on not getting resettled, i.e the 'this' in: 'If this is not happening'. His siblings are introduced as minor characters and are not voiced, but yet influence his decision to apply for resettlement as seen in his evaluation in lines 16-17, in which he elaborates why ('Because my siblings are still young. I have to think about them also. I mean, I don't want them to go through the same thing that I'm going through right now.').

In line 18, he resumes the narrative by quoting what else he said to his parents. Here, another conditional clause is used: 'If we go for resettlement, then we go to a third country. Then we'll be recognised'. The effect of getting resettlement is getting to a third country and being recognised. Interestingly, Prince positions himself in a position of power in relation to his parents. This is displayed in the account of his defiance of his parents' wishes to remain and wait for citizenship especially in line 14 ('Yea, actually I applied for resettlement'), where he foregrounds his own decisive action in applying for resettlement.

(b) Resettled refugees abroad and refugees awaiting resettlement

In lines 19-20, Prince introduces his uncle, who was also a refugee, as a means of comparison with his own situation. His uncle' situation is described as 'stable' compared to his own (lines 21-25). He lists down many disadvantages 'we' here in Malaysia face but concedes one positive thing in line 25 ('The only thing we can get here is just … harmony place where we can stay peacefully…'). But he emphasises the lack of legal status as the main problem faced by 'us' in line 11.

Other refugees who have been resettled abroad are also mentioned as a point of comparison with his current situation in Malaysia. Other relatives, such as his aunty and her children, are mentioned in lines 49-50 and the children are described as 'studying in a college' and having citizenship, to which he expresses his feelings about this in line 51 ('sometimes I feel envy of them'). In lines 54-57, he refers to refugees who have been resettled abroad, who he feels do not deserve to be resettled compared to him. These two groups of refugees are described distinctively. There are 'Those who deserve it' (53), who do not get 'the opportunity' for resettlement and this is positioned at odds with 'those people who goes there and they don't appreciate it' (54) and 'don't know how to manage it over there and grab the opportunity and use it' (56). He ventriloquates them indirectly in line 57: 'they say the place is not nice, this and that, they wanna go to other places' to distance himself from the kind of thinking he perceives these refugees to have.

6.2.2.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

The interviewer's question in line 1 positioned Prince as someone, who would face challenges that may be different from other people. He accepts this positioning in line 2 by repeating the question ('Yeah, I feel like… I have a lot of challenges.'). In lines 3-7, he identifies that the problem is that he does not have the same opportunities the citizens

here have and that even if he works hard at his studies, he has no future prospects. So, in line 8, Prince first brings up the idea about migration to a third country as a possible solution. In line 11, he emphasises the lack of 'the most important that we supposed to have', which is then identified as 'our legal status'. It is in line 13 that the word 'resettlement' first appears and it is mentioned by the interviewer. Up to this point in the interview, Prince has not mentioned resettlement specifically. He mentions his action in applying for resettlement in line 14 but makes no mention of whether or not his parents did likewise, until the interviewer asks him about it in line 26 ('So have they applied for resettlement, your family?'), to which he answers in the affirmative.

The interviewer follows up the question about his family's resettlement application with another question about why it seems difficult for Rohingyas to be resettled when the interviewer asks, 'So, what are the chances for Rohingyas?' (30). Here, the interviewer displays her knowledge about the difficulties Rohingyas have with regards to resettlement and positions Prince within the frame of knowledge. He starts off answering by referring to length of time ('It will take-') in line 31 before he is cut off by the interviewer, who asks if the chances are 'good' (32). His answer in line 33 centres around what 'good' means, namely that the Rohingyas' chances are not good when compared to the Chin refugees. After that assertion, he goes on to express his uncertainty over the reasons why Rohingyas are not chosen for resettlement in line 34 ('I don't know why, what's the reason…') and why the Chins are instead in line 35 ('they take Chins').

In line 36, the interviewer suggests religion as a possible answer to Prince's question in the previous line ('Do you think it has anything to do with you being Muslim?'). The question is phrased at the beginning with 'Do you think…', indicating an attempt by the interviewer to mitigate the force of the utterance as merely a suggestion. Prince's answer ('Probably') suggests initial uncertainty in accepting that reason. In the next line (38), the interviewer's turn is cut off by Prince after she mentions 'Western countries'. At this point

Prince assumes control of the floor by posing a question to her: 'Yea, Western country because they think that uh, you know, 9/11 right?' (39). The interviewer laughs, acknowledging his narrative reference to the terrorist attack on the U.S. on 11 September 2001.

Prince then claims this reason as his own by assuming the position of expert on how the West views Muslims ('they still look at them as Muslims' – line 42). He uses a hedge in line 43, 'I assume la, I think that they also think Muslims…', to lessen the impact of this assertion, which is then elaborated further in line 46. Here, he positions himself as having an insight into how the Western countries view 'whoever who are Muslims' as 'not good people', who 'are terrorising people' and 'extremists'. The Western countries are positioned as being convicted in this view of Muslims. Line 45 is the concluding statement to his argument on 'the major factor why we are not selected'.

In line 47, the interviewer asks about the uncle he mentioned, who had been resettled. He not only talks about this uncle and his family but also about another aunty, who was resettled in Norway. He expresses his envy of them in line 51 and the reason why in the next line ('I just feel like I deserve it. We work very hard…'). Lines 54-57 (as discussed above as part of positioning level 1) contain his evaluation of ungrateful refugees already resettled abroad.

6.2.2.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

In this excerpt, Prince builds an image of the Rohingya refugee, which he clearly identifies himself as through the repeated use of 'us' and 'we', as a people who are disadvantaged because they do not have legal status as refugees in Malaysia. His personal struggles and challenges due to the lack of opportunity drive him to the belief that

resettlement is the solution to all his problems. This leads him to recall his conversation with his parents about resettlement and his subsequent disagreement with them.

He expresses his frustration over the lengthy waiting period for resettlement by comparing the Rohingyas with the Chin refugees, who do not have to wait as long for a place. To account for this, he readily accepts the interviewer's suggestion that his religion (Islam) might have something to do with it and goes on to reproduce the representation of Muslims as problematic to 'Western countries'. Post 9/11, the figure of the refugee has been conflated into the threatening figure of the Muslim terrorist, resulting in heightened security concerns over the authenticity of refugees coming from the South (Johnson, 2011, p. 1027). Prince draws on this discourse to position himself as disadvantaged in the resettlement process because of his religion.

The comparison with refugees who have resettled allows him to project an idealised self he hopes to have in the future, i.e. 'stable' and going to university. When resettled refugees he knows appear not to be happy with or appreciate their new situation, he perceives this as an act of ingratitude and discontentment. The expectation of resettlement as a means to ending all the refugee's struggles is shattered by the actuality of the lives of some resettled refugees.

6.2.3 Being Rohingya and Malaysian

Excerpt P3 is an example of how problematic the 'Malaysian citizen' identity claim is to Prince in the practical aspects of life. Here, Prince discusses his preference for a 'Rohingya Malaysian' identity that based on the premise of being accepted as a Malaysian citizen. Lines 2-9 contain a narrated event and lines 10-50 consist of interaction between Prince and the researcher.

Excerpt P3

1	I:	Yea, let's say in Malaysia, what would be a [perfect day?
2	P:	[Oh, in Malaysia.
3		Um… (.) Okay, for us would be (.) I get my IC and I see all my siblings studying in a very, very good school.
4		Probably Chinese school, I want them to study in a Chinese school because I feel like Chinese schools are the best schools in Malaysia. Okay?
5		Um, I see my parents, they are no, no more working hard, not really. They have their own business, which they don't um, they got boys working under them.
6		Um (.) for me, I (.) I'm recognised and even though I'm a Rohingya, people recognise me um (.) Rohingya Malaysian.
7		And people respects [sic] me because who I am.
8		I=I'll no more say I'm a Malaysian, I'll say I'm Rohingya and p=even then, people will like uh, respect me.
9		If when I say I'm Malaysian, I, I will, I just hope they will respect me the same way that they uh, would when I say I'm Malaysian. And…
10	I:	Okay. Um, just a little bit=just now you mentioned, you know, if in your perfect day, you want to be called a Rohingya Malaysian but you would prefer to say you're a Rohinyga.
11		What does that mean? You want people to know [you as a
12	P:	[Okay, my iden=my identity as a-
13		my identity here is I'm Malaysian. And…

14	I:	What does being Malaysian mean? When you say you're a Malaysian, what does that mean? Is it because you're born here?
15	P:	Yea, I'm born here.
16	I:	Any other reason why you call yourself Malaysian?
17	P:	I speak the language and I (.) I follow the law and… the culture over here.
18	I:	Which culture? ((laughs))
19	P:	Yea, follow…
20	I:	All the cultures?
21	P:	Yea, all the cultures. I have to yea, I respect so, I have to follow=I mean since I am (.) been here for a while. I, I have adapted (to) the culture,
22		so yeah, that's why I call myself, consider [myself a Malaysian.
23	I:	[So, if let's say one day you got a, you know,
24		a permanent, you got citizenship, Malaysian citizenship, would you still prefer to be called Malaysian or Rohingya?
25		[If let's say you
26	P:	[Rohingya Malaysian.
27	I:	Okay, why with the Rohingya?
28	P:	Because I, I don't want them to know like my half identity, you know.
29		When I say I'm Malaysian, I'm like half. It's like not complete.
30		I'm hiding the other half of myself.
31		When I say the other half, then they will ask, 'Then what is Rohingya?'. This and that.
32		Then I don't know what to answer.
33		But once I get like (.) um, Malaysian, perm=um, like real citizen, then I can say Rohingya.
34		I'm not sure whether I will become (.) really become citizen here or not.
35		So, how if I say I'm Rohingya and then later oh, I don't have it.
36		I mean, I'm Malaysian now then later, Malaysian now because when I say later, I don't have an IC, then what would it be? I'll be back to where I was=
37	I:	=So, this IC was given by who? The government?
39	I:	And then they say that you can only have it til 2014?
40	P:	Um, yea.
41	I:	And then, you don't know what happens after that lah?

42	P:	Mm hmm ((nods))
43	I:	So, this period, 2008-2014, that you have a card, what is the difference if, let's say, you didn't have it? Is there any difference? What do you have extra, any advantages you have?
44	P:	Um, okay if I say the advantages, the only advantages I can take my license.
45	I:	You can drive a car lah?
46	P:	Yea, I can drive a car, I can.
47	I:	Anything else you can do?
48	P:	I can't buy land, I can't, I can't buy anything actually.
49	I:	Can't go to school also.
50	P:	No, can't.

6.2.3.1 Positioning level 1 (the story world)

The characters that appear in the narrated event (lines 2-9) are Prince and his family. Responding to the question about what his perfect day in Malaysia would be like in line 1, Prince constructs an idealised image of him and his family in a hypothetical future situation (2-9). His siblings are imagined as students in a Chinese school, which Prince refers to as 'the best schools in Malaysia' (3-4). His parents do not have to toil at work anymore, but instead they have 'boys working under them' (5). He imagines himself in lines 6-9 as : i) being recognised as a Rohingya, ii) being recognised as Rohingya Malaysian, iii) being respected by everyone and iv) treated equally with Malaysians.

Lines 6-9 also contain embedded evaluation. In line 6, he expresses his desires to be recognised by both his Rohingya and Malaysian identity although he acknowledges that this is not the case at the moment. This can be seen in the use of 'even though' in the sentence '… even though I'm a Rohingya, people recognise me (as) Rohingya Malaysian', implying that his recognition as Rohingya right now is a hindrance to him being accepted by the Malaysian society. The hope for 'respect' from 'people' in line 6 in repeated in the following two lines. Line 8 is telling: 'I'll no more say I'm a Malaysian,

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I'll say I'm Rohingya and … even then, people will … respect me.' The use of 'even then' once again emphasises the obstacles calling himself a Rohingya brings to his acceptance into society. Line 9 refers to his desire to be treated equal to Malaysian citizens: 'when I say I'm Malaysian, I, I will, I just hope they will respect me the same way that they uh, would when I say I'm Malaysian.'

6.2.3.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

In lines 3-9, in answer to the interviewer's question, Prince narrates his perfect day and how on this day, he would be recognised as a Rohingya Malaysian. From line 10 onwards, the interviewer interrupts him and assumes control of the floor to probe further on Prince's claim on the Malaysian identity. In line 10, the interviewer asks Prince to elaborate on what he means by the phrase 'Rohingya Malaysian'. Prince chooses the word 'identity' in lines 12 and 13 to rephrase the interviewer's question on what he prefers to be called and he makes a claim for a Malaysian identity (13). This is followed by further probes in lines 14 and 16. The probe in line 14 ('What does being Malaysian mean?'), the interviewer then presents Prince with a suggestion: 'Is it because you're born here?', with which Prince agrees (15). Another probe in line 16 ('Any other reason why you call yourself Malaysian?') is asked to encourage Prince to elaborate and he complies by giving a few reasons in line 17, namely: i) speaking the local language, ii) following the law, and iii) following the culture. Following two more probe questions on culture in line 18 ('Which culture?') and 20 ('All the cultures?'), he cites the reason why he considers himself Malaysian, i.e. he respects the culture and has adapted to it (21).

The interviewer then presents to him a hypothetical situation in lines 23-24 (i.e. if he received Malaysian citizenship) and asks him to choose between being Malaysian or Rohingya. Here, she is presenting to Prince the idea that both identities are separate. But he resists that positioning and his answer is decisive and quick in line 26, 'Rohingya

Malaysian'. When questioned why 'Rohingya' is important, he refers the notion of 'half identity' ('I don't want them to know like my half identity, you know') in line 26. The use of 'you know' at the end of that sentence not only demonstrates his acknowledgement of the interviewer's question but also positions her as having to be told what he wants for himself. In the following lines (29-32), he explains the 'half identity' notion further that he is incomplete when recognised with either the Rohingya or Malaysian identity alone ('(29) It's like not complete. (30) I'm hiding the other half of myself').

In line 31, he brings in the character 'they', which is a generic 'they' and could refer to anyone he meets, into a hypothetical situation. They are voiced saying, 'Then what is Rohingya?' and he positions himself in this narrative as being unable to answer that question (32). This hypothetical situation is played out further on in lines 33-36 through his reflections with the interviewer. In line 33, he discusses another hypothetical situation, i.e. 'once I get… real citizen(ship)', in which he assumes he will get Malaysian citizenship and be confident of calling himself a Rohingya. However in the next three lines (34-36), he leaves that narrative to enter into an external evaluation, by speaking directly to the interviewer and expressing his uncertainty over that hope becoming a reality ('I'm not sure whether I will … really become citizen here or not. So, how if I say I'm Rohingya and then later oh, I don't have it.'). In line 36, he claims the Malaysian identity but only temporarily: 'I mean, I'm Malaysian now then later, Malaysian now because when I say later, I don't have an IC, then what would it be? I'll be back to where I was…'. In his question, 'what would it be?', he seeks assurance from the interviewer and receiving none, he states: 'I'll be back to where I was'.

The excerpt then ends with the interviewer assuming control of the interaction by asking him how his obtained his IC and what will happen after it expires 2014 (lines 37-56). In line 47, she asks Prince, 'And then, you don't know what happens after that…?', which is followed by the question about the difference between having the IC and not

having it (line 49). In doing so, she positions Prince as a non-citizen. Prince replies that he is able to get his driver's license and drive a car but cannot buy any property or go to school within the national system, thus accepting and reinforcing this positioning as a non-citizen.

6.2.3.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

A discussion about how the identity claims of being Rohingya and Malaysian are reflected in reality emerges in this interaction between Prince and interviewer. As previously discussed in the previous excerpts, Prince often aligned himself to the Rohingya identity. Yet when asked to specify what that really means for him, Prince is forced to evaluate his true feelings about being recognised as Rohingya by the local Malaysian people. Although he stops short of saying that he is being discriminated against for being Rohingya, it is clear that he feels that this identity poses problems for him. He prefers to claim to be a Malaysian to avoid difficult questions and so he can be respected by people.

Yet, when discussing his 'Malaysian' citizenship and IC, it becomes clear that the identity he is attempting to claim as his own is not a permanent identity and there is significant difference between his citizenship and that of local Malaysians, namely that his IC will expire. Despite observing local patriotic practices such as singing the anthem and abiding by the laws, he remains outside the national system, ineligible for basic opportunities. The notion of the 'half identity' and the category 'Rohingya Malaysian' he coins for himself are also interesting because it shows how being either Rohingya or Malaysian is simply not enough for Prince to feel 'complete'. Instead, it offers him the possibility of a third option, i.e. an attempt to reconcile both identity claims.

Prince's attempt at claiming this 'Rohingya Malaysian' identity reveals his constant movement between his aspirational Malaysianness and the stigmatised Rohingya identity.

This behaviour bears similarities to King and Mai's study among Albanian migrants in Italy, who constantly floated between their desire to become Italian and their stigmatised Albanian identities (2008).

6.2.4   Hiding his refugee identity

In P4, there are three main narrative accounts. In the first account, Prince gives his definition of a refugee and why he considers himself a refugee. In the second account, he describes how his often hides his refugee identity in public when interacting with locals who appear to him to be hostile towards refugees. The final account describes how Prince 'camouflages' with friends from other cultures to hide his refugee identity.

Excerpt P4

1 I: okay so, um what have you… can you explain to me what you understand as a, as a refugee and why you call yourself a refugee?

2 P: Why [do I-

3 I: [Why do you need refuge here? Explain to me first, what is a refugee

4   and number two, why you are a refugee?
       Or [do you consider yourself a refugee?

5 P: [What is a refugee?

6   What is a refugee? Refugee.. (.) okay, if I wanted to say a person is a refugee, he's um, first he's stateless.

7   Second, he's not treated right. I mean he doesn't have the same rights, equal rights, he doesn't get the equal rights like the other individual, which is staying in the coun=which, what am I saying? Uh, in the country he's staying in with other people.

8   And what else? Um, he's discriminated because of his identity as a refugee.

9   He is um, (.) also used for illegal (.) um, for illegal things. I mean to do illegal things like some people who are in higher status, they will use um refugees to do things, which is not right. To do like selling drugs and stuff.

10   And in the end, when they get caught, the refugees get caught, it's like the end.

11   It's the end of them because first, they are refugee, they are not recognised.

12   And they get easily out of the prison because they are refugee.

13   And why do I call myself as a refugee?

14   Because (.) um, I am not, I don't, (.) I'm in a country, which I don't have equal right as the other people who is staying in the same country.

15		And I feel (.) isolated when I, when I reveal my true self, my true identity to others
16		to say, when I say that I'm a Rohinyga and they start to think like, 'Rohingyas? You know, these Rohingyas are this and that'.
17		When I go to a cab, when I get into the cab, they'll start saying, 'You know, these Burmese..'
18		When I was like coming back from Selayang, 'You know these Burmese people, these Rohingyas are troublesome people'.
19	I:	After you told them or they didn't know you were (Rohingya)?
20	P:	No, I didn't tell, didn't… because when you go to Selayang right, there is=okay, Selayang and Kotaraya.
21		There is two main um port for Rohingyas and Burmese people.
22		So whenever you are in Selayang and you are like taking the cab, they will assume that you are a Rohingya or assume that you are Burmese.
23		So, they will start saying all these kind of things. So, when they ask me, 'Are you Rohingya? Are you Burmese?',
24		then I will say, 'No, no, no.'
25		Sometimes I say I'm Indian, sometimes I say I'm Punjabi, sometimes I say I'm Malay.
26		So, whenever when, sometimes I ask them to guess then they guess that I am Malay.
27		'Yeah, yeah, absolutely right'. So I just like, 'Yeah, yeah, you're right'.
28		And I say, 'Yeah, I'm Malay'.
29		And I, I just like make a fake identity of myself.
30		Because I don't want to (.) when I, they were looking at me differently, you know.
31		Like can you imagine like this, we didn't reveal yourself then,
32		okay, first I'm talking to you nicely but when you reveal like for, for example, you're Korean, for example, you're Korean.
33		And I thought you were a Japanese.
34		So, when you say that you're a Korean, you reveal your true self, I'll get disappointed and I'll like look at you differently.
35		<u>What</u>? Okay… and it's like yeah, very awkward, right? (.)
36		He'll (the cab driver) look at me different, differently.
37		Which I don't really like that look.

38		So, I don't reveal my true self when they started to talk bad about (.)
39		but I say, 'Hey, how can you judge a person for… I mean, the whole community or whole Rohingya because of one person?' Right? Because there is black sheep in every…
40	I:	Does that happen a lot that you run into a lot of [all the time?
41	P:	[Yeah, it happen-
42		I mean actually it happened four times already. Four times. So, four times I will consider, yeah.
43	I:	And then uh, but besides cab drivers, what uh, what do you feel about Malaysian people? Do you think that eve=all Malaysians have=
44	P:	=No, no, no, not all of them. No, no, of course not all of them
45		People here very warm, very nice. Yeah, they're very nice.
46		It's just the some people, some obviously like the minority of the,
47		will assume we are just um, like people who are staying here without, aimless, I mean like chicken with no heads. ((laughs))
48		They- I don't know how to, how to really describe us.
49		But they don't look us in a positive way. Yeah, they don't look at us in a good way.
50	I:	So, you don't feel part of the Malaysian community at all lah?
51	P:	No. Not really.
52	I:	Unless you put on your fake self, right?=
53	P:	=Yeah. [Then, yeah
54	I:	[Then,
55	P:	They'll like, they'll like accept me.
56	I:	So, if you, one day you go out and you say, 'Yeah, actually I'm Indian', so then you feel Malaysian?
57		More, [treated like a Malaysian?
58	P:	[Yeah, kinda. Yeah, they treat me differently actually.
59		When you say you're this, you're that. Yeah, actually it how, that's how it works. When you hide your true identity, they'll be like so different to you.
60	I:	When you say different, what do you mean? Besides the look and the things they say, say about you or, or to you, what [else?
61	P:	[They will say that, okay, first they will say,

62		if I say I am a Rohingya, then they will say, they will never, not ever, ever say good thing about Rohingya.
63		They will say, 'You know, last week ah what happened in the duh-duh-duh-dah, in this place,
64		you know I saw in news, you know the Rohingya people, they've been doing this nonsense, this and that.'
65		'Oh! Yeah. You are right.' I just say like, 'Oh yeah, mmm okay. (.) Oh, I see.'
66		That's how my reaction and I try to avoid them and try to go away
67		and they keep the conversation on and on and (.) it goes on my head. I just can't do anything.
68		Whereas, sometimes I say I'm Punjabi and they like, because I can speak six languages,
69		so it's not a big deal for me to say I'm Malay.
70		When I'm say Malay, I speak Malay. When I'm Indian, I can speak=
71	I:	=Tamil?
72	P:	A bit of Tamil. So, when I say I'm Punjabi, I can speak Punjabi. And sometimes I say I'm Pakistani.
73		((I laughs)) Yeah, I can speak Hindi. So I like, I interact in Hindi.
74		Actually mostly I say [I'm Pakistani.
75	I:	[Learn yourself or just interact with your friends?
76	P:	Um, I learn from my, uh watching movies. I interact with my friends.
77		So, when I'm with my friends, actually when I'm with my Pakistani friends, when they ask me where am I from, I say I'm Pakistani too. I'm also a Pakistani.
78		So I speak in their language.
79		So they won't like, I just camouflage, I just camouflage with them.

6.2.4.1 Positioning level 1 (the story world)

In this narrative sequence, Prince positions himself with regards to three other characters: (a) the generic refugee, (b) local taxi drivers, and (c) Prince with people from different cultures. Prince's positioning of each of these characters will be discussed here in turn.

(a) The generic refugee

At the start of excerpt P6, the conversation centres on the definition of a refugee. Prince's definition of a refugee matches the representation of refugees found in Chapter 5, namely that a refugee is passive and victimised. The refugee, 'he', is described by him as 'stateless' (6), does not have equal rights and 'not treated right' (7), discriminated against (8), taken advantage of for 'illegal things… like selling drugs and stuff' (9), and 'get caught' (10). Being in a 'stateless' position means refugees do not belong to any state and the other characteristics he mentioned passivated refugees as being on the receiving end of specific types of actions, over which they have not control. They merely have these actions (not treated right, being discriminated against, being taken advantage of) done to them. There was a reference in line 9 to 'they' or 'some people who are in higher status', who he describes as abusing their power to force refugees into criminal activities.

(b) Prince and the taxi drivers

He then switched the main character to himself from line 13 onwards, starting with the question, 'And why do I call myself as a refugee?'. He describes himself as not having equal rights as Malaysian citizen (14) and being isolated whenever he reveals his 'true self' or 'true identity' (15). In line 16, he signals the start of a personal account with a general account of common reactions of the generic 'they' whenever he reveals his Rohingya identity. The thoughts of 'they' are voiced as saying: 'Rohingyas? You know, these Rohingyas are this and that.' The abstract is found in line 17, where he begins an account of his experience with Malaysian taxi drivers, 'When I go to a cab…'. The taxi drivers are referred to using as a generic 'they' and are voiced as saying, 'You know, these Burmese..'. Line 18 continues this voicing of 'they' in another direct quotation, 'You know these Burmese people, these Rohingyas are troublesome people', with one more detail in his story ('when I was like coming back from Selayang'). The type of

double-voicing found here is vari-directional DvD as Prince does not align his voice with that of the taxi drivers.

His reconstructed conversation with the taxi drivers over his ethnicity in lines 23-24 and 27-28 alternates with the elaboration for his actions in lines 25-26 and 29-30. His response to being identified as Rohingya is 'No, no, no' (line 24) and is differs from his response to being identified as Malay in lines 27-28 ('Yeah, yeah, absolutely right… Yeah, I'm Malay'). In describing his actions within the narrative in line 25, he takes on the roles of both author and animator of the utterance about his ethnicity, as well as principal because he is invested in the choices to present himself as Indian, Punjabi or Malay. He then animates himself in the next line (26) as asking the taxi driver to guess his ethnicity and then recounts that their guess is 'Malay'. His affirmative answer in the following two lines positions him as principal, i.e. committed to playing the role of a Malay. Line 29 reinforces his commitment to this identity when he foregrounds his agency, 'I just like make a fake identity of myself.'

Lines 31-35 is an instance of scripting, an interactive turn, where Prince asks the interviewer to imagine if a similar thing happened to her and her true identity disappointed someone. The narrative account then resumes in line 39 but before that he evaluates: i) what happens when the taxi driver learns of his true identity (line 36: He'll (the cab driver) look at me different, differently.), ii) his feelings about that reaction (line 37: Which I don't really like that look.), and iii) his thought process that determines his response (line 38: So, I don't reveal my true self when they started to talk bad…). Prince is voiced in the narrative in the response in line 39: 'but I say, 'Hey, how can you judge a person for… I mean, the whole community or whole Rohingya because of one person?' Right? Because there is black sheep in every (community)'.

He states his preferred reaction again in line 59, which is to hide his identity: 'Yeah, actually it how, that's how it works. When you hide your true identity, they'll be like so

different to you.' When asked to elaborate he provides another narrative account (lines 62-67) to illustrate what happens when he says he is Rohingya. 'They' is positioned as an active speaker and voiced: 'They will say…' (63), while Prince is positioned in the narrative as a passive listener. He voices himself in line 65 concurring ('Oh! Yeah. You are right.') but being non-committal about it ('I just say like, 'Oh yeah, mmm okay. (.) Oh, I see.''). Lines 66-67 again emphasise his positioning within the narrative as not being in control ('I just can't do anything') of the conversation that is described going 'on and on… it goes on [sic] my head'.

(c) **Prince with people from different cultures**

Prince recounts in lines 68-79 other occasions where he successfully hides his identity and 'camouflages' with other people. The means is choice of language, of which he claims he speak six (68), to support his various identity claims, i.e. 'When I'm say Malay, I speak Malay.' (70) and 'So, when I say I'm Punjabi, I can speak Punjabi. And sometimes I say I'm Pakistani. (72) Yeah, I can speak Hindi. So I like, I interact in Hindi. (73). Actually mostly I say I'm Pakistani. (74)'. In line 77, he positions himself within the narrative as assuming a Pakistani identity when asked by Pakistani friends where he comes from. He calls this behaviour 'camouflage' in line 79.

6.2.4.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

Prince's description of a refugee is a direct response to the interviewer's questions in lines 3-4 ('Explain to me first, what is a refugee and number two, why you are a refugee? Or do you consider yourself a refugee?'). Prince's account complies with that order, which he reinforces by repeating the questions before his account ('What is a refugee?' in line 6 and 'And why do I call myself as a refugee?' in line 13). The short accounts of what refugees are follow these story prefaces. After talking about how he is a refugee

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because he feels isolated when revealing his true identity to others (13-15), he voices what 'they' would be thinking in line 16, which leads him into his story preface for the taxi story in line 17: 'When I get into a cab, they'll start saying…', followed by Prince's voicing of what the taxi drivers say in line 16. Lines 15-16 provide the context for reading of his use of DvD in lines 17-18 and signals Prince's non-alignment to the taxi drivers' view of Rohingyas.

After his initial account of his experience with the taxi drivers in lines 17-30, he directly engages the interviewer by presenting to her a hypothetical situation in lines 31-35, in hopes that she might understand the need for him to have a 'fake identity'. The interviewer is then asked to imagine herself as a Korean and he positions himself in the narrative as mistaking the interviewer for Japanese. In line 34 he says: 'So, when you say that you're a Korean, you reveal your true self, I'll get disappointed and I'll like look at you differently.' The effect, namely getting disappointed and looking at the interviewer differently, is caused by the revelation of her 'true self' as Korean. In line 35, Prince plays out a possible reaction to this revelation ('What? Okay…'). He then poses the question to the interviewer, 'it's like yeah, very awkward, right?', to elicit her sympathy or some kind of agreement in a bid to establish rapport. However, the interviewer does not respond and Prince resumes his original narrative about the taxi driver in line 36. The interviewer positions herself as a researcher instead of an equal to Prince, who might identify with his point about mistaken identity.

The interviewer's question in line 43, 'what do you feel about Malaysian people? Do you think that eve=all Malaysians have=' presupposes that Prince's experiences with the local taxi drivers might influence his opinion of Malaysians in general. Prince responds in the negative with 'not all of them' but singles out the minority who 'will assume… people who are staying here (refugees)… aimless, I mean like chicken with no heads.' (line 47) and who 'don't look us in a positive way' (48).

The interviewer then presents her assumption in the form of a question in lines 50 and 52, 'So, you don't feel part of the Malaysian community at all lah? … Unless you put on your fake self, right?'. Prince agrees and offers the reason in line 55, 'they'll like accept me'. The interviewer then offers a hypothetical situation of her own to Prince in the next two lines, 'So, if you, one day you go out and you say, 'Yeah, actually I'm Indian', so then you feel Malaysian? More, treated like a Malaysian?' Prince corroborates this conclusion with 'Yeah, they treat me differently actually' (58), with the use of 'actually' to support this statement as fact. His next line repeats this idea: 'When you hide your true identity, they'll be like so different to you.' This prompts the interviewer to ask for clarification as to what he means by 'different' and she mentions some possible way people might display their differing behaviour to towards him 'Besides the look and the things they say… about you or… to you, what else' (line 60). He then proceeds to mention some things 'they' usually say in lines 61-64 and his response in line 65.

In line 68, he starts the turn with 'whereas' indicating that he is about to discuss a contrasting situation, which is his use of different languages to blend in with people from different cultures. The interviewer demonstrates she is following his line of thought by contributing 'Tamil?' in line 71 after Prince mentions when he says he's Indian (70). Following the mention of languages he can and does speak (70-73), he interviewer then asks the question: 'Learn (the languages) yourself or just interact with your friends?' Prince picks up on the question about friends and mentions his Pakistani friends in line 77 and his behaviour around them ('I say I'm Pakistani too').

6.2.4.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

Two aspects of Prince's negotiation of his identity emerge in this excerpt. Firstly, he continues to embrace the dominant discourse of the refugee as victimised. In describing

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the main characteristic of the refugee as 'stateless', he emphasises that refugees are powerless and have no rights. By describing himself and by extension the refugee as 'isolated', he refers to their exclusion from the local community.

This however raises a second aspect, namely emphasising his desire to become someone else or to 'camouflage' himself. This is a response to his resistance towards claiming the stigmatised identity of the refugee as his own. His description of the meaning of 'refugee' in lines 6-13 consists of a list of negative characteristics attached to the refugee, which causes him to feel 'isolated' when identifying himself as a refugee (15). Being Rohingya in particular is constructed as a stigmatised identity as seen in the first story told in lines 16-30. Studies have found that negative representation or media coverage of minority migrant groups have caused some migrants to respond to these stereotypes or stigmatised identities by generating feelings of avoidance, distancing and social fragmentation from other ethnic and social groups (Guarnizo, Sánchez, & Roach, 1999; Iosifides et al., 2007; King & Mai, 2008).

By concealing this identity and becoming someone else, Prince is able to avoid rejection by the local community and gain acceptance. Concealment of a stigmatised identity has been identified as a coping strategy used by minority groups when they are subjected to stigma (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2015; Goffman, 1963; van Laar & Levin, 2006). Through concealment, Prince is able to resist being identified within what he perceives to be the dominant discourse amongst the local community that Rohingyas are 'troublesome' people. The two stories found in this excerpt were told in answer to the interviewer's question, 'Do you consider yourself a refugee?'. The three stories told in this narrative excerpt enabled Prince to position himself as creating for himself a way out of problematic and hostile situations.

6.3   JOHN

Respondent background

I first met John's mother, May (May's narratives will be discussed in section 6.3), at a refugee learning centre somewhere in the Klang Valley. While talking to me about the 20 plus years she had spent in Malaysia and learning more about my research study, she suggested that I should speak to her son, who had been born in Malaysia and grew up here. She then arranged to have me meet John at the learning centre on a separate day.

At the time of the interview, John was 19 years old and had recently completed his O-Levels examination at a local international school. He was then pursuing his A-Levels examination. The school he was attending is a privately funded school that usually catered to students from affluent families or children of expatriates.

Personal reflection

When I first saw him, John did not strike me as a refugee. He was tall, wore spectacles, was smartly dressed and carried an expensive looking school bag. He appeared very physically different from the other refugee children at the centre, not merely in terms of dressing but also in his demeanour. He was polite, quiet and had an air of confidence about him.

He spoke English with an accent very much like my own and it was easy to quickly establish rapport with him. Once the interview got going, he opened up and seemed comfortable. His mother was in the room at the time, doing some work for the centre and she was not involved in the conversation nor was she paying much attention to it. However, there were two occasions when she participated after being engaged directly by John and the interviewer and these instances will be noted in the sections below.

John's narratives

Similar to Prince in section 6.2, John also struggled with a dual identity of Malaysian and Myanmar. However, unlike Prince, who actively tried to hide his refugee identity to blend in with the local people, John found that he often had to correct the misconception among the local people that he was a Malaysian by explaining that he was a refugee. He was very comfortable with the Malaysian culture, people and languages as he had spent most of his life growing up in Malaysian neighbourhoods.

The main characters that frequently appear in his interview are students and staff from his school, his family, Malaysians (such as the police, neighbours and general Malaysians) and other Myanmar refugees. Excerpts from his interview are analysed according to the three positioning levels and discussed in the following sections (6.3.1 to 6.3.3). The division of these sections follow themes and the sections consist of discussions about the kind of identities John chooses to claim to represent himself analysed using Bamberg's three level positioning framework. Section 6.3.4 will consist of some concluding remarks.

6.3.1 Raised in a proper neighbourhood

In Excerpt J1, John narrates his recollections about his childhood. This occurs right at the start of the interview when the interviewer asked John to tell her about himself. Here, he speaks about his early childhood spent in Sungai Buloh.

Excerpt J1

1	I:	Maybe you can tell me something about yourself… um… what you remember about growing up in Malaysia?
2	J:	Uh… I was born in 1996.
3		And… I guess… I didn't really feel a lot.. <u>different</u> from other children, even though I knew that I was different.
4		Um, you know, seeing everyday uh other children in school and stuff
5		but I never had that chance when I was younger.
6		Uh but I think I was… raised in a… in a quite conducive environment.
7		As in, even though I was a refugee all my life um, I had local friends who are locals
8		and uh, the chance to interact with (them) and that led to um… me being able to speak English and…
9		speak the local language as well.
10		So um… I was- for many years, when I was… seven until I was um 11,
11		I was actually raised in a <u>proper</u> neighbourhood um,
12		in a- I lived in a <u>terrace</u> house with neighbours, and local [neighbours…
13	I:	[With your mom?
14	J:	Yes, with my family.
15	I:	Was this the one in uh… where was that, Sungai Buloh ah?
16	J:	Yes, Sungai Buloh, yea.
17		I lived there for… tha- that was… MOST of my childhood I'm raised from there.
18		And um, from there I made a lot of friends and uh it felt… it was- I felt happy.
19		But of course, I knew that I was different in- in a very fundamental way ((laughs))
20		in that I was a refugee but apart from that uh,

21		from the way I was raised, from the way I- I spoke and from the way I was-n- from the culture that I experienced, it was very much local.
22	I:	Where were you living before seven?
23	J:	Uh, Sungai Buloh as well.
24		But in a different area. This… neighbourhood that I lived in, that was… that really um… <u>made</u> me who I am, I guess.

6.3.1.1 Positioning level 1 (the story)

In John's story about his early childhood, he identifies 'other children' as characters he did not feel very different from despite acknowledging that he was aware he was different from them (line 3). He positioned himself as Senser in 'seeing' these 'other children in school' (line 4). In line 5, he contrast these children (4) with himself ('but I never had that chance when I was younger'). In line 7, he identifies himself within the story as a refugee but that his 'local friends' were instrumental in helping him learn to speak English and 'the local language' (8-9).

The 'neighbourhood' in John's narrative plays an important role in influencing how he felt about his childhood. It is described as 'a quite conducive environment' (6) for him to learn the Malaysian way of living and 'a proper neighbourhood' (11). In line 12, he specifies that he lived in 'a terrace house with… local neighbours'. In line 24, John emphasises the importance of the neighbourhood in shaping him ('that really … <u>made</u> me who I am').

In this excerpt, John positions himself as an outsider, who has gained access to the locals' way of life and subsequently becomes influenced by it, learning to become like the locals. The latter point can be observed from his repeated us of the phrase, 'I was raised in…', and the effect of that mentioned in line 21 ('from the way … I spoke and from the way I was- … from the culture that I experienced, it was very much local'). He foregrounds his agency in adapting to and learning the local culture in lines 8-9, which

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centres on him having the 'chance to interact' with his local friends (referred to in line 7). The effect of this is him being the *carrier* in the relational process of *being*: 'being able to speak English and… the local language'. He also positions himself as being aware of how being a refugee made him different (lines 19-20) but yet, everything else about him was 'local' (line 21).

6.3.1.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

The interviewer's question, 'what (do) you remember about growing up in Malaysia?', leaves it open to John to decide what story he remembers about 'growing up' to tell in answer to the question. It also positions him as someone who would have memories specific to growing up in Malaysia. He initially starts with the orientation to the story with the statement in line 2,'I was born in 1994', which is a common way of opening a narrative sequence. However, in line 3, he switches over to a more evaluative statement to express his feelings about the difference between what he felt about his childhood ('I didn't really feel a lot.. different from other children), and the reality that he was aware of at the time ('even though I knew that I was different'). In doing so, John is already positioning himself in a complex position of being an insider (i.e. having grown up in Malaysia) but yet still an outsider (i.e. 'different from other children').

In line 6, he mentions for the first time the environment he grew up in ('conducive environment'), with a further elaboration in lines 7-9 about what he meant, signalled by the phrase 'as in…' in line 7. He provides more details in lines 10-12 and in line 11, he mentions again his environment ('proper neighbourhood'). This proper neighbourhood is described as living in 'a terrace house with… local neighbours'. The interviewer interrupts him at this point to ask if he lived with his mother (13) and if the location of the neighbourhood was in Sungai Buloh (15). John answers these questions and then resumes his narrative about his childhood. However, after the introduction of the detail

'Sungai Buloh', John uses 'there' three times in lines 17-18 to locate his narrative (i.e. in Sungai Buloh): 'I lived there', 'I'm raised from there', and 'from there I made a lot of friends'. Once more in lines 19-20, he moves away from the narrative to voice his own thoughts within the narrative ('But of course, I knew that I was different in- in a very fundamental way… in that I was a refugee…), the contradictory phrase 'but of course' signalling this move.

This 'proper neighbourhood' in John's narrative is located through the time period when he was seven to eleven years old (line 10) rather than a specific place. It is only when the interviewer asks specifically if the neighbourhood was *Sungai Buloh* (line 15) that John confirms this. Yet, the place John is referring is a more specific place in Sungai Buloh and this emerges when the interviewer asks where he was living before the age of seven (line 22). This indicates that the interviewer assumes John was living somewhere else. He then emphasises that it is a specific place in Sungai Buloh that he is referring to although the place remains unnamed (line 24). The narrative ends with the coda of the story ('This… neighbourhood that I lived in, … that really… made me who I am') in line 26. This statement is reflective and addressed to the interviewer to emphasise to her the importance of the place he grew up in between the ages of seven to eleven. The repeated emphasis on the properness and conduciveness of the neighbourhood he grew up in as well as on his local experience allows John to position himself not as a refugee but a local.

6.3.1.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

In this excerpt, John establishes a contradictory display of identity within the context of Malaysian society from the start, namely that he is 'local' but 'different'. The repeated mention of the 'proper' and 'conducive' neighbourhood is an attempt to construct his childhood around the notion of normalcy. Yet these 'facts' established in the narrative is

repeatedly juxtaposed by his own inner thoughts, in which he is always reminding himself that because he is a refugee, he is not really 'local' but 'different'.

The 'proper neighbourhood' seems to be pivotal in John's negotiation of his identity of a 'local' (lines 19-21). The local neighbourhood is credited as making him who he is and it is through this experience that he is able to gain access to a local identity and his positioning as 'different' from other refugee children points to his preference for this 'local' identity claim. Studies have shown that inclusive neighbourhoods and positive experiences in neighbourhood places play a pivotal role in helping children form attachments to places (Gullestad, 1997; Spicer, 2008). Spicer's study on asylum seeker and refugee children in the UK, in particular, showed that positive neighbourhood experiences contribute to these children having aspirations of settling in and belonging to the UK.

6.3.2 Being Malaysian: Encounters with the police

In excerpt J2, John relates two very different experiences he had with the local police, which shed some light into the movement of his positioning of himself from a refugee and outsider to a Malaysian.

Excerpt J2

1 I: OK. Any experiences with authorities like police or things like that?

2 J: Um… Yes um… when I was I think 12 or 11 uh…

3 my <u>mom</u> and I… were walking from the market, it was in Sungai Buloh, uh… factory area

4 and this… police patrol car… was um patrolling around the area… and they <u>saw</u> my mom and I in this factory area you know/.

5 So, it's <u>quite obvious</u> that we are not Malaysians lah.

6 So um… we… we knew they were coming but then we… couldn't and there's nothing-

7 there's no point running like 'cause they had cars and we had nothing so we just… you know…

8 eventually they caught up with us and they asked us for papers and stuff and then… uh…

9 I was very young at that time, I was 10 or 11.

10 Yea… I haven't- after a while, I cried ((laughs))…

11 then my… my dad was actually working in that factory, which is like very nearby…

12 and he <u>came</u> also to <u>talk</u> to this policeman and um…

13 eventually what happened was… we tipped them off.

14 Actually our- my father's boss, who's… who's Chinese, yea just bribed them off.

15 Which is what… they do… everywhere.

16 I: Some… so anything since then? Nothing?

17 J: Umm… nothing since then.

18 Yea for me… 'cause particularly… I haven't… 'cause NO one will suspect I'm a refugee.

19		Uh I even- when I was NEW in Cheras… those days… uh 'cause my parents were living in Rawang… no-
20		my dad was in Sungai Buloh working there, my mom is in Rawang, the refugees… centre right?
21	I:	Yea.
22	J:	She's helping out with the place and… uh once a week uh in the weekends I'll go back to… uh Rawang 'cause I don't stay in Cheras.=
23	I:	=You have a… the house there?
24	J:	Like apartment, this really cheap apartment that we rented out…
25	I:	OK…
26	J:	So um… ((sniffs)) I would go back and… finding my way around
27		and I was <u>new</u> to that place in Cheras so I didn't know where the LRT station was, the KTM station was…
28		and <u>once</u> I remember uh I took the bus and I was dropped off somewhere near the KTM station
29		but… I didn't really know where it was/ it was not- it was out of sight actually…. Hidden behind some trees and…
30		I <u>saw</u> this police pondok (small police beat)… ((laughs))
31		so I just went to this… this pondok and asked the policemen,
32		like where's the… in <u>Malay</u> lah, in the <u>most</u> <u>Malay</u> accent I can… (h) can come out with
33		and they thought- they really thought- they didn't know I was… a refugee, they thought I was Malay.
34		Like legit… like legitimately… they had <u>no</u> suspicion at all. Yea and then I just said thank you and… ((laughs))

In excerpt J2, John relates two stories and each one will be discussed in turn here according to positioning levels 1 and 2. Then positioning level 3 will be discussed in relation to both stories.

6.3.2.1 First story: Being stopped by the police patrol car

(a) **Positioning level 1 (the story)**

The first story occurs in lines 2-14 and happens when John is 11 or 12 years old. There are three main groups of characters: i) John and his mother ('we'), ii) the police ('they'), and iii) John's father and his boss.

John and his mother were referred to collectively in this narrative ('we') and in the orientation clause in line 3 were described as walking from the market near the factory area. They were positioned in line 4 as being spotted by the police ('they saw my mom and I') and in line 5 as 'not Malaysians'. Here, John switches to a God perspective and assigns himself the role author in the evaluation, 'it's <u>quite obvious</u> that we are not Malaysians', which implies that their ethnicity would have been obvious to anyone within the storyworld.

The thoughts of 'us' are voiced in lines 6-7 through indirect quotations and 'we' were positioned as helpless and without agency [-power] ('we knew they were coming but … there's no point running') with regards to the police [+power], who 'had cars', while 'we had nothing' (7). John described himself as 'very young' and '10 or 11' (line 9) and therefore, frightened by the incident (10: 'after a while, I cried'). John's reaction of crying in line 10 indicates a lack of knowledge (-knowledge) to solve the problem he encountered.

At the start of the story, the police in the patrol car were positioned as possessing more agency (+power) than John and his mother (-power). This can be seen through the activation of the police as *Senser* in the mental process 'to see' in line 4 ('they saw my mom and I') and *actor* in the material processes ('they caught up with us') and *sayer* in the verbal process ('they asked us for papers') in line 6.

From line 11 onwards, the agency switches to John's father and his boss. Firstly, John's father is introduced in line 11 ('my dad was actually working in that factory…

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very nearby') and then he is activated as sayer in the verbal process in line 12 ('he came…

to talk to this policeman'). The resolution clause in line 13 is initially attributed to John

and his parents or 'we' ('eventually what happened was… we tipped them off') but then

John clarifies in line 14 that it was his father's boss that actually bribed the police

('Actually our- my father's boss, … who's Chinese, yea just bribed them off'). 'Actually'

signals the start of the clarification and the switch in agent is seen in the repair 'our-' and

then 'my father's boss' immediately after. Note the specific ethnic description of his

father's boss as 'Chinese'. The coda of the story is found in line 15, 'Which is what…

they do… everywhere', referring to the act of bribing the police in the preceding line. The

coda is structured as a dependent clause, as it begins with the relative pronoun 'which'.

It also indicates John's alignment with this action of bribery through his acceptance and

assertion that it something that is commonly done 'everywhere'.

(b) **Positioning level 2 (the telling)**

This first story was told by John in reply to the question in line: 'Any experiences with

authorities like police or things like that?'. In this question, the interviewer positions John

as someone who would frequently encounter the police, which is a common experience

for refugees living in Malaysia. John accepts this positioning (seen in the reply, 'Yes', in

line 2) and begins to tell Story 1 from his childhood of such an encounter. He emphasises

that this experience occurred when he was 'very young' in line 9, giving a sense that the

incident happened a long time ago (although John was only 19 at the time).

John tells this story with the interviewer in mind and this can be seen when he

addresses her from time to time with the discourse marker 'you know', firstly in line 4

and then in line 7. In the latter instance, he does not finish his sentence, instead assuming

that the interviewer would understand what happened in the narrative and what he meant

('so we just… *you know*…').

6.3.2.2 Second story: Asking the police for directions

(a) **Positioning level 1 (the story)**

The second story about the police (lines 19-34) happened when John was already living apart from his parents in Cheras, which was close to his school. Only two characters appear in this story: John and the police at the police beat.

In contrast to Story 1, John positions himself here as agent (+power) because it is he who initiates all the action in the story. He is *Senser* in the mental process 'to see' in line 30 ('I <u>saw</u> this police pondok'), *Actor* in the material process 'to go' ('I just went') and *Sayer* in the verbal process 'to ask' ('asked the policemen') in line 31. He also has knowledge (+knowledge) because by speaking Malay 'in the most Malay accent', he was able to pretend to be a local. He also has the ability this time to solve his problem, unlike in the first story. The policemen, on the other hand, are positioned as lacking knowledge (-knowledge) because they 'didn't know' (33) and 'had no suspicion at all' (34) that John was a refugee.

John's evaluation of this story is seen in lines 33-34 ('they didn't know I was… a refugee, they thought I was Malay… like legitimately… they had <u>no</u> suspicion at all'). In these two lines (33-34), John attributes the thoughts about his identity to the policemen (assigned the role of author) and that in the policemen's perspective, he was positioned by the police as 'Malay' (33) and 'legit' (34).

(b) **Positioning level 2 (the telling)**

The interviewer continues her positioning of John as a refugee that would frequently encounter the police, with the question after the end of the first story, 'so anything since then?' (line 16) before offering him the opportunity to respond otherwise ('Nothing?'). John replies in the negative (line 17) with his explanation in line 18 (''cause NO one will suspect I'm a refugee'). He positions the question as irrelevant to him now because he is

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not identified as a refugee by locals. To illustrate the point, he tells the second story, in which the policemen react differently to him.

The resolution of the story in lines 30-34a also include evaluative elements (especially in lines 33-34a) to support his reply to the interviewer's question that he has not had any bad experiences with the police after the first story. The implication of this resolution is that the police answered his request for directions without giving him the trouble that they would have had they known he was a refugee. Because 'they really thought' (33) he was Malay 'legitimately' and 'had no suspicion at all' (34), he was able represent this experience as a non-incident in the context of the interviewer's question about experiences with the police. The coda to his story in line 34 ('Yea and then I just said thank you and…') ends with laughter, indicating that John was pleased that he had managed to hide his refugee identity from the police in that incident.

(c) Story one and two: Positioning level 3 (the self)

The two stories in excerpt J2 present two contrasting reactions John received from the police because in both stories the police perceived him differently. The negative reaction in the first story was caused by the fact that it was 'obvious' John was not a Malaysian. In the second story, however, following his years in school and learning to adapt to the local culture by learning the Malay language, John was able to avoid being identified as a refugee by the police and therefore, avoid a negative reaction.

These differing reactions led to correspondingly differing effects on John. In the first story, he ended up crying out of fear and needed his father's boss to bribe the police in order to help him out of that difficult situation. In the second story, John was able to achieve his goals of first, getting directions and second, avoiding being identified as a refugee by the police. The fact that the second story ends with John laughing points

towards the different emotions that both these stories evoke in him, i.e. sadness/fear versus happiness.

What emerges from this excerpt is John's ability move from being positioned as an outsider by Others to now being able to claim a Malaysian or an insider identity for himself that would enable him to avoid the problems that he would have faced as a refugee. His proficiency and confidence in using the local language helps him gain this insider status. By contrasting the effects of both the outsider and insider identities, John is able to demonstrate that he is aware of the consequences of certain representations of himself. He is also able to show how he is successfully navigating away from the refugee identity into a more local identity that he feels will make him more acceptable to the local people. Again, as was seen in Prince's narrative (6.2.4), John is able to use the strategy of concealment to assume the identity of a local.

6.3.3   Speaking like a Malaysian

In excerpt J3, the interviewer and John discuss his fluency in the local language and in the use of local expressions.

Excerpt J3

1	I:	So, how much of Myanmar culture do you retain in terms of maybe festivals, food… anything?
2	J:	I think the only thing I retain is food.
3		Apart from that, from my music that I listen to, from the- way I <u>dress</u> to the way I… talk…
4		to my perception of… everything I guess I'm more Malaysian than… than Myanmar.
5	I:	OK. [So then-]
6	J:	[In FACT I think] I'm more Malaysian than some people in my school. (I laughs)
7		Like… for example, like in terms of speaking Malay right…
8		my class particularly, there's this one guy who… has been to international (school) his whole life… his whole life just been in Cempaka for his whole life…
9		so… when he speaks Malay right… he speaks as if it was written.
10		Like, <'Saya mau beli….> ((laughs)) goreng pisang' (I want to buy fried banana)
11		like- he will speak with- yea… [it's just weird]
12	I:	[Like a…] child lah or learning to read, right.
13	J:	And I would- (h) I'm better than him in- in Malay definitely.
14	I:	So, I would assume that you're quite Malaysian even in the way you speak in terms of you know the… the <u>sla:ngs</u> and idiomatic expressions that we have in Malaysia,
15		things like *jom* (let's go!) or… or… whatever it is, just Malay or some- you use sometimes even [Chinese… expressions,] right?
16	J:	[Chinese yes… like… mm.]
17	I:	Like? ((laughs))

18 J: *Abuden*?

19 I: ((laughs)) Ah OK. *Walauwei*.

20 J: ((laughs)) Yea, those- those things.

21 I: So you know if- if something really surprised you then what would you say?
         What would be the word that you used? If you were really shocked.

22 J: Um… I'll- surprised? Will say 'whoa'.

23 I: [If you were..]

24 J: [Depends…   ] you know ((laughs)), depends on my group of friends.

25   Yea, if I'm around people who are English speaking and… very Western
         influenced I'll just go like, 'whoa'…

26   then when I'm like… among my more local Chinese friends then I'll say,
         'WAH(h)!'

27 I: So are they very different? Your- these two groups of friends,

28   [the ones that's more-]

29 J: [Yes 'cause   ] my school… most of them from international school
         so they are very Western influenced, grew up in that culture

30   so… and they have that… bit- American slangs and will say- or British slang
         I don't know=

31   =they don't speak how… normal people speak and I guess… I adapt a bit to
         them.

32   Yea it's not really a problem for me… and then my church basically… my
         church is basically a local- a very Chinese church.

33   Mm most of them are Chinese and they're from Sabah, Sarawak, students all
         coming here to study, to do their degrees…

34   then I speak differently.

6.3.3.1 Positioning level 1 (the story)

The characters that appear in excerpt J3 were John and the different groups of friends

he has. John positions himself differently with regards to these groups of friends.

(a) **'This one guy… in my class'**

In lines 2-6, John talks about which culture he most subscribes to, which is the Malaysian culture. Apart from Myanmar food (line 2), he is very Malaysian in other ways, such as dressing, speaking and perception (lines 3-4). In line 6, he asserts that he is 'more Malaysian than some people' in his school. He then illustrates this point with a story about 'this one guy' in his class in lines 8-11. His classmate is described in line 8 as having spent 'his whole life' in the international school. The effect of that is 'he speaks Malay… as if it was written' (line 9) and John then voices his friend in line 10. He imitates his friend's Malay by speaking slowly and deliberately:

<'Saya mau beli….> ((laughs)) goreng pisang' *(I want to buy fried banana)*

John also laughs in the middle of the sentence because he finds this funny and then evaluates it in line 11 as 'weird'. The coda to the story in line 13 ('I'm better than him in-in Malay definitely') is also evaluative in nature as he makes a direct comparison between himself and his classmate to support his initial claim in line 6 that he is even more Malaysian than some Malaysian people. This statement also justifies why he chose to tell this story to answer the question.

(b) **Interacting with different groups of friends**

In lines 24-34, John talks about how he adapts his speech to suit the group of friends, with which he is interacting. He identifies one group of friends as 'English speaking… Western influenced' and another group as 'my more local Chinese friends'. The first group is described in lines 30-31 as friends from his school who spoke with American and British accents ('slangs') and did not speak the way 'normal people' spoke, thus John had to 'adapt a bit to them' (line 31). The second group were from his church, which is described as 'a very Chinese church' in line 32 and Chinese students who came from

Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia (line 33). Imagining how he would react in front of these two groups if something surprised him, John voices himself saying 'whoa' with his friends from school (lines 22 and 25) and 'WAH(h)!' with his local Chinese friends (line 26).

6.3.3.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

In the question in line 1, 'So, how much of Myanmar culture do you retain in terms of maybe festivals, food… anything?', the interviewer positions John as a Myanmar. John does take up this position, saying that he only eats Myanmar food (line 3) but is 'more Malaysian than… Myanmar' in everything else (line 4). To illustrate his point, he narrates the first story about his classmate as a response to it. Speaking about the ways he is Malaysian, John then draws a comparison between himself and other Malaysians. The strong emphasis on 'in fact' in line 6 signals the start of this comparison and line 7 serves as the story preface ('Like… for example, like in terms of speaking Malay right…'). After John demonstrates how his classmate spoke Malay by imitating him in line 10 and evaluating that as 'weird' in line 11, the interviewer offers an analogy of the situation John just described in line 12 ('Like a… child lah or learning to read, right?'). John does not respond to that but closes the narrative with the coda in line 13, which parallels what he said in line 6, i.e. being more Malaysian than other Malaysians because he speaks better Malay.

The interviewer takes up John's positioning of himself as Malaysian in her question in lines 14-15 ('I would assume that you're quite Malaysian even in the way you speak…'). She stays on the topic of language and asks John how he might use local idiomatic expressions and slangs, suggesting that it might include Malay and Chinese expressions. John ratifies that suggestion in line 16 ('Chinese yes… like… mm') and then pauses before the interviewer probes him in line 17 ('Like?'). He replies with the slang word,

'abuden', in line 18, prompting laughter from the interviewer. She establishes rapport as locals by contributing another slang word, 'walauwei', in the next line and this time John laughs. In line 21 she asks John what slang word he would use if he was shocked by something. John's initial response is to say he would say 'whoa' (line 22) and the interviewer begins to ask what situation he would say that ('If you were…') but is then interrupted by John with 'Depends'. He then compares what he would say when with two different groups of friends (discussed in the section above). The interviewer asks how these two groups are different (line 27) to elicit John's positioning of himself with regards to other groups of locals. John elaborates and in his concluding statement, 'then I speak differently' (line 34), positions himself as performing different identities by using different registers with the two different groups of friends.

6.3.3.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

Both stories in excerpt J3 indicate that John considers speaking the local language and fluency important characteristics for being Malaysian and being able to claim that identity. The first story allowed John to qualify what he means by being a Malaysian and how he is able to support the claim that he is Malaysian. He compares himself to someone who is a Malaysian citizen but yet does not exhibit the Malaysian quality of being able to speak the national language. The implication for John's negotiation of identity is that nationality alone may not be enough for someone to qualify as truly 'Malaysian'. This story serves to reinforce that idea of John's 'Malaysianness' despite him not being a citizen of the country.

The second story is borne out of the interaction with the interviewer in the preceding lines and demonstrates how John is able to change linguistic styles to adapt to two very different kinds of groups of 'Malaysians'. First, the students at the international school who are influenced by Western cultures and second, the local Chinese friends from his

church. What emerges is John's flexibility in moving between different performed identities depending on what kind of group of locals, with which he is interacting.

6.3.4 Malaysian born with Burmese heritage

In excerpt J4, the interviewer and John discuss what the notion of belonging and identity mean to him.

Excerpt J4

1   I: And a place where you feel like you truly belong? What does belonging mean?

2   J: Belonging means uh to me… to be able to… (.) <u>perform</u> little everyday tasks you know,

3   just… to… to be able to enjoy the things that… that are… in, in a particular place without too many hindrances.

4   I: How about…

5   J: And to be able to identify with the- the the people…

6   I: Around you lah?

7   J: Yea and the- the environment…

8   I: How about the word 'identity', what do you think that means?

9   J: Uh… to me ((laughs)) identity? Mm… it means to… (.) um (h) it's very hard for me=

10   I: =Or what is your identity… if you were to-

11   J: Um… I would say… I mean if someone asked me where… where I'm <u>from</u>, I would say I was <u>born</u> in Malaysia… but my parents are Myanmar. That's what I would say.

12   I: [You would never say, 'I'm from Myanmar',] right?

13   J: [I would really emphasise…   ] I wouldn't say (that), yes.

14   'Cause… it would give them a complete different idea… if I say…

15   I will always emphasise I was <u>born</u> in Malaysia. My parents from Myanmar..

16   yea that- Malaysia part I would really emphasise because… it would give them the wrong idea lah I mean from Myanmar- if you say as- I'm from Myanmar

17   then they'll be like, 'Ohh… so:… do you… ((laughs)) Do you know nasi lemak, do you know teh ta(h)rik'

18   like- Yes, I know these stuff you know.'

19   I even had once- I had a friend… when I was in Year 10, he was new to the school…

20   and we were in the canteen eating together.

21   I was… I was there f- I mean I was there for Cempaka international for more than one year already and…

22   waiting in the canteen and then… one day this guy asked me, 'Eh John, do you know this- this Chinese uh… this dish called <bak… kut… teh?' ((I laughs))

23   Then I just looked at him and I'm like… ((laughs)) 'YES.' ((laughs))

24   And he realised, 'Oh you actually- you're familiar with(h) it?'

25   Then he just laughed and then… he embarrassed himself lah so(h)…

26 I: OK. How about if people ask you WHO are you? The question who are you, how do you answer that?

27 J: Um, I'm John(h). I mean- uh..

28 I: Besides that?

29 J: Besides that I would say… like- that I'm a Malaysian born… who has um… Burmese… parentage you know.

6.3.4.1 Positioning level 1 (the story)

(a) **Hypothetical situations to discuss belonging and identity**

   When answering the question about what belonging and identity mean to him, John answers by presenting hypothetical situations, wherein he places placing himself. In lines 2-7 he describes what situation would qualify for him to feel a sense of belonging, e.g.

being able to 'perform little tasks' (2), 'enjoy… things… without… hindrances' (3) and being able to 'identify with… the people… (5) and the environment (7)'.

When it comes to talking about identity, John places himself in another hypothetical situation in line 11: 'if someone asked me where… where I'm <u>from</u>, I would say I was <u>born</u> in Malaysia… but my parents are Myanmar'. The effect, namely saying that he was born in Malaysia but that his parents were from Myanmar, is dependent on 'someone' asking him where he was from. In lines 14-16, he elaborates that his emphasis would be on the place of his birth, which is Malaysia and not Myanmar because he did not want 'them' to get 'the wrong idea' (16). This wrong idea would result in people asking him questions as if he were a foreigner. He voices such questions in line 17: 'then they'll be like, '<u>Ohh</u>… so:… do you… ((laughs)) Do you know nasi lemak, do you know teh ta(h)rik''. He voices himself responding to this question in line 18: 'Yes, I know these stuff you know'. These items, 'nasi lemak' and 'teh tarik' are local food and drink and therefore something a 'local' would know well.

(b) John's friend in Year 10

John tells a story about one friend he had in school during Year 10 (lines 19-25), who reacted to John in the same way. This friend is described as 'new to the school' (line 19), whereas John describes himself in the narrative as having been at the school 'for more than one year' at that point (line 21). In the orientation clauses, John and this friend are described doing the same thing, i.e. 'in the canteen eating together' (line 20) and 'waiting in the canteen' (line 22) when the friend asks John the question, 'Eh John, do you know this- this Chinese uh… this dish called <bak… kut… teh?'. John voices his friend saying the name of Chinese dish, bak kut teh, slowly and deliberately, as someone might say to a foreigner less familiar with the dish. John's incredulous response to that question is recorded in the next line, 'YES' with a rising tone, which also functions to demonstrate

John's rejection of being considered a foreigner in the story. The friend's response in line 24, 'Oh you actually- you're familiar with(h) it?', is evaluated by John in the next line as being a cause for embarrassment for his friend.

6.3.4.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

In this excerpt, John and the interviewer are much more interactive and much of the narrative emerges from interactive turns between the two rather than from long narrative turns from John. The interviewer's first question in line 1 is about belonging. The initial question is worded with an emphasis on geography ('a place where you feel like you truly belong?') but then she rephrases it to focus instead on a more conceptual idea ('What does belonging mean?'). John pursues this perspective of belonging as a concept by repeating her last question in line 2 adding a prepositional phrase, 'Belonging means … to me'. He does not focus his answer on geographical elements but rather on what he is able to do (lines 2, 3 and 5). The interviewer probes if 'the people' mentioned in line 5 refers to people in his immediate vicinity and John responds in the affirmative and includes 'the environment' as well (line 7).

The interviewer then asks about what he thinks the concept of identity is and again John replies with the prepositional phrase, 'to me', in line 9 before hesitating to answer ('it's very hard for me='). The interviewer rephrases her question in line 10 ('what is your identity…') before starting to present a hypothetical situation ('if you were to-'). John responds by presenting his own hypothetical situation, starting with 'I would say…' before repairing the sentence with 'I mean if someone asked me where… where I'm from, I would say I was born in Malaysia… but my parents are Myanmar. That's what I would say.' (line 11). The interviewer gives John another hypothetical situation in line 12, 'You would never say, 'I'm from Myanmar', right?'. In doing so, she positions John as different from a Myanmar person from Myanmar and John ratifies this with 'I wouldn't say (that),

yes' (line 13). Instead, he positions himself having a dual identity, Malaysian born but with a Myanmar heritage: 'I will always emphasise I was <u>born</u> in Malaysia. My parents from Myanmar..' (line 15) and 'I'm a Malaysian born… who has … <u>Burmese…</u> parentage' (line 29). He gives his reason in lines 14 and 16, namely not wanting to give people the 'wrong idea' that he is from Myanmar and thus, a foreigner. Place of birth is an important fact that John emphasises to legitimise his insider status.

An example of questions people would ask a foreigner is voiced by John in line 17 and his laugh in the middle of the sentence indicates that he finds it funny that anyone should ask him these kinds of questions, further reinforced by his sarcastic reply in line 18: 'Yes, I know these stuff you know'. The discourse marker 'you know' here has an emphatic function to indicate to the person John is addressing (i.e. his friend) that contrary to his perception, John does have knowledge about the local cuisine. This use of the discourse marker 'you know' for emphasis is consistent with the findings from the study by Erman (2001) on the use of 'you know' among British teenagers living in London (p. 1347).

The story of his friend from Year 10 is told as an example of the ignorant questions John has been asked by people who assumed he was a 'foreigner'. The story preface is in line 19 ('I even had once- I had a friend…') and 'even' signals to John's audience that this story is an example of the point he was making just before that from his own personal experience. The coda of the story occurs in line 25 with '… he <u>embarrassed</u> himself lah' to emphasise the outcome of this ignorant question for John's friend.

After John concludes this story, the interviewer then asks John to respond to the question of his identity in 26: 'OK. <u>How</u> about if people ask you WHO are you? The question who are you, how do you answer that?'. Her use of 'OK' indicates that she accepts John's story and account of how he is truly a Malaysian, but that is immediately followed up with the question, '<u>How</u> about if people ask you WHO are you?', alluding to the contradictory position accorded to John by himself in comparison with other 'people'.

John again mentions his dual identity ('I'm a Malaysian born… who has um… Burmese… parentage you know').

6.3.4.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

The salient aspect that emerges from this excerpt is John's positioning of himself as a Malaysian born Myanmar and distancing of himself away from being recognised as a Myanmar from Myanmar. Place of birth seems to be particularly important in his identity claim as a Malaysian because Malaysia is the preferred location, not Myanmar. This use of place as a characteristic of identity is referred to as 'place identity', which can be defined as the process, by which 'people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place' (Hernandez et al., 2007, p. 311). John's story about his friend's mistake is told to support his argument at the start of the excerpt that it is important to emphasise that he does not come from Myanmar. Because he was born in Malaysia, he is familiar with the local cuisine, such as *nasi lemak*, *teh tarik* and *bak kut teh*.

In this encounter with his friend, John displays his rejection of his friend's othering of himself as a foreigner or stranger. Alignment with the Myanmar identity to John here implies social exclusion and that is something he quickly downplays with a sharp retort ("YES" in line 23). John makes a claim for the Malaysian identity here through the force of this utterance, which functions to reject his friend's mistaken assumption and avoid being positioned as a non-Malaysian. Despite identifying the dual identity he uses to describe himself in line 23 ('I was born in Malaysia… but my parents are Myanmar'), John displays his preference for the Malaysian identity over the Myanmar identity in narrative excerpt.

6.4   MAY

Respondent background

I was introduced to May by a refugee social worker in 2013. At the time, she was the principle of a refugee school in Selangor supported by the UNHCR. She had already been living in Malaysia for 25 years when I interviewed her. After arranging some interviews for me with the Myanmar teachers in her school in her office, she came in to tell her own story. She is Burmese from Yangon and was trained as a teacher. She had been the principle of a middle school in Yangon before she was forced to flee the country.

Personal reflection

During my initial contact with May to arrange the interviews, we conversed mainly in English, but on the day of the interview, it was clear to me that she felt more comfortable speaking in Malay. Her proficiency in the Malay language was fair by my assessment, albeit at a more basic and communicative level rather than the standard form of the language. She used a lot of shortened forms of words, e.g. 'takda' instead of 'tidak ada' (do not have), as well as particles frequently found in Malaysian local Malay and English language varieties, e.g. 'lah', 'ah' and 'loh'.

Yet to accommodate me, she tried speaking in English as much as she could but frequently employed code-switching between Malay and English. Most interactions between her and myself started out in English before switching to Malay and a mix between both languages. Personally, as an interviewer I preferred to ask my questions at least initially in English before translating them into Malay if need be in order to establish some consistency in the way the questions were asked in the interviews. Most of the turns that involved me were spoken in English but there were times when I spoke in Malay or used local idiomatic expressions to establish rapport with May or simply as a natural part

of the way I was used to code-switching with other Malaysians. May did not require translations of the questions because she could comprehend both English and Malay equally well.

Unlike the previous two refugee respondents in this chapter (Prince and John), May did not strike me as being physically very Malaysian. On all occasions when I met her, she was dressed in Myanmar styled clothing, i.e. dressed similar to the other Myanmar female teachers at the school. Even though she spoke Malay, she did not have what appeared to me to be a local accent.

6.4.1 Leaving Myanmar

In excerpt M1, May tells the story of why she had to flee Myanmar in 1989.

Excerpt M1

1 I: So can you tell me why you first left Myanmar? *Kenapa nak… (Why did you want…)*

2 M: I… of course of 1988 democracy protest.

3 I: OK.

4 M: That democracy protest event uh… all my students, from 8 standard lah… the highest standard of my school.

5 I'm head… middle… uh… head teacher of middle school.

6 All my girls and boys, they went out and participated in democracy protests.

7 So after democracy protest, democracy protest that time ah, I think 88- August 8th, you know?

8 August, September, October.. The resert- the… protest over uh… in month of November.

9 It means protest by three months long.

10 That time after protest the government… the military government came and ask me many questions…

11 about… how my students participated in democracy protests.

12 I: Oh, but you didn't participate in it?

13 M: No.

14 I: Just the students?

15 M: Students. But, students and teachers uh cannot separate one… together.

16 So, we have to take care our students.

17 So, I- I always <u>went</u> out after my students. I find out- find out- find out- that… the problem.

18 So, democracy time you know, students come out- come out- come out- it mean I ask for democracy- ask for democracy.

19 After democracy in the newspaper- newspapers uh… my photos are=

20 I: =Ohh.. ((laughs)) okay.

21 M: Very big one. They <u>never</u> mark me gather student. They mark me=

22 I: =as a protestor=

23	M:	=fight for democracy.
24		I cannot refuse one. I cannot free one.
25		And, by what and- and- they called me many times to office, but I'm head teacher.
26		I cannot left my school… I cannot leave school like that.
27		So, if you want to ask me ma:ny questions, come and meet me. I- I never go there and… interview-no.
28		They come- they come (I asked them to come) but they don't want. They don't. See, they don't. Also I don't want to go there.
29		This one ah one problem between our government and I. A:lways every time, problem… the relationship.
30		So, after that (.), they came to my house. They came and visit my father, my husband like that- they want to disturb everything. Every place.
31		And th- they wanted to give me demotion.
32		And they want to set me another place, in… another township, not Yangon. I- I got no go…
33	I:	You are from Yangon?
34	M:	Yea, Yangon.
35		So… that time ah… so problem with that army government.
36		Then, finally… not only demotion, they want to- they wanted to arrest me.
37		Two teachers in front of me, they arrested already.
38		So later they come- they came and arrested me.
39		So, I got new(s). Some of my… parents- uh student's parent… my school uh got another teachers, another parent's parents uh… we got new(s).
40		You must go out, you must go out. SURE they come and arrest you, and got new(s).
41		So, I came out my country. 1989 December I came out from my country.

6.4.1.1 Positioning level 1 (the story)

In this story, May is the protagonist and the military government is the antagonist. Supporting characters include her school students, her fellow teachers and her family members. All the characters involved contribute significantly to the story, so they will be discussed together in this sub-section.

May describes herself in the story as the 'head teacher of (a) middle school' in Yangon (line 5), while her students were year 8 students, what May refers to as 'the highest standard of my school' (line 4). She does not provide their exact age but the phrase 'from 8 standard' in line 4 could refer to the Malaysian schooling system, in which year 8 would be around 14-15 years old. The reference to middle school also provides a clue as to the age of the students. While May claims responsibility for these students, referring to them as 'my girls and boys' in line 6, she also highlights their agency with regards to the protests, 'All my girls and boys, they went out and participated in democracy protests'. The students are described as going out and participating in the protests.

It is the actions of her students that brings May trouble because the military government then comes to question her (line 10) about 'how my students participated in democracy protests' (line 11). Despite not being involved in the protests herself, May represents students and teachers as a collective group that 'cannot separate one… together' (line 15) because 'we have to take care (of) our students' (line 16). In line 17, May is described going after her students to find out what 'the problem' was.

May describes that what transpired was a misunderstanding. While she was trying to get her students to come back into the school, her picture was taken and printed in the newspaper. In the newspaper, she claims that she had been represented as a protestor when she was not ('They never mark me gather student. They mark me.... fight for democracy' in lines 21 and 23). This resulted in her being targeted by 'them', i.e. the military government, for questioning (line 25). May's character displays agency in refusing to go in for questioning, citing the reason that she 'cannot leave school' (lines 25-27).

Instead, she asks the military officials to come to her school to ask her questions but they allegedly refuse (line 28). In this line, both sides are positioned as refusing to go to the other ('they don't want... Also I don't want to go there). This put May at odds with

the military officials and she describes it in line 29 as a 'problem' relationship 'between our government and I'. The officials are then portrayed as trying to 'disturb everything' by coming to her house and her family's house (line 30), wanting to give her a demotion or transfer (lines 31-32) and finally wanting to arrest her (line 36).

In line 37, she mentions two other teachers that were already arrested and line 38, refers to a future situation, in which she would also be arrested just like the other two teachers. In lines 39-40, she voices parents of her students, who give her 'news' and urge her to leave ('You must go out, you must go out. SURE they come and arrest you, and got new(s)'). The certainty of this arrest is emphasised with 'SURE'. This provides the push factor for her to leave in 1989.

6.4.1.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

This excerpt occurs right at the start of the interview and the interviewer starts off by asking May, 'So can you tell me why you first left Myanmar? *Kenapa nak...*' (line 1). There are several aspects of interest in this question that indicate how the interviewer positions herself. First, the question is concerned with 'why' and not 'how'. In doing so, the interviewer positions herself as interested in what motivated May to leave Myanmar and perhaps even her thought process behind the move. There is also an expectation that there needs to be a reason to justify what makes May a refugee, namely a compelling story of difficulty such as persecution or discrimination. Secondly, the interviewer structures the statement in the active form, assigning May ('you') the role of agent in leaving ('why you first left'). Finally, although the interviewer begins with the question in English, she then starts to translate the question into Malay when May responds in English. The interviewer is positioning May as a Malay language speaker and by attempting to translate her question, she is offering May the alternative of speaking in Malay. There will be more instances where May responds almost entirely in Malay in

later excerpts. This code-switching is also an attempt to establish rapport with May in making her feel comfortable speaking either English or Malay.

The interviewer does not interrupt very much in this excerpt save to ask some questions for clarification (e.g. in lines 12, 14 and 33) but she is an attentive listener and able to follow May's story even when May speaks implicitly, e.g. in lines 19-23 when May describes how she was mistaken for a protestor when she was really trying to gather her students back into school. The interviewer signals her understanding in line 20 ('Ohh….'), which is followed by a laugh and 'okay', and then by switching to the role of collaborator in line 22 when she completes May's sentence in line 21.

May orientates to the interviewer's positioning of her as requiring justification of her refugee status through her account about the democracy protests. To justify her decision to leave Myanmar, May consistently positions herself as a responsible teacher. The main point of the story is how May was mistaken by the military government to be a protestor but she instead focuses on how she is a responsible teacher, who cares for her students (lines 15-16) and a responsible head teacher, who cannot 'leave school like that' (line 26). Her refusal to go in for questioning only adds to her troubles with the government but she refuses to change her mind.

May accepts her role as agent in the events that happens in this story. She consistently positions herself as the decision maker in all her actions. For example, in line 27 she says of the military's request for her to come in for questioning: '(1) So, if you want to ask me ma:ny questions, come and meet me. (2) I- I never go there and… interview-no.' Here the military is positioned in a lower position of power (-power) compared to herself (+power). In her evaluative statement in (2), she clearly positions herself as the active social actor, who decides not to go. In line 32, she once again highlights her agency when she refused the government's attempts to transfer her out of Yangon ('I got no go…'). After the warning she received from friends about her impending arrest (lines 39-40), she

once again positions herself as agent in deciding to leave Myanmar (So, I came out my country. 1989 December I came out from my country.'). The focus here is on her decision to leave rather than on her reaction to the warning she received.

6.4.1.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

May positioned herself in this story as possessing agency in her actions. She is responsible for her actions during the protest and although she is mistaken as a protestor, she does not position herself as submitting to the military government's requests and intimidation tactics. Her agency is displayed through numerous declarative clauses, such as 'I cannot leave school like that' (line 26), 'I never go there and… interview- no' (line 27), 'Also I don't want to go there' (line 28), 'I got no go' (line 32). This defiance finally comes to a head when she receives news that she is going to be arrested. Even her choice of words to talk about leaving is interesting. Instead of saying she was forced to leave or that she had to flee, she simply says she 'came out' of her country, which emphasises her agency rather than an external force compelling her to leave.

6.4.2 Becoming a refugee

In excerpt M2, the interviewer asks May if she has a work visa for Malaysia but the conversation leads on to how May became a refugee. Hence, there are two stories present in this excerpt: i) getting an illegal work visa and leaving Malaysia as an illegal worker, and ii) being caught in illegal migrant sting operations. The characters that appear in both stories will be discussed in turn below.

Excerpt M2

1	I:	So you have working visa?
2	M:	Yea… so when visa finish go back again, and come in. Visa finish, go again and come in.
3	I:	How do you get the working visa? From your boss is it?
4	M:	Yea my boss arrange for me.
5		That time ah… work permit work permit. That work permit time ah… I have to buy passport.
6		But the passport are not real, in lah… imitation.
7	I:	OK.
8	M:	I bought it from Thailand. But if I can apply, work permit.
9		This one the last round I- I think four years.
10		In 1998 ah… another way. That time 1998 ah you know (.) uh Malaysia government do- got do… amnesty.
11		Any foreigner can go back. Any windows- any doors of Malaysia open legally amnesty.
12		But as a Myanmar people… can't go back.
13		Indonesia can go back, Bangladesh can go back.
14		Of course when they reach their own country, nobody to stop them.
15	I:	Yea…
16	M:	Myanmar people cannot go back.
17		When we got go airport there… uh… the police and the army government already arrested us.
18		Before we reach, they knew our name also already arrested us=
19	I:	Oh, so you actually went back lah?

20	M:	I try to went back but cannot, arrested one.
21	I:	And then?
22	M:	So, many time- and I think… in my life Malaysia so- within 23 years ah…
23		Malaysia got three times amnesty. Every three time amnesty we come.
24	I:	So the last time the 6P one, you went back also?
25	M:	6P also I went back but [cannot
26	I:	[Same thing?
27	M:	Same way.
28	I:	They arrest you in Myanmar then what happens?
29	M:	Now I ah… no more Myanmar because 15 years ah… Myanmar government announced already. We are exiled.
30	I:	Ah…
31	M:	We are anti-government.
32		So, my life ah… I think forever (.) cannot go back.
33		No, only me lah my husband, my son also… because of 15 years interval, we, cannot go back.
34		Lost country lah…
35		And that time I decide… I must apply UNHCR. I must apply UNHCR.
36		Then, I try to get UNHCR.
37		2003… difficult… 2004… cannot. 2005… six, seven, up to- 2004 to 2007… I have no chance to go into UNHCR office.
38	I:	No chance to go in?
39	M:	To go in, cannot.
40	I:	Why?
41	M:	Every year. One day ah… 300, 400 people.
42	I:	Ah…
43	M:	And, that time I got into the door, five o'clock, shut at three. ((laughs))
44		You know, *pagi pukul lima, sampai petang pukul lima, tunggu itu pintu UNHCR sana. Ber- beratus beratus, dua ratus, tiga ratus*.
		(You know, five in the morning, until five in the evening, waiting at the UNHCR door there. Hun- hundreds, two hundred, three hundred people.)
45		So… one- one time ah very funny one.
46		Ah… we we- 2004 we went there and then wait our list to go in, to go in.
47		Before we go into UNHCR office, police car come and arrest. ((both laugh))
48		So, I have to sleep police lockup ah two nights.

49	I:	Two nights?
50	M:	Because nobody come and… collect me lah.
51		*Takda panggil saya keluar, takda…*
		(No one got me out, no one…)
52		Final- final- final I telephone my boss ah… 'Bos ah… *kesian kesian mari angkat ah… kita tiga orang lah.*'
		(Finally I telephoned my boss saying, 'Boss, have pity, have pity, come and get us… we are three people, you know.')
53		*Anak itu ada, kita boleh keluar.*
		(My child was there, we can get out.)
54		*Itu jam bos bagi polis…*
		(That hour, my boss gave the police…)
55		I think 700 for three persons. And they pay first and they cut off our- my salary 100, my husband salary 100, cut, pay first.
56		And the, three persons 700, *saya gembira sebab takda mahal.* ((both laugh))
		(And the, three person 700, I'm happy because it wasn't expensive)
57		One person 700 *minta, saya matilah*, that time.
		(If they asked for 700 for each person, I would die)
58		This are my big problem there, and like uh *operasi. (police sting operations).*
59		Three time I have experienced *operasi.*
60		Like her (referring to the previous interviewee May helped interpret for me) I also I=
61	I:	=Run away?
62	M:	Run away. Run away. And sometime got *operasi*- I got- go and stay at my Malay friend's house.
63		Malay people okay.
64		*Bila ada dengar berita ada operasi, 'jangan tidur* you *punya rumah, mari kita punya rumah'.*
		(When they hear the news about sting operations, they say, 'Don't sleep in your own home, come to our home'.)
65		And then go and sleep. *Ada bestnya. (It's really the best.)*
66	I:	How you know these Malay people?
67	M:	Yea, because I like to eat Malay food.
68		Got the *kantin-kantin, warung-warung ah sudah lama saya makan enam bulan, tujuh bulan macam jadi ka=*

		(Got the canteens, food stalls ah, for a long time I ate there six months, seven months like became fr=)
69	I:	*=Kawan. (=Friends.)*
70	M:	*Dia boleh tolong.*
		(He can help.)
71	I:	Ah… *Ini di… KL* or Kapah?
		(Ah… This was in… KL)
72	M:	*Saya punya kilang pindah Sungai Buloh. Sudah sampai Sungai Buloh saya ada-*
		(My factory moved to Sungai Buloh. Arriving in Sungai Buloh I had-)
73		I have a lot of Malay friends.
74		Because I go and rent stay outside ah…*kampung melayu (Malay village)*. The quarters *kampung melayu*.
75		My landlord also *melayu (Malay)*, my neighbours neighbours are *Melayu*.
76		So… I that time ah… I stay not like in Myanmar, like Malaysian people.
77		So many friends.

6.4.2.1 Positioning level 1 (the story)

Story 1: Illegal work visa and status

This story begins in line 2 and overlaps with the beginning of the next story in lines 29-35. The main character in this story is May. Secondary characters that appear here are her boss, the Malaysian government, 'Myanmar people' and the Myanmar government.

May starts talking about her working visa in line 2 and how she had to leave and enter Malaysia repeatedly over the years whenever her visa expired. Her boss is identified as helping her to make arrangements for her visa (line 4) but May positions herself as agent in obtaining a passport (line 5), which is revealed to be a fake passport (line 6) bought from Thailand (line 8).

She shifts the focus from her personal narrative to a general narrative on the immigration policy of the Malaysian government, namely periods of amnesty for illegal foreign workers to return to their countries of origin, and how it affects the Myanmar people (lines 10-16). The Myanmar 'foreigners' (lines 12 and 16) were differentiated

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from other foreigners such as those from Indonesia and Bangladesh (line 13) because unlike other foreigners (line 14), the Myanmar people would not be allowed back into their country. In lines 17-18, May uses the pronoun 'we' to align herself with other Myanmar people who are arrested whenever they try to re-enter Myanmar. The government is described as knowing the names of those returning even before they arrive in Myanmar (line 18).

In line 20, May shifts the narrative back to her personal narrative on her arrests upon trying to re-enter Myanmar, 'I try to went [sic] back but cannot, arrested one'. She positions herself here as attempting to return but unable to do so. This also results in a loss of agency for May's character from this point on in the story. She shifts from the pronoun 'I' in lines 20-21 to 'we' in lines 23 and 29. This shift signals her positioning with other refugees, e.g. 'Every three time amnesty we come' (line 23) and 'We are exiled' (line 29). She specifies who is exiled in line 33, which is her husband, her son and herself ('because of 15 years interval, we, cannot go back'). The length of times, 15 years, is given as the reason why she can no longer return to Myanmar. The Myanmar government is activated as agent in deciding on this length of time (line 29) and branding such refugees as exiles and 'anti-government' (line 31). In line 31 ('We are anti-government'), May speaks indirectly from the perspective of the Myanmar government and takes up the role of animator of this utterance. She does not position herself as principal of this utterance as she does not verify this statement as true or false but merely mentions the effect of this perspective, 'So, my life ah… I think forever (.) cannot go back' (line 32) and 'Lost country lah' (line 34). Both these sentences give a sense of her passivity, namely that she is unable to return even if she wanted to and that the implication is the loss of her citizenship or 'country'.

Story 2: Being caught in illegal migrant sting operations

Story 1 provides the impetus for the events that occur in story 2. May is still the main character in this story and is positioned here as agent in deciding to apply for refugee status (line 35: 'And that time I decide… I must apply UNHCR'; line 36: 'Then, I try to get UNHCR'). She describes her predicament as one with 'no chance to go into UNHCR office' (line 37) despite many years passing by. However, this application for refugee status is not the main focus of this story. Instead, she then relates several incidences with the police that she had encountered.

In lines 45-57, May recounts one particular incident that occurred while she was waiting to get into the UNHCR office. She describes herself waiting in line to go in the office (line 46) but gets arrested before being able to go in (line 47). She has to stay in the police cell for two nights because there was no one to help her (lines 50-51). She describes how she called her boss to ask for help and she voices herself in line 52 saying, 'Boss, have pity, have pity, come and get us… we three people'. She makes an appeal to her boss for sympathy and the emphasis of this can be seen in the way 'have pity' is uttered twice. It is only revealed in line 53 that she was not alone but with her child and her husband (mentioned in line 55). It is implied that her boss pays the police a bribe to get them out and this can be inferred from line 57, 'If they asked for 700 for each person, I would die'; 'they' referring to the police. However, this bribe is taken out of her salary and her husband's salary (line 55). In this story, May is positioned as a helpless victim, who needs to seek help from her boss. Her boss does help but he is not positioned as doing it out of charity because May is expected to pay him back out of her salary and her husband's salary.

In lines 60-65, May describes how her local neighbours helped her during sting operations. She is positioned in the story are running away during operations (lines 60 and 62) and seeking help from her Malay friends. The 'Malay people' are evaluated as

'okay' (line 63) and positioned as agents that help her whenever they receive news about sting operations. They are voiced in line 64 saying, 'Don't sleep in your own home, come to our home', and May accepts this invitation (line 65). Their positioning in this story sharply contrasts May's boss in the previous story as they offer help without asking for anything in return. Their relationship is also more equal than between May and her boss. She identifies these people as her 'Malay friends' (line 73). These friends consist of her landlord and neighbours (line 75). She describes herself in line 76 as i) living like a Malaysian and not like a Myanmar and ii) having 'many friends' (line 77), who help her (line 69).

6.4.2.2 Positioning level 2 (the telling)

The topic about the working visa starts with the interviewer's question in line 1, which is followed by another probe question in line 3 ('How do you get the working visa? From your boss is it?'). This topic comes about after May mentioned earlier that she had worked in a factory after coming over from Myanmar. The interviewer is aware that refugees are not allowed to work because of their illegal status and therefore, asks these questions to ascertain how it was possible for May to work. The interviewer's suggestion about May's boss's involvement is corroborated by May in line 4 but then lines 5-8 focuses on May's agency in purchasing a fake passport (6). She then mentions how long her last visa lasted in line 9 ('This one the last round I- I think four years'). Here, May is positioning herself as an illegal foreign worker. Although she has a work visa, she admits to owning a fake passport, which she bought from Thailand (line 8).

In lines 9-10, May breaks away from her narrative and addresses the interviewer in order to give her some background about the Malaysian government's periods of amnesty for illegal migrants to return to their countries of origin without being punished. In doing so, she positions herself as an expert about the events and policies that affect refugees in

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Malaysia. She begins talking about this by saying, 'In 1998 ah… another way' (line 10). The mention of 'another way' refers to how May was able to stay or return to Malaysia apart from the work visa mention earlier in the excerpt. She then elaborates by saying, 'That time 1998 ah you know…' with the discourse marker 'you know' addressed to the interviewer to establish rapport and understanding.

In line 12-18, May presents her evaluation of how the amnesty period affects migrants from different countries. The Myanmar migrants (line 12) are differentiated from other migrants (line 13). While talking about this, May uses the pronoun 'we' to signal that she is aligning herself with Myanmar refugees as a collective group. The interviewer then asks, 'Oh, so you actually went back lah?', in line 19 (note the use of 'you' in the singular) and May replies by using the pronoun 'I' to refer to herself specifically. In line 23, she slips back into using 'we' and the interviewer once again tries to put the focus back on May by directly asking her a question that concerns her ('So the last time the 6P one, **you** went back also?') in line 26. The mention of the 6P programme[8] here assumes May's shared knowledge about this. When May replies that it is the 'same way' (line 27), the interviewer assumes that May was also arrested in Myanmar after returning during the 6P programme and asks her what happened to her upon her arrest. Instead of answering that question, May states that she and her family are now exiles from Myanmar, left without country (lines 29-34). This implies that she did not go back during the amnesty period and her exile is mentioned to justify why she did not act in accordance to the government's policy for illegal migrants.

The sequence of event in the narrative up to this point enables May to provide the reason for her application for refugee status. In line 35, she says, 'And that time I decide… I must apply UNHCR. I must apply UNHCR', and this line is a turning point in the

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[8] The 6P was a six-step legalization programme conducted by the Malaysian government in 2011 to systematically convert the status of illegal migrants into legal migrants. Illegal migrants were given an amnesty period, during which they were required to legalise their status or risk being deported after that period ended.

narrative as she starts to relate her experience of trying to apply for refugee status. She moves from positioning herself as agent in deciding to apply for refugee status (lines 35-36) to positioning herself in a passive role in lines 37 and 39 ('I have no chance'). Her passivity or helplessness is emphasised by the many years she spent waiting but not being able to get 'into the UNHCR office' (line 37). When probed to explain why by the interviewer (lines 38 and 40), May mentions the number of people before her in the queue (300, 400) in line 41 and the limited time they have because of the UNHCR office hours (line 43). She elaborates this further in line 46.

Lines 45-46 function as the story preface to her story about being arrested while waiting at the UNHCR door. The story orientation is established through the year the incident occurred (2004) and what she was doing ('we went there and then wait our list to go in… Before we go into UNHCR office, police car come and arrest'). At this point, both May and the interviewer laugh, not because the story is particularly funny but because of the effect of May's storytelling in lines 41-44 about the amount of time she had already spent waiting and how she was arrested right before getting past the UNHCR door. It is this ironic turn of events, which provokes the laughter. May then resumes her story in lines 48-55. In lines 56-57, May evaluates the point about having her salary deducted by her boss to repay what he spent in trying to get her out of the police cell. She talks about the cost of her release (RM700 for three people) saying, 'And the, three person 700, I'm happy because it wasn't expensive'. This provokes more laughter from both May and the interviewer, also caused by the irony in the story. Despite having been released due to the bribe, May's concern was more for the cost of the bribe, i.e. RM700 for three instead of one person ('If they asked for 700 for each person, I would die'). Line 58 is the coda of this story ('This are [sic] my big problem there, and like uh *operasi*.') and May then tells another story to illustrate her point about *operasi* (sting operations) being a big problem for her.

By referring to the number of times she has experienced the *operasi* in line 59, May is positioning herself as an expert on the subject based on her experience ('Three time [sic] I have experienced *operasi*'). She then aligns herself with the refugee interviewee that she translated for, who spoke to the interviewer right before May's interview. Firstly, May identifies 'her' and secondly, using the preposition 'like' before 'her', May signals her alignment with the previous interviewee. The interviewer infers from this context what May is referring, namely that she behaved like the previous interviewee during the *operasi* and interjects with 'Run away?' (line 61). May acknowledges this by repeating 'run away' twice before talking about how she sometimes hides at her Malay friends' house (line 62). She gives her evaluation of this new character, her Malay friends, as 'okay', which implies that they are not bad people because they help her. She voices them in line 64 and then evaluates their offer to her as '*bestnya*' (line 65).

The interviewer then focuses on her Malay friends by asking, 'How you know these Malay people?' (line 66). May's initial response is, 'Yea, because I like to eat Malay food' (line 67), which forms a story preface. She elaborates further in line 68 about how she spent many months eating at Malay food stalls and getting to know the people there. The interviewer contributes 'Kawan' (Friends) in line 69 at the same time May begins to say the word in line 66. The interviewer asked where she was living when she made these friends (line 71) and May replies that it was Sungai Buloh. She then identifies her move to Sungai Buloh as the point when she made Malay friends in lines72-73 ('*Sudah sampai Sungai Buloh saya ada*- I have a lot of Malay friends') and in lines 74-75, she talks about the Malay neighbourhood she lived in. The coda of the story occurs in lines 76-77: 'So… I that time ah… I stay not like in Myanmar, like Malaysian people. So many friends.'. May uses the opportunity to talk about her Malay friends and neighbours as a means of positioning herself as living like a Malaysian instead of a Myanmar.

6.4.2.3 Positioning level 3 (the self)

What emerges in this excerpt is the different ways May moves from one position to another as the narrative progresses. On the story level in story 1 (level 1), May moves from positioning herself as an illegal worker that has agency (seen in her initiative to apply for her passport and attempts to return to Malaysia after renewing her passport and visas) to a Myanmar exile with no agency. In the latter position, the Myanmar government is positioned as having agency and power, which strips May of any right to her country of origin. She ends up becoming an exile, who has lost her country. In story 2, she is positioned as someone needing help but her position changes with regards to other characters in her story. In the earlier story about her boss and the police, she is described as unable to solve her problem of being in the police cell and has to ask for help from her boss. She has to take the initiative to get help. In the later story with her Malay friends, the friends are positioned as agents as they help her willing without asking for anything in return. They also help her on their own initiative by warning her of impending danger and offering her a safe place to stay. In this case, May did not need to seek help from them.

On the interactional level, May moves from positioning herself collectively with Myanmar refugees in the earlier part of the excerpt ('we') to positioning herself as living 'like Malaysian people' at the end of the excerpt (line 76). In the former position, May repeated aligns with the Myanmar refugees, using the pronoun 'we' frequently, despite some attempts from the interviewer to direct the questions specifically to May (e.g. in lines 19 and 24). This positioning also emerges when she refers to the similarity of her situation with the previous refugee interviewee during sting operations (line 60). The turning point in her positioning occurs from line 66 onwards after the interviewer asks her how she knows her Malay friends. She mentions the fact that she has many Malay friends twice in the narrative (lines 73 and 77) and describes the neighbourhood in which

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she lived as being a very Malay neighbourhood. This along with her preference for speaking in Malay allows her to position herself as living 'like Malaysian people', although she does not position herself as a Malaysian or use any first person pronouns to identify herself as a Malaysian.

In narrating the story of her attempt to apply for refugee status and getting caught during sting operations, May moves from positioning herself as agent to positioning herself as a passive social actor. Despite her best efforts to act on her decisions, she acknowledges that her situation is more affected by what others do to or for her than what she can do for herself.

This movement from position to other positions illustrates how identity claims are constantly changing and are never permanent. However, compared to how she positioned herself in excerpt M1 (6.4.1) as having agency to decide how to react to challenges she faced in Myanmar, she is positioned in this excerpt as having significantly less agency. As such, she is unable to: i) return to her country, ii) prevent herself from being arrested, iii) get released from the police cell, and iv) protect herself from immigration raids. Yet at the end of the excerpt, she is able to position herself as being accepted by the local community and to re-imagine her life as more in line with the Malaysian way of life.

6.4.3 Malaysia as my home

May discusses what she likes about Malaysia and why it is her home in excerpt M3.

Excerpt M3

1   I: Okay, can you tell me... about uh living in Malaysia? How would- after 23 year, do you like the country?

2   M: Now- now I ((coughs)) Malaysia like my country. ((laughs))
          because uh.. I live ah… *daripada Myanmar orang* I *kenal Malaysia orang banyak banyak.*
          (because uh.. I live ah… from Myanmar people I know many many Malaysian people.)

3   *Sebab saya punya pakaian macam Melayu.*
          (Because my clothes are like the Malays'.)

4   Um… *makanan pun nasi lemak* lah… ((coughs)) *ikan masak pedas ah, tahu sudah- sudah tahu makan Melayu… punya mi goreng apa* I *tau.*
          (Um… food also, nasi lemak lah ((coughs)), spicy fried fish ah, I already know- already know how to eat Malay food like fried noodles or what, I know.)

5   Sometime I forget already Myanmar food *apa macam.*
          (Sometimes I forget how Myanmar food tastes like.)

6   I: ((laughs))

7   M: Uh… *lagi…* I know *Hari Raya,* I don't know my *Raya.* ((laughs)) Forget already.
          ((Uh… what's more… I know Eid al-Fitr, I don't know my own festival ((laughs)). Forget already.)

8   Ah… so 2008 *baru balik, kena balik.* Myanmar people lah as teacher.
          (Uh… so 2008 only I came back, had to come back (to the) Myanmar people as teacher.)

9   But till now my husband and my son ah they are stay in ( ).

10 I: Yea. Then uh… so can you tell me any interesting stories about Malaysia?

11   You said you're very good friends with Malays… is there anything, like any funny story that you all=

12 M: =Yea. Shockedly [sic] I say ah… That time I walk to… market, *pasar pagi.*

(That time I walk to… market, morning market.)

13 I *pergi,* when Malay people see, they drive the car, they stop the car.

  (I went and when Malay people see me, they're driving the car, they stop the car.)

14 MAK CIK KAK, *saya hantar, takda susah.*

  ('AUNTY, let me send you', it's not inconvenient.)

15 And every time, police problem, *operasi* problem, *sebab* without document *lama-lama,*

  (every time, police problem, sting operation problem, because without document for so long,)

16 (in) Malaysia all my neighbours know we have no document. They never look down me.

17 *Kesian… lagi ada polis jangan pergi, mau apa saya beli like* that lah.

  ('Poor thing… if the police is there, don't go. Whatever you want, I will buy' like that.)

18 So, I am happy lah. I feel very happy.

19 And, uh… *terima kasih tu apa yang saya buat kah*…

  (And uh… I'm grateful for that and I do…)

20 *Malay- Malay ini macam sekolah-sekolah punya budak-budak*, *macam* form one lah, standard two, standard three, standard six like that ah… *Bahasa English takda faham*, *saya* tuition lah.

  (Malay- Malay, like the school children, like form one, standard two, standard three, standard six like that … If they don't understand English, I will give tuition.)

21 I: Okay.

22 M: Free- free tuition.

23 I: Oh… their kids lah.

24 M: Ah their kids ah. So, Malay kids ah I also already friendly lah. So, I love lah.

25 And, all the supermarket ah.. Mid Valley *lah apa lah*, my neighbour neighbour *hantar.*

  (And, all the supermarkets.. Mid Valley or whatever, my neighbours will send me.)

26 Genting Highland, every place lah *dia tak buat saya* lonely lonely. Very familiar with me.

(Genting Highland, every place they make sure I don't go alone. Very familiar with me.)

27 I: Where you stay?

28 M: Ah… Sungai Buloh *kampung melayu (Malay village).*

29 I: *Kampung Melayu lah…*

30 M: Mm… (.) We never *rebut.*

(Mm… We never fight.)

31   Here *ada* foreigner, without document *mari tangkap tak dak* oo…

(Here there are foreigners without documents. The police don't come here to get them…)

32   *Bila polis mari pun dia bagi tau, jangan keluar, depan ada polis macam.* Good lah.

(Even if the police do come, they (Malay people) will let us know saying, 'Don't go out, there are police outside', like that. That's good.)

33 I: Hmm… Any uh… do you have any experience with maybe any of the Chinese people, Indians?

34 M: Also okay. Uh… sometime ah, *kampung melayu* ah… *sudah mau itu tanah mau* collapse time ah… uh *apa…*

(Uh… sometimes in the Malay village… when the ground is about to collapse… uh what…)

35   Demolish time ah have to go and stay another place ah… India and China, *dalam* also. Okay *juga.* India also okay.

(Demolish time, we have to go and stay in another place … Indians and Chinese are also living there. It's also okay. Indians are also okay.)

36   *Tapi kita boleh cakap apa tau, kita* okay, *semua* okay lah.

(But, you know, we can say, we are okay, all okay.)

37   If I smile at my mirror, the mirror image of me smile me back lah.

38 I: Yea.

39 M: I good, they also good to me lah.

40   I always try to get good with everybody. And, cool down…

41   I know myself and understand myself very well.

42   I am a person, country-less.

43   So, I… good with e:very environment, every wrong thing.

6.4.3.1 Positioning level 1 (the story)

There are three stories in this excerpt and they can be categorised as follows: i) living in Malaysia like a Malay (lines 2-8), ii) the kindness of the Malay people (lines 13-27), and iii) living in the Malay village (lines 29- 44).

(a) Story 1: Living in Malaysia like a Malay

The only character in this story is May. This narrative section is not a story in the conventional sense but more a general narrative as a response to the interviewer's question. The statement, 'Malaysia is like my country' (line 2) summarises what she is about to talk about next. In lines 3-7, she gives reasons why she considers Malaysia her country now. These reasons are: i) she knows many Malaysian people (line 3), ii) she dresses like the Malays (line 4), iii) she enjoys eating spicy, Malay food (line 5) and has forgotten how what Myanmar food tastes like (line 6), and iv) she knows more about Hari Raya (Eid al-Fitr) than her own Myanmar festival (line 8).

(b) Story 2: The kindness of the Malay people

Here, May is the main character, while other Malay people are secondary characters. She begins her story with an evaluation of how the story makes her feel, i.e. shocked (line 13). She provides the setting for this story, namely when she was walking to the market one day (line 14). The 'Malay people' in line 15 are positioned as agents who 'see' her while they are driving and 'stop the car'. They are voiced in the next line saying, 'MAK CIK KAK, *saya hantar, takda susah*. (AUNTY, let me send you', it's not inconvenient)'. Not only are they positioned as taking the initiative to help her, they also display a lot of generosity in doing so.

In line 16, May mentions other times, when she experiences similar kindness, i.e. 'every time' during 'police problem, operasi problem'. Her neighbours are positioned in line 17 as knowing about her undocumented status but yet never looking down on her. She voices them in line 18 saying, '*Kesian… lagi ada polis jangan pergi, mau apa saya beli like* that lah. ('Poor thing… if the police is there, don't go. Whatever you want, I will buy' like that.)' The word 'kesian' is ventriloquated by May to voice her neighbours describing her but also allows May to align herself with this image of her as someone who needs to be pitied. By voicing her neighbours using imperative sentences, May is also positioning herself as possessing less power compared to her neighbours, who are positioned as telling her what to do.

As a response, May describes how she tries to repay this kindness by giving free English tuition to Malay school children because she is grateful (line 20). The children are characterised by their age in line 21 (primary school age) and as the children of her Malay friends, i.e. 'their kids', whom she loves because she is familiar or 'friendly' with them (line 25). In lines 26-27, she gives a few more occasions when her neighbours will offer to send her somewhere, e.g. the supermarket, Mid Valley mall and the holiday destination, Genting Highlands. The neighbours are positioned as not wanting her to go alone and being very familiar with her (line 27).

(c) **Story 3: Living in the Malay village**

The main character in this story is identified by May as 'we', which generally refers to all the residents in the Malay village. However 'we' is sometimes ambiguous as it is unclear if it refers specifically to foreign migrants (e.g. in line 33 and 36) or to all residents in the Malay village collectively (e.g. in line 37). There is a reference to 'foreigners' in line 32, who are migrants without legal documents and in line 33, May seems to include

herself into this group when voicing the Malay residents giving 'us' help by alerting them about the police raids.

The Indian and Chinese residents are identified separately and evaluated as 'also okay' (line 36). May includes herself in 'we' in lines 35-36, aligning herself with the Indian and Chinese residents, who are all affected by the demolition of the village. Her final evaluation of the relationship between all the residents is in line 36: '*Tapi kita boleh cakap apa tau, kita* okay*, semua* okay lah.' (*(But, you know, we can say, we are okay, all okay.)*.

6.4.3.2 Positioning level 2

At the beginning of this extract, the interviewer asks May to describe what it is like to live in Malaysia and if she likes it after living here for 23 years (line 1). May's response is to call Malaysia her home. She positions herself as local and in the subsequent lines, she provides a description of things she does that make her a Malaysian, i.e. 'know many Malaysian people' (line 3), 'pakaian macam Melayu' (line 4), and eating Malaysian food (line 5). This contrasts the things she has forgotten that no longer make her a Myanmar, i.e. 'Sometime I forget already Myanmar food *apa macam*' (line 6) and forgetting her own cultural festival (line 7). In line 9, she explains that the reason she 'kena' ('had to') return to work in the Burmese learning centre was to help the Myanmar people.

May answers the interviewer's question in lines 11-12 about any interesting stories in Malaysia differently because this time, she positions herself as an outsider. In line 12, the interviewer voices May indirectly in her question with the clause, 'You said you're very good friends with Malays…', which prompts May to tell stories relating to her experiences with Malay people. In doing so, she positions her Self as different from 'them'. They are predicated as being kind to her, while she is positioned as a recipient of their generosity and goodwill. Her reaction to this (line 19: 'I feel very happy' and line 20: 'I'm grateful for that') prompts her to try to repay their kindness by giving free

English classes to their children. From line 25 onwards, May begins to position herself as part of the neighbourhood. She is well acquainted with the Malay kids (line 25), familiar with her neighbours that they offer to drive her to places (lines 26-27) and living harmoniously with her neighbours (line 31). This positioning of herself and her neighbours in the Malay village continues until line 38, where she concludes by using the metaphor of the mirror in line 38 ('If I smile at my mirror, the mirror image of me smile me back'). This metaphor of the mirror is used to emphasise how similar she is to her neighbours, something she mentions again in line 40 ('I good, they also good to me lah').

In lines 42-44 she addresses the interviewer in a moment of self-reflection, when she talks about how she knows very well that she is a 'country-less' person. This propels her to strive to be 'good with every environment, every wrong thing' (line 44), i.e. accepting every circumstance and the people around her.

6.4.3.3 Positioning level 3

In this extract, May regards herself as someone who is Malaysian and this can be seen in her socio-cultural practices and her relationships with the local people. She recognises that she is often in a disadvantageous position and this can be seen in the way she positions local characters in her story in higher positions of agency compared to herself. She accepts and appreciates the help and protection she receives from the locals. Her alignment with the locals emerges as she positions herself as an equal to the locals not only in the reference to herself in the collective pronoun 'we' and 'us', but also in highlighting the actions and attitudes that she shares with the locals that make this possible, namely that they help each other out and accept one another. By accepting every circumstance she is in, she able to find a greater sense of belonging to the people and places she has lived in.

6.4.4 Gratitude to the Malaysian government

In this extract, May talks about what she thinks about the Malaysian government and how grateful she is that refugees are allowed to live in Malaysia. In lines 4-14, she compares Malaysia to other neighbouring countries in relation to how refugees are accepted and treated. In lines 18-26, she discusses her thoughts on refugees and the enforcement bodies in Malaysia. The extract ends with May giving her brief opinion on the advantages for refugees if they were to be recognised in Malaysia.

Extract M4

I: So if you could say something to the Malaysian government? Mayb=

2   M: =Thank you!

3   I: Yea?

4   M: *Malaysia government ah, kita* boleh terima kasih, sebab dia bagi UNHCR ofis sini banyak tahun sudah.
(We can thank the Malaysian government because they have allowed the UNHCR office here for many years.)

5   Malaysia government *takda bagi berdiri sini ini* UNHCR office also, Myanmar *orang* <u>*semua*</u> refugee status, *tak boleh jadi di dalam* South East Asia.
(If the Malaysian government didn't allow the UNHCR to set up their office here, all Myanmar people won't be able to get refugee status in the whole of South East Asia.)

6   *Pergi Thailand tengok, kita pergi beratur* Thailand, *kilang-kilang kerja* business, Malaysia *boleh*, Thailand *tak boleh*.
(Let's look at Thailand, we go and line up in Thailand, work factory businesses, we can do it in Malaysia, we can't in Thailand.)

7   *Kalau kita tunggu* di dalam sistem *satu*, *tiga tahun, empat tahun dalam* Thailand ah *kita boleh mati* loh.
(If we wait in the system, one, three, four years in Thailand, we will die.)

8   *Tak cukup makan, tak cukup gaji.*

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(Not enough food, not enough salary.)

9   *Lagi tengok* another country, Indonesia *susah nak masuk. Kalau* Philippine <u>*lagi*</u> *susah* can.

    (Let's look at another country, Indonesia is hard to get in. If it's The Philippines, it's <u>even</u> harder.)

10   *Kalaulah* Malaysia government, *tak terima* UNHCR office,

    (If the Malaysian government did not allow the UNHCR office,)

11   sini (here), many thousand- I think 40 to 70 thousands of refugees here all finished.

12   So, that's why we can say, uh… Malaysia government, good.

13   And they *rasa kesian. Orang takda negara.*

    (And they feel sympathetic for people with no country.)

14   That's the point. I want to say thank you, Malaysia government lah.

15 I: But even though the refugees are here, they're all actually working illegal right?

16 M: Illegal.

17 I: But so you're saying that Malaysian government is good because even it's *(working)* illegal, they just let you do it=

18 M: =They one eye=

19 I: =Close. ((laughs))

20 M: If they follow terms and regulation *betul-betul, satu pun tak boleh terima.*

    (If they really follow the terms and regulations, not a single refugee can be accepted.)

21   *Tapi dia tak buat lah. Operasi memang operasi. Tetapi tak kuat.*

    (But they don't do that. Sting operations are sting operations, it's true. But it's not aggressive.)

22   *Lagi RELA RELA ada, polis-polis ada. Bila nampak polis, kita cakap ya…*
    ( )tak berapa wang lah, sikit saja boleh keluar.

    (Even if there is RELA, police. If we see the police, we say, 'Yea ( )…'. Even if we don't have much money, just a little bit we are able to get out.)

23   *Ba:nyak boleh, <u>semua</u> makan takda. Ada yang polis beri percuma pun boleh balik, ada.*

    (They take) a lo:t of money, but not take <u>everything</u>. Some police even let you go for free, there are.)

24   *Tetapi, ada* refugee, *tak kira* Myanmar, *tak kira siapa-siapa…* anti-law lah.

(But, there are refugees, regardless whether they're Myanmar or whatever… who are anti-law.)

25   *Kalau tak ikut* Malaysia term and regulation, Malaysia people *sendiri pun kalau tak ikut* law, *kena tangkap juga lah*.

(If they don't follow Malaysia's terms and regulations, even if Malaysian people don't follow the law, they will get caught as well.)

26   *Mabuk-mabuk, kacau-kacau, curilah orang punya anak, kacaulah apalah*, Malaysia government *boleh… buat lah*.

(Drunkenness, disturbances, kidnapping people's children, whatever disturbances, the Malaysian government can… do what they want.)

27 I: But you still wish that they will recognise refugees? Is it better if they did that? *Kalau=*

28 M: =Better lah. Better lah. Because *adanya* [unclear] *orang refugee tak mau pergi* Western country.

(=Better. It's better. Because there are refugees who do not want to go to Western countries.)

29   *Daripada kita punya* traditional custom, culture, a bit different lah.

(In terms of our traditional customs, cultures, (Western countries are) a bit different.)

30   *Kalau* Malaysia government *boleh terima kita… sebelum mari punya orang semua…* happy. *Senang lah… senang duduk lah*.

If the Malaysian government accepts us… before coming here all… happy. It's easy… easy to live.)

6.4.4.1 Positioning level 1

(a) **Malaysia and its neighbours**

May's narrative on the Malaysian government and her gratitude towards them is elicited by the interviewer's question in line 1 ('So if you could say something to the Malaysian government?'). The two main characters are 'we' or 'Myanmar people' (refugees), which includes herself, and the Malaysian government. Secondary characters

are the UNHCR and other South East Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The Malaysian government is activated as allowing the UNHCR to set up their office (lines 4-5) and as Senser in feeling sympathy for the Myanmar refugees (line 13). Thus, the Malaysian government is positioned here as sympathetic towards the refugees' plight. In lines 18-23, the Malaysian government (including the enforcement departments) is described as lax in the enforcement of their immigration laws to the benefit of refugees. They are evaluated as 'closing one eye' (lines 18-19), not following their own regulations (line 20), not being aggressive in their sting operations (line 21) and susceptible to bribery (lines 22-23). However, these qualities are not evaluated as negative qualities as far as May is concerned. On the contrary, it is this condition that allows refugees to have opportunities not only to live in Malaysia but to earn a living as well.

Malaysia is compared to three other neighbouring countries, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Thailand is described as prohibiting refugees from working in factories (line 6) and having a long waiting list for refugees (line 7), who have to live without money or enough food (line 8). In line 9, Indonesia and the Philippines are described as countries that are even harder to enter into.

May positions herself alongside other refugees, who are significantly affected by the policies and actions of these South East Asian governments. The positioning of refugees is framed within hypothetical clauses. In line 5, the effect, namely that the Myanmar people would not be able to refugee status in South East Asia, is dependent on the hypothetical situation, i.e. that the UNHCR office was not granted permission to operate in Malaysia. The hypothetical situation involving Thailand (lines 7-8) is prefaced by May's statement in line 6 that refugees are not allowed to work in factories in Thailand. In lines 10-11, she repeats her point about the Malaysian government mentioned in line 5 by presenting the same hypothetical situation ('*Kalaulah* Malaysia government, *tak*

terima UNHCR office') and the effect ('many thousand- I think 40 to 70 thousands of refugees here all finished'), which is involves more specific social actors, i.e. the 40 to 70 thousand refugees, compared to line 5.

(b) **Malaysian enforcement bodies**

From line 18 onwards, May positions refugees as passive social actors without agency with regards to the Malaysian enforcement bodies, i.e. the immigration officers, police and RELA, the paramilitary civilian corps. Refugees would not be 'accepted' if the Malaysian officials followed the 'terms and regulations' (line 20). In line 22, the refugees' opportunity to avoid arrest is dependent on them having money to pay for a bribe. The enforcement bodies are positioned as active agents, who can decide to enforce rules or not (lines 20-21) and who can determine the amount of bribe money they want to receive (lines 22-23).

Further on in lines 24-26, May differentiates between law-abiding refugees and Malaysian citizens and 'anti-law' or law-breaking refugees and Malaysian citizens. She positions the enforcement bodies once again as decision makers in enforcing the law, who have the right to enforce the law on those who break the law. What emerges in these lines is her positioning of law-breaking people regardless of citizenship, who are at the mercy of the enforcement bodies. She phrases the outcome of law-breaking activities through statements of fact, such as in line 25: 'Malaysia people *sendiri pun kalau tak ikut* law, *kena tangkap juga lah*' (even if Malaysian people don't follow the law, they will get caught as well) and in line 26: 'Malaysia government *boleh… buat lah*' (the Malaysian government can… do what they want).

6.4.4.2 Positioning level 2

Extract M4 occurs near the end of the interview and the interviewer asks May if she had any message for the Malaysian government. In responding to the question, May positions herself as a representative of Myanmar refugees in Malaysia and takes up the speaking role of *animator* (speaking on behalf of refugees) and *principal* because she is invested in the utterances. This is achieved through the use of the pronoun 'we' and 'us' to align herself with the refugee group and also the activation of 'we' as sayer in thanking the government (lines 4-14). She also speaks on behalf of the Myanmar refugees in describing the situation for them in the different countries in South East Asia, including Malaysia (lines 5-12). Although she does not have first-hand experience of the situation in other countries, yet she speaks as a representative of all Myanmar refugees in the region.

The interviewer's question in line 15 about refugees working illegally compels May to corroborate their illegal status (line 16). Prior to this, May had been talking about refugees working in the different countries but this question reminds May that under Malaysian law, refugees are not permitted to work. In doing so, the interviewer positions May as a refugee, who is working illegally. The interviewer's subsequent question in line 17, 'But so you're saying that Malaysian government is good because even it's (working) illegal, they just let you do it=', calls into question May's positioning of the government as 'good' because a 'good' government would be expected to abide by its own laws, i.e. including laws and policies on refugees as migrant workers. May confirms this by referring to the idiom 'to close one eye' or 'to turn a blind eye' in line 18 when she begins saying, 'They one eye='. The interviewer understands her point and immediately completes the idiomatic expression with 'close' in the next line, assuming the role of collaborator. In lines 20-23, May explains how the enforcement bodies 'close one eye' with regards to the refugees, thus positioning herself as an expert on the enforcement

bodies' activities and attitudes, which emerges in the declarative sentences she uses to describe them. Again, they are evaluated in a positive light because of the positive affect their actions have on refugees.

The categorization of two kinds of 'residents' in Malaysia (including refugees) in lines 24-26, namely law-abiding residents and law-breaking residents, reveals May's positioning of herself alongside refugees, who are essentially illegal migrant workers but who do not deserve to be punished harshly by enforcement bodies because they do not break the law. Instead, this group of people are compared to those who are 'anti-law' and engage in real criminal activities, such as '*Mabuk-mabuk, kacau-kacau, curilah orang punya anak*' (Drunkenness, disturbances, kidnapping people's children). Such law-breaking people deserve punitive action taken against them by the authorities and this in stark contrast to refugees, who are beneficiaries of the same authority bodies' lackadaisical attitude towards enforcing immigration policies on them. Her allusion to the government's turning a blind eye to refugees' illegal work, legitimises her position as a migrant worker in Malaysia.

The interviewer, however, does not take up this positioning of May as seen in her question in line 27, 'But you still wish that they will recognise refugees? Is it better if they did that?', which clearly positions refugees as not being recognised along with all the implications that representation of refugees brings. May accepts this positioning by the interviewer by answering in the affirmative and explaining in lines 28-29 why refugees would prefer to be resettled in Malaysia if they were formally recognised by the government. She concludes by mentioning the effect of this formal recognition in line 30: *Kalau* Malaysia government *boleh terima kita… sebelum mari punya orang semua…* happy. *Senang lah… senang duduk lah.* (If the Malaysian government accepts us… before coming here all… happy. It's easy… easy to live.).

6.4.4.3 Positioning level 3

At the story level, May positions herself alongside Myanmar refugees in the South East Asian region, who lack agency because they are at the mercy of national policies affecting refugees as well as enforcement bodies. They can either be affected negatively, i.e. being denied entry into a country or work opportunities, or positively, through enforcement bodies' 'turning the blind eye' to their work activities and illegal presence.

Her positioning of her identity is more complex at the interactional level. By referring to the experiences of refugees in the region, she positions herself among the wider refugee community. But this larger shared refugee identity also functions to draw comparisons with the situation in other countries compared to Malaysia. On a local level, she displays agency in actively evaluating and reinterpreting the government's and enforcement bodies' actions of 'turning a blind eye' as an act of compassion towards refugees, despite mentioning that police regularly extort money from refugees caught in sting operations. The legitimation of the positioning of herself as a law-abiding resident of Malaysia serves to further reinforce her identity claim as a 'Malaysian citizen', a theme that emerged in and was discussed in sections 6.4.2 – 6.4.4.

6.5   Discussion

This final section of Chapter 6 will broaden the discussion that had been mentioned in the positioning level 3 sections of the three individual refugee respondents. The experiences of all three respondents were diverse and complex but some similarities emerged through the analysis of their identity claims and negotiation of their sense of Self. A salient aspect in the narratives of all these respondents was agency to choose for themselves identities that would enabled them to achieve particular goals. The narratives presented here revealed a complex weaving of two main identities: a refugee and a Malaysian 'citizen'.

This section will be divided into the different kinds of identity claims made by the three refugee respondents under three headings: i) socio-cultural factors and identity, ii) place and identity, and iii) stigmatised identity. The aim of the analysis undertaken in this chapter was not so much concerned with the truth of the stories or experiences shared by the respondents but rather, it was concerned with how they used positioning within and outside their narratives to construct a sense of Self.

6.5.1   Socio-cultural factors and identity

It was unsurprising that all three respondents in this chapter made claims for a Malaysian identity based on the length of their stay in Malaysia and their level of assimilation into the local culture. The following socio-cultural factors emerged in their narratives as integral to the construction of their Malaysian identity: i) linguistic repertoire and language choice, ii) cultural practices, and iii) social networks. These factors will be discussed in brief below.

All three respondents identified their ability to speak the local languages, particularly the Malay language, as an important part of their local identity. Prince told stories of his attempts at concealing his Rohingya identity by speaking Malay and other Asian languages (6.2.4). John's 'born in Malaysia' identity was reinforced during interactions with his local friends by use of Malay and English as well as local idiomatic expressions and slang. He emphasised repeatedly that he was 'more Malaysian' than other Malaysian school friends because he spoke like a Malaysian (6.3.3-6.3.4). He also identified his ability to code-switch between different groups of Malaysian friends, i.e. the international school friends and the Chinese friends from East Malaysia. In the second story about his encounter with the police, John identified speaking Malay as the reason why he was able to avoid being identified as a foreigner by the police (6.3.2). May's preferred medium of communication with the interviewer was Malay and through her role as an educator, she even provided extra English classes for the local children in her neighbourhood outside of her normal working hours (6.4.4).

The practice of local culture was another factor identified by all three respondents that contributed to their Malaysian identities. Despite originating from Myanmar, none of them practiced much of the Myanmar culture except to eat Myanmar cuisine once in a while. John emphasised that his parents came from Myanmar and not him, therefore legitimising his rejection of the Myanmar and foreigner identity (6.3.4). He knows about local culture and cuisine because is not from Myanmar. May constructed herself as living like a Malay person, because she dressed and ate like a Malay and also celebrated Malay cultural festivals instead of her Myanmar festivals (6.4.2-6.4.3). Her choice of certain stories to narrate functioned to emphasise her lost identity as a Myanmar (either by choice or otherwise) and to justify why she is now more Malaysian, e.g. the story of becoming an exile, her socio-cultural practices and stories that helped her express her affection for Malaysia and its people.

These first two factors, linguistic skills and cultural practices, are used by these respondents as a means of attaining 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986, 2004), which is an understanding of the dominant culture in a particular society. This understanding includes a variety of cultural elements such as languages, accents, credentials, mannerisms, clothing and so on, which can be attained through association with a particular social class or social group. Cultural capital is desirable because it enables an individual to attain acceptance into a particular collective identity and a sense of belonging. In the case of May, she claimed a Malay or Malaysian identity by assimilating with her Malay neighbours through her language skills, dressing and cultural practices that extended to the food she ate and the cultural festivals she participated in. For John, his cultural capital allowed to assimilate into Malaysian society and overtly reject being positioned as an outsider. Prince used his cultural capital to conceal his Rohingya identity in order to avoid hostile situations.

Social capital can be understood as resources or value obtained through a network of institutionalised or more informal mutual relationships (Coleman, 1988). Prince, John and May all referred to the social networks that they associated with most often in their narratives that allowed them to legitimise their claim for particular identities. Prince retained more salient links to the Rohingya community, so he had access to being Rohingya and frequently positioned himself within the collective Rohingya identity. However, he also spoke about occasions when he preferred to assume other identities when interacting with people from other social groups to avoid social exclusion. John preferred the company of different groups of Malaysian friends over Myanmar people but maintained his Burmese heritage through his interaction with his parents. May, as mentioned above, described her lifestyle as 'Malay' as well as her close and warm friendship with all her local neighbours (6.4.2-6.4.3). Close social networks have been identified in research among refugees to provide refugees with emotional and social

support, but more importantly, reduce their sense of exclusion from society (Sales, 2002b; Spicer, 2008; Zetter & Pearl, 2000).

6.5.2   Place and identity

In the era of globalization and mass mobility, what Harvey (1993) referred to as 'place-bound identities' (p. 3) is vital for individuals seeking a sense of belonging and rootedness in a world of diminishing borders and spatial territories. Massey (1995) argued that amidst this flux, belonging to a place provided the individual with 'a source of stability and an unproblematic identity' (p. 63). Furthermore, she asserted that identity to a place for an individual is not tied to its acknowledged history but rather to a combination of factors at a particular point in time, which are of significance to the individual. The importance of place identity emerged in the narratives of the three respondents, particularly John and May.

For John, place was more important in his claim for the Malaysian identity than nationality. He acknowledged the influence of the 'proper neighbourhood' he grew up in during his early childhood (6.3.1) and this theme ran through most of his narrative interview, as discussed in section 6.3.4. For John, his sense of belonging and national identity was not equated with citizenship but with place of birth instead. His attachment to the country allowed him to identify himself as Malaysian born and helped him integrate into the local community. This link between place attachment and increased levels of integration was also noted by Spicer (2008) in his study among asylum seeker children in the UK.

For May, her stories about leaving Myanmar (6.4.1), applying for refugee status (6.4.2) and applying for resettlement (6.4.4) were told in a way that highlighted her agency. In each of these stories, she positioned herself as the sole decision-maker is the all the actions

undertaken. She also positioned herself as a responsible and caring person, who was always looking out for others. Her stories were also linked to places: Myanmar in the story about leaving (6.4.1), Malaysia in the story about her new life (6.3.3), and the difference between refugees in different South East Asian countries (6.4.4). May positioned her place making attempts as being motivated by her desire to make a difference in the lives of other people wherever she was. In 6.4.1, her concern for her students in Yangon caused her to get into trouble with the Myanmar authorities. In Malaysia, she not only teaches children and trains teachers at the refugee school, she also provides extra language classes for the local children (6.4.3). In other words, as she moves from one place to the next, May is choosing to make those places her home and a better place for the sake of those around her.

John's and May's sense of place and identity differs from Hoffstaedter's study on the liminal or in-between experience of Chin refugees in Malaysia (2014). Instead of viewing their life as being lived in a 'liminal non-place' that goes nowhere, John and May position themselves in their narratives as actively making Malaysia their home, whether it be through cultural practices, language choice, social networks or place identity. Their experiences also differ from the findings from Hoffstaedter's study in that they did not position themselves as excluded or marginalised by the local people. Instead of facing discrimination and mistrust, John and May positioned themselves as having genuine and warm relationships with different social groups in Malaysia.

6.5.3   Stigmatised identity

The issue of stigmatised identities emerged in the narratives of the two young refugees, Prince and John. Although the aim of the study was not to explore stigma, yet because of its salience in the narratives of the two young refugees, it will be discussed in brief here.

In Goffman's classic work on stigma (1963), he defines stigma as an 'attribute' by which an individual is rejected or 'deeply discredited by his/her society' that reduces an individual 'from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one' (p. 3). He identifies three main types of stigma that are based on: i) physical deformity or disability, ii) perceived deficiencies in character and behaviour, and iii) notions of religion, race or nationality. Eijberts and Roggeband (2015) identified six strategies for coping with stigma in relation to doing identity work: concealing, conciling (acceptance), circumventing (avoidance), compensating, confronting and consolidating.

The type of stigma Prince and John both described was mostly the third kind, i.e. surrounding race, nationality and religion. For Prince, the 'troublesome' and criminalised Rohingya was a stigmatised identity from which he was trying to distance himself, a behaviour which was consistent with the findings in A. Azis' study on Rohingya refugees living in Malaysia (2014). His preferred strategy for coping with this stigma was concealment. He repeatedly underlined his preference for being identified as a Malaysian, regardless of race, although he also accepted being identified as belonging to other South Asian nationalities, such as Punjabi or Pakistani. He displayed acceptance for the stigmatised identity as a Muslim as seen in 6.2.2.

John frequently mentioned his encounters with the stigma of being a Myanmar from Myanmar and a foreigner. His narratives were built around the binary notions of 'local' versus 'foreign' and his attempts to claim a Malaysian identity based on the *jus soli* principle, i.e. the right to citizenship based on place of birth. In the narratives of his early childhood (6.3.1 and 6.3.2), he positioned himself as a foreigner but the subsequent narratives showed a movement into a more local identity. In the story discussed in 6.3.2.2, he was able to conceal his refugee identity when interacting with the police. In the narrative excerpts in 6.3.3 and 6.3.4, John's coping strategy for the stigmatised identity of a foreigner was confrontational. He openly challenged what he perceived to be

mistaken representations of him by other people. Through his stories, he also compared himself with other Malaysian citizens, who he positioned as displaying less 'Malaysianness' than he did. Yet, he did so while moving between the 'born in Malaysia' identity and the Burmese heritage he has because of his parents.

Prince's and John's responses to stigmatised identities resulted in the construction of selves that not only included multiple identities but were often also contradictory. Studies on stigmatised identities such as the study by Toyoki and Brown (2014) on prison inmates' identities showed that the construction of 'good' selves can exist alongside accepted stigmatised identities in a way that does not impoverish or disempower an individual. Kumsa's (2006) study on second-generation refugee experiences in Canada emphasises that refugees' attempts to find a sense of belonging in an environment of social exclusion and disruption are filled with paradoxes and inconsistencies and the findings in this chapter fully supports Kumsa's findings.

Yet, as much as the refugee identity was a stigmatised identity, it was also one that could be taken up as a strategic resources in achieving particular goals. For Prince, embracing the refugee identity was a way for him to get out of his difficult situation through resettlement. His narrative about applying for resettlement (6.2.2) foregrounded his agency because it was he who decided to apply and not of his parents. For May, the loss of her citizenship and her untenable position as an illegal worker on an illegal work visa in Malaysia (6.4.2) prompted her to apply for asylum. In these cases, this identification as refugees was rooted in agency and was not equated with victimhood or vulnerability.

6.6   Summary

The analyses of the narratives presented in Chapters 5 and 6 have shown that the refugees' experiences and negotiation of identities are not defined by silence and helplessness as is frequently represented in wider discourses concerning refugees. Common representations of refugees such as illegals, foreigners, burdens and criminals were contested or even manipulated by refugees in this study as strategic moves that were integral to their efforts for everyday survival.

The case studies of the three long-term refugee respondents were presented in sections 6.2-6.4, followed by a brief discussion in 6.5. The next and final chapter will present some concluding remarks, including implications of the study and suggestions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1   Introduction

This final chapter will present concluding remarks concerning this study. First, an overview of the research aim and objectives and how the study has sought to achieve them will be presented in section 7.2. Then, a summary of the main findings of the study as discussed at length in Chapters 4-6 will be presented in section 7.3. Section 7.4 will mention the limitations of the study as a result of the research scope chosen for the study. Section 7.5 will present some implications for policy on refugees in Malaysia based on the findings of the study. The final section (7.6) will discuss implications of this study on further research in discourse studies and refugee studies.

7.2   Research aim and design

The aim of this study was to investigate the construction of refugee representation and identity in Malaysia. In order to accomplish this aim, the study set out to achieve the following three research objectives:

1. To investigate how refugees are represented in public discourse.

2. To examine how refugee identities are created and sustained through personal narratives.

3. To explore how refugees position themselves in relation to themselves and others.

The Discourse-Historical Approach informed the study and framed the structure of the research design. The public and personal fields of action were included through the analysis of media texts and personal narratives from refugees to allow for greater breadth in the understanding of the representation of refugees. To accomplish this, media texts

from the mainstream and alternative press were collected and analysed according to three groups of elite voices: government voices, alternative voices and the press.

The analysis of media texts was complemented by the analysis of refugee narratives in two ways: thematic analysis and in-depth positioning analysis or narratives-in-interaction. The thematic analysis of narratives from long-, mid- and short-term refugees were analysed to identify common themes used by respondents to describe the refugee experience. The narratives of three long-term refugees were then selected for analysis using Bamberg's three-level positioning framework.

7.3   Main findings

Chapter 4 presented the findings from the critical discourse analysis of the media, while the findings of the thematic and positioning analyses were discussed in chapters 5 and 6 respectively. Thematically, the representation of refugees and refugee identity were framed within two main discourses: (i) the refugee as a problem, and (ii) the refugee as a victim. Where refugees were represented as problems, the discourse focused on the need for appropriate solutions to fix this 'problem'. In contrast, the representation of refugees as victims foregrounded their vulnerability and helplessness, which necessitated protection measures by a good Other. Sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 will discuss the representation of refugees framed within these two main discourses. Section 7.3.3 will discuss the main findings from the positioning analysis in Chapter 6.

7.3.1   Refugees as a problem

Within the discourse surrounding ASR as a 'problem' population were attempts to portray them negatively. Pickering argued in his analysis of Australian media discourse (2001) that ASR were not only represented as a problem but also as a deviant population that deviated from what was considered acceptable and normal. Deviancy, according to Pickering, is constructed in opposition to normality and is a means by which a government legitimised exclusionary policies towards ASR. Or as Johnson (2011) argued, 'The citizen is the norm, and any deviation from this is understood as dangerous, problematic and in need of correction' (p. 1028).

7.3.1.1 Media texts

The analysis of government and mainstream voices in the media data set revealed a focus on the refugees' deviancy through the representation of them as 'illegal immigrants' and 'threats'. According to Goodman and Speer (2007), generic references to people

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foreground either their legitimacy or illegitimacy instead of ways to help them. Thus, the genuine needs of ASR are delegitimized and any punitive action taken by the state can be justified. Furthermore, the absence of refugee voices in the government and mainstream press statements reinforces this monologic and authorial voice as they are able to present their ideological orientation regarding the representation of refugees.

Representing ASR as 'illegal immigrants' involved ascribing them criminal qualities, which legitimised 'keeping them out'. The choice of words pertaining to the punishment for breaking immigration laws, including 'detain', 'arrest', 'deport' 'taking action against', and 'send back', reflected this criminalization of ASR. Don and Lee (2014) argued that the securitization of Malaysian public discourse surrounding ASR fulfils two functions. First, by conflating ASR into the more threatening and problematic figure of the illegal immigrant, the state is able to explain 'the need to defend ourselves' from the 'flood' of 'illegals' (p. 702).

The second function of securitizing the discourse to represent ASR as threats is to legitimize hindering their entry into or keeping them out of the country and sending them home (Ibrahim, 2005; Pickering, 2004). This explains the Malaysian government's antagonistic attitude towards ASR and the restrictive immigration policy. This exclusionary practice is best illustrated by the fact that Malaysia has not ratified the UN Refugee Convention and its Protocol and has consistently asserted its position of considering all ASR as illegal immigrants. Through legitimation strategy of authorization, political leaders were able to make claims to the sovereignty of the government, thus subjecting international law and the UNHCR to the laws of the country.

The findings in Chapter 4 showed that when it came to legitimising the exclusion of asylum seekers and refugees, elite voices in Malaysia employed similar discursive practices found in the studies conducted in Europe, Australia and North America. Leudar et al. (2008) argue that negative representations of asylum seekers and refugees by the

media through common descriptions such as illegal immigrant, outsiders, threat, burden, disease, and flood are part of 'socially shared and resourced' expressions of discrimination and prejudice that exist in communities at large (p. 189). The findings in Chapter 4 supports this argument.

7.3.1.2 Findings from the thematic analysis

As discussed in Chapter 5, the refugee narratives analysed in this study were framed by three main identity claims: (i) the refugee as homo sacer (bare life), (ii) the refugee as a victim, and (iii) the idealised Self.

Refugees described themselves living bare lives in political and social *zones of indistinction* (Agamben, 1998) because they were stripped of any rights and access to material property and social and political opportunities. This homo sacer identity claim was constructed around two main positioning: the refugee as (i) a non-citizen, and (ii) an illegal migrant. In the case of both positioning, respondents made it clear that these were positioning imposed on them by the Malaysian state and local community. As non-citizens, they were excluded to privileges afforded to citizens and treated as outsiders by society. Because the distinction between who was a citizen and who was not, as in the case of refugees, was clearly defined in the law, the respondents accepted this positioning albeit reluctantly. However, the stories told regarding their experience as non-citizens frequently drew on the issues of lack of safety and security, denial of opportunities, discrimination and prejudice.

As mentioned section 5.2.2, the positioning as illegal migrants assigns an active role to the refugee as the one doing the offending. Therefore, this positioning as an illegal migrant required a response and the respondents reacted to this by either embracing or resisting it or alternatively, negotiating a half-legal, half-illegal positioning for themselves. Very few respondents positioned themselves as illegals. Instead, they

acknowledged that it was a positioning imposed on them by the locals or the government. Respondents who resisted this positioning almost always drew on the discourse of international law and human rights to justify why they were not illegals. Their understanding of the difference between themselves and illegal migrants was based firstly, on their definition of an illegal economic migrant, who came to work without proper documentation. Secondly, the motivation for the migration from the home country is also integral to the resistance against the illegal migrant positioning. Respondents foregrounded the fact that refugees were forced to flee persecution and were not motivated by economic reasons.

Respondents, who straddled both the legal and illegal migrant positioning, navigated between their pragmatic acceptance of the legal situation in Malaysia with regards to refugees and their status under the UNHCR. An important feature of this positioning was temporality. Respondents who accepted being 'illegal' in Malaysia as well as 'legal' focused on the fact that it was not a position they had to cope with in the long-term. They lived in a transitional or liminal state (Turner, 1967) and as Turner argued, liminality implies invisibility. In the context of the refugees, in this liminal state, they were no longer classified as citizens as their home country (and therefore, illegal) but were yet to be classified as citizens of any other country.

7.3.2 Refugees as victims

The second discourse surrounding the representation of refugees related to their vulnerability and victimhood. Johnson (2011) identifies the shift in the discourse surrounding refugees in the post-Cold War era from a 'politicised, European figure' to a 'depoliticised victim', represented primarily by 'Third World' women and children (p. 1029). This representation positions refugees as people, who have lost their homes, citizenship and thus, are non-political. As a 'mute victim' (Rajaram, 2002), the refugee

was almost always assigned a passive role without little or no agency and certainly without any voice. Because they had lost their country and had no voice, they were in need of someone else to speak on behalf of them.

7.3.2.1 Media texts

The alternative voices and non-government press took on this role of advocate as they represented ASR as victims of circumstance but also as victims of those in authority. These voices displayed more empathy towards the challenges faced by the refugees and they identified the Malaysian government as the oppressor of these victims. They were critical of the government's actions and challenge the treatment and management of ASR, while yet speaking out within permissible bounds.

Najib's opinion article published in the Sydney Morning Herald that was analysed represented the government more favourably. The focus was on the plight of the refugees and the fact that they were victims of human trafficking. This appeal for help explained why the 'Malaysia Solution' deal with Australia was proposed to solve this problem (section 4.2.3). Here, ASR were represented alongside the representation of the heroic self (the government) and the villainous Other (human traffickers). The government was activated being responsible for the ASR, who were in turn, passivated as victims without any agency. As discussed in that section, the mainstream newspapers aligned themselves with the Prime Minister's new representation of refugees by reproducing his article verbatim under headlines that reflected this sympathetic discourse (section 4.4). In contrast, the portions of his article were recontextualized in Malaysiakini representing a different image of Malaysia. Refugees were still the victims but Malaysia was now represented as the bad Other, who was accused of violating human rights in its treatment of refugees. The government was now represented as the one doing the extorting, trafficking and selling of human lives.

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7.3.2.2 Personal narratives

The victim representation that was present in some of the media data set, was also salient in the narrative data set. The theme of victimhood or vulnerability emerged as one of the main themes refugee respondents drew upon to represent themselves and this was discussed in Chapter 5 (section 5.3).

The discourse of victimhood was presented by respondents through two main positioning. First, respondents positioned themselves as passive victims through narratives of discrimination and exploitation of refugees by the local Malaysian people as a result of being positioned as 'illegal immigrants' or outsiders. The passive victim was always characterized by silence during an act of exploitation and helplessness to obtain assistance. Because refugees were constantly being positioned by Others as 'illegal', they were sometimes the target for unscrupulous action. More alarmingly, their passivity extended to their inability to take any action to resolve their conflicts and problems. The coda and evaluation portions of these narratives often included accounts of accepting the bad situation against their will and not knowing where or who to turn to for help.

Secondly, respondents positioned themselves as beneficiaries of other people's kindness. Some narratives highlighted the solution to their vulnerability, namely through the initiative and kindness of Malaysians. The characters, who took on these benefactor roles, provided refugees with assistance and resources they would otherwise have no access to.

7.3.3   Findings from positioning analysis

In Chapter 6, the narratives of three long-term refugees – Prince, John and May - were analysed using Bamberg's three-level positioning framework for narratives-in-interaction. All three respondents had lived in Malaysia for about 20 years and in the case of Prince and John, they were born in Malaysia and had never been to their country of origin. They all navigate between the positioning of themselves as Malaysian and Myanmar or refugee but their experiences were extremely diverse. A short summary of the analysis of their narratives, however inadequate, will be provided here.

Prince

For Prince, positioning himself as a Malaysian had more to do with his attempt to obtain 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) rather than his affinity to Malaysia. He problematised the refugee identity by presenting personal stories that illustrated the negative effects of being identified as a refugee. He also drew on macro discourses, such as refugees as victims, refugees as illegal immigrants, discrimination and prejudice, to further distance himself away from the refugee identity. Instead, through his stories, he consistently positioned himself as seeking to be identified as a Malaysian to avoid hostile situations with the locals. The Malaysian identity was seen to be more desirable and he described instances of him utilising his linguistic repertoire (e.g. accent, code-switching, multilingualism) and perceptions by others regarding his ethnicity to assume this identity. His positioning of himself as Rohingya could be seen through his presentation of heritage narratives. In these narratives, his accounted for his cultural heritage due to listening to his parents' stories and cultural values they passed on to him. Here, he positioned himself taking up this identity more passively compared to his Malaysian identity.

John

John distanced himself away from his Myanmar identity in a different way from Prince, who had to make efforts to hide his refugee identity. John often positioned himself being mistaken for a Malaysian, only to have to correct other people's misconception. However, when identifying himself as refugee, he positioned himself emphasising that he is a Myanmar born in Malaysian and not a Myanmar from Myanmar. He acknowledged his link to Myanmar through his parents but was not emotionally invested in this part of his cultural heritage. He displayed his preference for the Malaysian identity through his narratives, which revealed that this identity is something he has acquired over time because of his exposure to the local culture. The local people he has contact with were positioned as instrumental to the development of his Malaysian identity. His ability to use his linguistic repertoire as part of his investment in cultural capital further reinforced his claim for a Malaysian identity.

May

At the time of the interview, May, a recognised Burmese political refugee, had been living in Malaysia for 25 years. Her narrative on her journey from asylum seeker to refugee mirrored the movement of her positioning of herself from Myanmar citizen to asylum seeker to refugee to Malaysian. In her narrative, she spoke warmly about her affinity for the Malaysian culture and people, who she clearly identifies with now. She positioned herself culturally as forgetting her original culture and embracing the Malaysian culture. She invested in the cultural capital of this Malaysian identity by embracing the local language, cuisine, clothing, and local cultural festivals. But yet, she also positioned herself as still responsible for the Myanmar people and this justified her willingness to take up the job as head teacher of a refugee school.

7.4   Limitations of the study

In this study, I have tried to show how hegemonic discourses surrounding refugees in Malaysia can be challenged by 'counter narratives' (Bamberg, 2004a). Framed by the DHA, narrative as a field of action and as a genre brings to light aspects of the refugee experience that has been ignored or omitted from the larger discourse. Indeed, personal narrative serves as an important field of action in better understanding the identity or self-presentation of the refugee. This study is limited by the number of fields of action it was able to analyse due to the constraints of time and resources. Other genres in media discourse, such as opinion articles, readers' letters, TV news and features, advertisements, etc, and political discourse, such as parliamentary discourse, TV and radio interviews, political campaigns, etc, as well as legislative documents were also not included in the study for the same reasons. In terms of the voices included in the study, it was also not possible to include other voices, such as the UNHCR, social workers, activists, refugee community leaders, and lay people, as it was outside the scope of the study.

The thesis focused on main themes, such as illegality, securitization, vulnerability/victimhood, and identity construction in multicultural settings but was unable to discuss some other themes that were also present in the data sets. Examples of some themes not explored in detail in the study include and are not limited to stigma, taboo, and liminality.

7.5   Implications for policy

Based on the findings of this study, I identify some key areas for changes in policy relating to refugees:

- Malaysia needs to ratify the UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its Protocol if it wants to be serious in its commitment to upholding the rights of all people.

- If ratification is not forthcoming in the near future, a positive starting point for the Malaysian government would be in setting an example in the kind of rhetoric employed in the discourse surrounding refugees. Recognition of asylum seekers and refugees as different from illegal migrants, as a first step, would help begin the process of correcting prejudiced discourses and representations of refugees already present in public discourse.

- More open channels of communication between the government and organisations and parties that speak for refugees, apart from the UNHCR, should be established to ensure that the needs of the refugee community are conveyed to policy-makers.

7.6   Implications for future research

Based on the limitations of the study mentioned in section 7.3, further studies could include an investigation into more fields of action and genres relating to the refugee discourse in Malaysia. Examples of some genres include and are not limited to written personal narratives, journaling, advocacy texts, multimodal texts (e.g. advertisements, feature press articles, etc), TV and radio reporting, visual / digital storytelling, social media texts, etc. Studies could also include more voices than were analysed in this study.

Future studies could also include longitudinal narrative and ethnographic research to obtain a diachronic view of the refugee identity in transit. Studies on refugees in transit or refugees residing in non-signatory countries are scarce and longitudinal research would add greater depth into the construction of refugee identity as the refugee moves from asylum seeker to refugee and including the process of waiting and preparing for resettlement and finally, resettlement itself. Longitudinal studies could also explore the dynamics of the refugee family in terms of the development of the children's socialization and acculturation into either refugee or local communities or both. As was seen in the analysis of the two refugee youth in Chapter 6, the issue of the cultural and social identities of both refugee and local communities were a crucial part of the youths' negotiation and presentation of their Self.

Comparative studies on refugees living in other Asian countries would greatly contribute to developing changes in policies that affect them. In comparison to countries in the West and North with longer histories of receiving ASR and more developed structures for managing them, countries in Asia are still in the process of developing policies for managing refugees. Countries in this region are either signatories to the Convention but have limited resources and knowledge about how to manage refugees (e.g. South East Asian countries: The Philippines, Cambodia and Timor-Leste) or are non-signatories, who allow ASR to have their claims processed while waiting for long-term solutions (e.g. Thailand, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, etc). For example, Pakistan, although a non-signatory, hosted the highest number of refugees in 2013, around 1.6 million out of the total 51.2 million forcibly displaced people worldwide (UNHCR, 2014).

On a personal note, when I started my research into this area, I always had in mind two post-thesis objectives that I would like to achieve. First, a publication of selected excerpts of refugee stories for public consumption as a means of increasing awareness in

Malaysian society about the plight of refugees. It is my hope that I can build on the work already done in this thesis and also on the contacts I have made throughout my research journey to collect more personal stories by refugees living in Malaysia. These stories would then be edited and organised into themes for readability. I also intend to continue further research into the discourse of elite voices surrounding refugees with a view to advancing advocacy and policy-making efforts that will benefit refugees and asylum seekers alike as well as offer consultation on related discourses surrounding the representation of refugees.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS AND PAPERS PRESENTED

Publications:

1. Don, Z. M., & Lee, C. (2014). Representing immigrants as illegals, threats and victims in Malaysia: Elite voices in the media. *Discourse & Society, 25*(6), 687-705.

Conference Papers:

1. Don, Z. M., & Lee, C. (2012). *Conflicting Voices: The struggle over the representation of asylum seekers and refugees in Malaysian public discourse*. Paper presented at the 4th Global Conference: Strangers, Aliens and Foreigners, 21-23 September 2012, Mansfield College, Oxford.
2. Lee, C. (2012). *1Malaysia against people trafficking: The representation of asylum seekers and refugees in the Australia-Malaysia asylum deal*. Paper presented at the University of Malaya Conference on Discourse and Society, 27-29 June 2012, Kuala Lumpur.
3. Lee, C., & Don, Z. M. (2013). *Media as a space for political views on refugees and asylum seekers: Representing the Other as victim*. Paper presented at the 3rd International Conference Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice (ALAPP 2013), 12-14 December 2013, Kuala Lumpur.
4. Lee, C., & Don, Z. M. (2014). *Refugee identity and belonging in Malaysia: An analysis of positioning through narratives of two Malaysian born Myanmar refugees*. Paper presented at the 5th International Conference: Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines (CADAAD), 1-3 September 2014, Loránd Eötvös University, Budapest.
5. Lee, C. (2015). *Refugee identity in Malaysia: Positioning analysis of narratives of two Malaysian born Myanmar refugees*. Paper presented at the Georgetown University Graduate Student Conference: Conceptualizing, Investigating, and Practicing Multilingualism and Multiculturalism, 27-28 February 2015, Georgetown University.