

RESEARCH REPORT

**A STUDY ON STUDENT'S UNDERSTANDING TOWARD
THE USE AND MISUSE OF LANGUAGE
IN MALAYSIAN NEWSPAPERS**

CODE: P (1) / G / 2006

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Bandar Baru Nilai,
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DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the work is our own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to Allah SWT and His Messenger Muhammad SAW upon the sustenance given by Him in completing this research. This research would not have been possible without the support of many people. Many thanks to Islamic University College of Malaysia (KUIM) for the opportunity, financial assistance and guidance in making this research possible.

Also thanks to the Faculty of Leadership and Management who have been supporting our work. And finally, thanks to our husbands, parents, and numerous friends who endured this long process with us, always offering support and love.

ABSTRACT

General Semantics is a field of knowledge that can be applied to improve communication skills and language objectivity in news writing. Even though this field is still new in Malaysia, there have been several content analysis researches conducted by local scholars in examining the level of language objectivity in local newspapers. Thus, this exploratory study of students' understanding toward General Semantics at Islamic University College of Malaysia (KUIM) was conducted to gain more knowledge about the understanding of General Semantics among local citizens. A survey was conducted to review related issues such as perception towards objective and non-objective words and statements in news contents and headlines among students, the students' understanding toward language objectivity in Malaysia and their readiness to learn that particular knowledge. The research identified that students had inaccurate perception of perceiving objective and non-objective words and statements in news contents and headlines as well as low understanding of language objectivity itself. At the same time, the research also revealed that the respondents are ready to learn General Semantics if it is offered in the university's curriculum in order to improve their communication skills.

ABSTRAK

Semantik Umum merupakan satu bidang kajian yang boleh diaplikasikan untuk memperbaiki kemahiran berkomunikasi dan meningkatkan objektiviti bahasa dalam penulisan berita. Walaupun bidang ini masih baru di Malaysia, beberapa kajian analisis kandungan telah dibuat oleh beberapa sarjana tempatan untuk menilai tahap objektiviti bahasa dalam akhbar-akhbar tempatan. Kajian ini merupakan satu kajian penerokaan yang dijalankan di kalangan pelajar Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia (KUIM) untuk mengetahui kefahaman mereka terhadap Semantik Umum. Tinjauan ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji isu-isu yang berkaitan seperti persepsi pelajar terhadap perkataan dan kenyataan objektif dan tidak objektif dalam berita dan tajuk berita, pemahaman terhadap Semantik Umum dan kesediaan pelajar untuk mempelajari ilmu ini. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar mempunyai persepsi yang kurang tepat dalam menilai perkataan dan ayat yang objektif atau tidak objektif dalam berita dan tajuk berita serta mempunyai pemahaman yang rendah terhadap Semantik Umum. Dalam pada itu, kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar bersedia untuk mempelajari Semantik Umum apabila ia ditawarkan di universiti untuk memperbaiki kemahiran komunikasi di kalangan mereka.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Objectivity is one of the most important aspects in journalism ethics. Objectivity is seen to be in both ways – achievable and only a myth (Merril 1987). In this research, the researcher would like to see objectivity as something achievable, through objective language used in news reporting. Objectivity in news ensuring the careful use of language in the news reporting. On the other hand, reporting itself requires identifying and discovering enormously complex events and responsibly representing them in summary form (Russell & Many, 1992). Thus, the role of perception is undeniable in journalism study so as to reduce cognitive dissonance among readers.

In Malaysia, reviewed literature shows that the level of language objectivity needs improvement (Mohd. Rajib Ghani 1984, Mohd. Rajib Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 1996, Faridah Ibrahim & Chau Pao Ling 1997, Mohd. Rajib Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 2000, Faridah Ibrahim & Mohd. Rajib Ghani 2002, Faridah Ibrahim 2003, Siti Suriani Othman 2004, Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 2005, Faridah Ibrahim & Emma Mirza Wati Mohamad 2005). So far, those literature review provide an insight of the objectivity level based on content analysis research but there has not been a single research yet in this country that examine whether the readers realize or not that the news read in the newspapers are

actually not objective. In this research, the main objective is to examine the understanding of students toward objective and non-objective statements in news contents and headlines. This exploratory study will provide the basic idea for further research pertaining language objectivity level among Malaysian.

The importance of ensuring objective reporting is inevitable (Roscho 1975, McDonald 1978, Jayaswal 1990, Streckfuss 1990, Correa 1992, Keeble 2001). According to Merrill (in Mohd Rajib Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 1996) objectivity is first considered as a "myth", a mere rhetoric based on "non-scientific" two-valued orientation, and hence an impossible goal to achieve. Second, objectivity is an ideal, largely attainable on the part of journalists by trying to be fair, accurate, balanced, dispassionate and unprejudiced. Obviously, no matter how we look at it, still objectivity is a primary journalism ethics that reporters should practice.

In measuring the level of language objectivity, prominent journalism scholars such as John C. Merrill (1965) have applied General Semantics (GS) in their attempt to improve the use of language and to reduce the misuse of language in news. General Semantics is a field of study that attempts to improve human's responses toward symbols, signs, symbol system (including language), sign system and situation-symbol. It is to be said as one of the first theories advanced in the communication field (Wood 2000). In this particular philosophy, the

emphasized is given to 'how words can be used to the betterment of human beings'. Researches in General Semantics studies have proved that with the principles suggested in this philosophy, it can reduce ambiguity in communication. Wood (2000) added, the goal of general semanticists is to improve everyday communication by discovering the ways in which words distort, obscure and complicate understanding between people. General Semanticists believe that the application of this philosophy would help a lot in reducing prejudice, stereotyping, and dogmatic generalizations (http://dfwcgs.net/sampler/about_gs.html, Faridah Ibrahim 2003). Using the basic ideas of General Semantics, we will see the application of General Semantics in journalism in promoting a more objective writing.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Language objectivity is a timeless issue in journalism ethics. According to the reviewed literature, the level of language objectivity in the Malaysian newspapers needs to be improved (Mohd. Rajib Ghani 1984, Mohd. Rajib Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 1996, Faridah Ibrahim & Chau Pao Ling 1997, Mohd. Rajib Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 2000, Faridah Ibrahim & Mohd. Rajib Ghani 2002, Faridah Ibrahim 2003, Siti Suriani Othman 2004, Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 2005, Faridah Ibrahim & Emma Mirza Wati Mchamad 2005).

Since the mechanism used to measure language objectivity applying the General Semantics approach is not yet popular in Malaysia, it is very crucial to know the level of perception and understanding of Malaysian readers. Even though this research is not yet researching for the whole Malaysia, this exploratory study will be the catalyst for future study that will open the opportunity for other research in the future. Hence, this will provide a complete insight about language objectivity level in Malaysia and a conclusion of the Malaysian understanding of the use and misuse of language in the local newspapers since after 20 years of the first General Semantics research done by Malaysian researchers (Faridah Ibrahim, 1984; Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani 1984), there has not a single research done researching on the audience perspective using the audience analysis methodology.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the audience awareness toward the objective and non-objective *statements* in the *news headlines* based on the General Semantics perspective.
2. To identify the audience awareness toward the objective and non-objective *statements* in the *news contents* based on the General Semantics perspective.

3. To identify the audience awareness toward the use and misuse of *words* in the news *headlines* and *news contents* based on the General Semantics perspective.
4. To know whether some non-objective *words* used in the newspapers have given any negative *impact* to the readers' mind.
5. To measure the *level of understanding of language objectivity* among the selected audience.
6. To measure the *readiness* of readers improve their awareness in language objectivity.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the statements in the news headlines that are considered objective or non-objective based on the audience perception?
2. What are the statements in the news contents that are considered objective or non-objective based on the audience perception?
3. What are words perceived as objective and non-objective by the audience based on General Semantics perspective?
4. What is the positive / negative impact of words used in the news contents and headlines perceived by the audience based on General Semantics perspective?

5. What is the level of language objectivity among selected readers based on General Semantics perspective?
6. Are the readers ready to improve their awareness in language objectivity?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This is an initial study in Malaysia with the attempt to measure the level of understanding of language objectivity among Malaysian readers. Since it is an exploratory study, this research will be the benchmark of future research. By continuously encouraging research like this, it will provide important insights of Malaysian scenario of language objectivity from the audience perspective. This would contribute a lot to the body of knowledge especially to the media and journalism industry.

An awareness and understanding of the language objectivity in news reporting would further assist the general public in perceiving news accurately. This is deemed necessary because their perception will affect the way they think and behave towards issues reported by media.

1.6 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

1. **News headlines** - a sentence that plays the role as the title of a news that usually derived from the most important element reported in a news.

2. **News content** - the body of news (text) which starts with the news lead that carries the most important message in the news and followed by other stories to elaborate the lead.

3. **Objective words** - are words that are used in journalism and yet, do not cause confusion to readers in terms of defining, understanding and causing negative behavior to the readers.

4. **Non-objective words** - are words that are used in journalism but can cause confusion to readers in terms of defining, understanding and causing negative behavior to the readers.

5. **Objective sentence** - are sentences that are written/quoted by reporters in news writing and yet, do not cause readers to infer the meaning, being judgemental or having the tendency to label something/someone which can lead to negative behavior.

6. **Non-objective sentence** - are sentences that are written/quoted by reports in news writing but it can cause readers to infer the meaning, being judgemental or having the tendency to label something/someone which can lead to negative behaviour.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This research will be a vital exploratory research to collect primary data to get a view about the USIM students' understanding toward General Semantics. It is hope that the benefits and limitations discussed in the later chapters will provide profound understanding about the studied scenario. The data collected will be very useful for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

General Semantics has been first studied in 1984 by local scholars (Mohd. Rajib Ab. Ghani, 1984 & Faridah Ibrahim 1984). The research findings basically reveal that the level of language objectivity is very low in Malaysian main streams newspapers studied. Further research was undergone to study the trend of the phenomena. This section will discuss related literature in order to understand General Semantics and language objectivity in Malaysian media practice.

2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The latest research is by Faridah Ibrahim and Emma Mirza Wati Mohamad (2005) entitled *War Heroes, Terrorists, Freedom Fighter and Fragile Economy: From Metaphors to 'WMDs'*. This qualitative content analysis and from the interpretive perspective research, the researchers explored how four Malaysian mainstream newspapers used language, especially metaphors and to what extent metaphors are appropriately used. The newspapers namely The New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian and The Star were systematically selected over a one-month period in June 2005 using Carter's constructed one-week sampling.

The findings show that the words used as metaphors in English newspapers are different from the ones used in Malay newspapers. Some metaphors categorized in this research are health metaphor, orientational metaphor, object metaphor, culture metaphor and war metaphor. Findings in the cultural and war metaphors show some appropriate and

inappropriate usage of metaphors such as The Star 27 June 2005 used bull-run to describe a rough situation. To most of us, bull is almost always associated to rough and brutal. This metaphor may easily mean that you are facing a challenging journey. But to the Indian community, bull is a sacred animal as the Hindus consider them as their god. Another example is an inappropriate use of the war metaphor. In UM 18 June 2005, the headline was "Michael Jackson wants to take revenge on individuals who have planned to damage his image". The word "revenge" is too strong a word and emotion-laden. Here, the war metaphor used to signify seriousness and anger, has an impact especially for Jackson's fans worldwide.

From the General Semanticists point of view, journalists' words have the potential to become Weapons of Mass Deception or rather Words of Mass Destruction when inappropriately used. Hence, metaphors do matter because they structure our perceptions, the way we make sense of the world around us, and the way we talk and understand about things that affect our lives and identities. And for the media, to be aware of the use and misuse of language, to be aware of what are being said, and how they say it, they can achieve enough impartiality for practical purposes.

Another research entitles *War Reporting: A Symbiosis between the Media and Protagonist of War?* by Mohd Rajib Ab. Ghani and Faridah Ibrahim (2005). This study looks at the use and misuse of words where reporting is concern. Through a qualitative content analysis, this paper tries to identify how war is reported, from which angles and in whose perspectives. Research was done to Malaysia newspapers over a period of two

months (March and April 2005) – in both print and electronic media alike – it is found that war coverage is definitely not missing in the daily news diet.

The electronic media also showed similar trends as the print media during the period of study. Like the Malaysian dailies, the electronic media in this country is dependent on the dominant four international news agencies for foreign news with AFP and Reuters remaining their favorite suppliers of news, news reels, actualities and visuals. One news producer told the writers in an interview that these two agencies are popular among Malaysian media organizations because of their “more or less” unbiased coverage.

With the shortage of trained staff, funds and equipments, the Malaysian newspapers, like their counterparts in most developing countries are still dependent on the dominant four international news agencies for foreign news especially war news (*Reuters, AFP and AP* and publish it under the *Agencies*). Only of late, after the 2003 Iraq War that the Malaysian editors see the need to train Malaysian journalists to be war correspondents.

This study has shown that while care is taken by local gatekeepers to create a more presentable war news by combining news from Reuters, AP, UPI and AFP and place them under agencies, there are instances where the choice of “facts” in news. By applying Hayakawa Trichotomy, the analysis shows that all the four newspapers had achieved about 55 to 66 percent objectivity in resending their war news but the remaining 36 to 45 percent of non objective coverage remained questionable. Using news from the international news agencies, the local media are still far from propagating world peace.

Another recent research done by Siti Suriani Othman (2004) entitled *Objektiviti Bahasa Jari Perspektif Semantik Umum dalam Utusan Malaysia dan Berita Harian: Satu Kajian Terhadap Berita Pelaksanaan Bahasa Inggeris dalam Mata Pelajaran Sains dan Matematik* concluded that the level of language objectivity in Malaysian newspapers should be increased. Source bias which is noted more than 10% which is 22% and editor bias that reached 51% shows that this scenario needs immediate improvement. This research did also study the journalist bias which shows the level of awareness among journalists is good—1.7% only. According the General Semantics perspective, any type of bias which is higher than 10% is critical and needs improvement. This research examined 1339 news statements using qualitative content analysis method to measure source bias and journalist bias, which in examining editor bias, 100 headlines was analyzed.

Another research by Faridah Ibrahim (2003) entitled *Penggunaan dan salahguna bahasa dalam tajuk berita daripada perspektif Semantik Umum* examined misuse of language in headlines and this should be avoided in news writing. Applying the Hayakawa Trichotomy which consists (1) Report Statement, (2) Inference Statement and (3) Judgment Statement based on General Semantics perspective, the researcher evaluated language objectivity in 891 headlines from four mainstream newspapers in this country i.e. (1) *The New Straits Times* (NST), (2) UM, (3) *The Star* (TS) and (4) *Berita Harian*. The analysis done within seven days in March and April 2002. This research has also analyzed the headlines orientation whether positive, negative, neutral or balance, source

presentation either individual source or collective source and the use of words such as noun, verb or adjective in headlines.

In this research, the headline was examined in overall, not by comparing them according to different newspapers. The analysis was done in quantitative and qualitative analysis. The findings show that the headlines are mostly categorized in the inference statement and judgment statement. When these two types of statements were combined, it reached up to 29.5 %. Overall, neutral news orientation was 65 % compared to the positive ones which is 23 % and 13 % negative. But, this research found out that the percentage of non-objective headlines are higher compared to the objective headlines. The question of how the percentage was higher than 10% is questioned, where neutrality is highly emphasized by editors in all examined newspapers.

A research by Mohd. Rajib Ab Ghani and Faridah Ibrahim (2002) entitled *Symbols, Labels and Straight News: A Study on the Nature of Prejudice in the Media* provide insights on alternatives to view the nature of prejudice that are reflected in the use of language, symbols and terms that sometimes dominate most news stories, from the perspectives of General Semantics and philosophy of ethics. This research combining both the quantitative and qualitative content analysis based on four basic problems that inhibit factual communication i.e. (1) *two-value orientation*, (2) *dead-level abstracting*, (3) *undue-identification*, and (4) *unconscious projection*. Four mainstream local newspapers (1) The New Straits Times, (2) The Star, (3) Utusan Malaysia and (4) Berita

Harian with the total of 444 news and 1282 analyzed sentences. Two issues from each newspaper were chosen randomly since April 2002.

In this research, the unit analysis is the newspaper. Since the issue studied is the nature of prejudice in the Malaysian media as manifested by the news content, the straight news articles were selected as the unit of observation. Features, editorials, letters and opinion pieces were excluded from the analysis because they do not purport to be objective.

The overall findings of the research show that 82 or 18.4 % of studied news contain prejudicial words. From this amount, English newspapers were found to have more inaccurate words compared to Malay newspapers. Most of the prejudicial words are originated from international news agencies, but the fact is the editors always have the choice whether or not to publish these kinds of headlines.

Another research was done by Aini Faezah Ramlan (2002) entitled *Paparan imej Wanita dalam Akhbar: Satu Analisis Objektiviti Semantik*. This research examined the use of language in news based on semantic objectivity. The objectivity level was measured through the abstract level of a news based on the Structural Differential Model introduced by Alfred Korzybski. Two mainstream newspapers were studied i.e. Utusan Malaysia and The New Straits Times using both the qualitative and quantitative content analysis.

The conclusion of the research shows that there has not been so many changes happen in the women portrayal in the Malaysian media compared to the research done by previous

researchers. Besides that, the findings of the research also show that the women's' image is now portrayed more positively through theme selection and objective language use.

A research by Faridah Ibrahim and Chau Pao Ling (1997) concentrated on the image objectivity among women local and international politicians through their research *Analisis Semantik Objektiviti Citra Ahli Politik Wanita Tempatan dan Antarabangsa*. This research has listed 206 current news, features/column/editorial/comic and picture/cartoon/illustration that have been collected for two months starting from September and October 1996 from the mainstream newspapers i.e. Utusan Malaysia and The Star. 116 samples are from Utusan Malaysia, and another 90 from The Star.

This research focused on the use of Hayakawa Trichotomy components as a means in categorizing speech, instructions, opinion and any decision in written form that the sources are women political figure and government leaders especially in Malaysia and its regions. This research also applied seven statements introduced by a local scholar, Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani (1984) that consists of (1) Report sentence attributed (RSA), (2) report sentence unattributed (RSU), (3) inference sentence attribute (ISA), (4) inference sentence unattributed (ISU), (5) judgment sentence attributed (JSA), (6) judgment sentence unattributed (JSU) and (7) label (L) (either attributed or unattributed) and also examining two types of bias which might possible to any news and headlines that are source news and journalist news,

Overall, this research shows that the image portrayal toward women politicians have the tendency of being negative because news and features that are published contained lots of biasness in terms of action, labeling issues and sentences that are inference and judgmental in nature. This research shows that the levels of objectivity of both newspapers are not high which is less than 60 % use of objective sentences respectively. This would give the implication that both newspapers need to take immediate initiative to increase the objectivity level to ensure the reputation of newspapers is not questioned. Besides that, the most important one is Malaysian won't get wrong perception regarding women's' image in the political world.

This research also studied two types of bias i.e. source bias and journalist bias shows a positive source bias in image portrayal (9.6 %), 17.1 % negative, 49.25 neutral and 17.1 % balance. Meanwhile, in terms of journalist bias, the image portrayal is 4.5 % positive, 24.1 % negative, 60.8 % neutral and 10.6 % balance. The findings show that the reporters have the tendency to concentrate their reporting neutrally which is a good attempt in avoiding source bias.

One of the ways to evaluate either the media organizations through the editors play their roles as the party that develop the image is by examining the headlines orientation in a news or feature. The analyzed news and feature headlines shows a neutral, positive and negative orientation, the headlines have the tendency to be quite similar i.e. 33.2 % positive, 32.2 % negative and 31.7 % neutral.

A research by Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani and Faridah Ibrahim (1996) aimed to highlight the trend of human rights coverage in the Malaysian media with special emphasis on several of leading daily newspapers in Malaysia i.e. The New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian, The Star and The Sun. Apart from that, this research also examines the use and misuse of media language in the explication of human rights stories. Hayakawa Trichotomy and the extended version of this trichotomy (Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani 1984) has been used as the research methodology.

The total of 218 news with 2564 sentences were analyzed through the qualitative and quantitative content analysis of five major local newspapers. The sample was collected in the forth week of March 1996 and the first week of April 1996. In this particular research, only current news and features have been analyzed. Editorial, letters to the editor and other types of newspaper writing have not been studied.

The findings show that there are so many non-objective sentences in the news have been published in the newspapers that is 25.5 %. This percentage is considered too big and the number could possibly be reduced if the journalists are aware of the importance of evaluating their thoughts prior to making statements. Generally, the data suggested that the newspapers in selecting human rights stories were not "sensitive" or "aware" of the potential meaning of the words they used and consequently were imprecise in the language they used to describe factual events.

The next research, *Image of superpowers in two Malaysian national dailies*. (Faridah Ibrahim 1984) has used the approach introduced in General Semantics. Statements that contain inference, judgment and negative adjective such as 'mendakwa', 'menyelar', 'mendesak', 'menuduh', 'slams', 'snubs', 'criticized', 'demands' etc. has portrayed the superpowers in dual images. This research studied 459 items from the national newspapers Utusan Malaysia and The New Straits Times found out the American, Great Britain and Russia have been categorized as neutral and non partisan while Japan and People Republic of China in neutral and partisan.

Another research by Mohd Rajib A. Ghani (1984) entitled *Semantic analysis of objectivity in two Malaysian newspapers* applied the Hayakawa Trichotomy to measure the objectivity level in Utusan Malaysia and The New Straits Times in political news writing. The findings out of the analysis of 2546 sentences in the news show that the practice of objective news writing is 65.8 % and the non objective sentences is 34.2 %. The number of the non objective sentences is considered high. The sentences categorized in non objective is quite high. The sentences categorized in non objective sentences containing inference sentence and judgment sentence, written by reporters that contained subcategorizes such as ISA, ISU, JSA, JSU and (L). This is actually the research that identified the seven subcategorizes in examining language objectivity through the General Semantics perspective.

A well-known professor in journalism, Dennis T. Lowry (1971) in his research *Agnew and the network TV news: a before/after content analysis* examined a television news

regarding the Vice President Spiro Agnew through content analysis. Lowry applied the Hayakawa Trichotomy to examined either the speech of Spiro in Des Moines has any impact to the television news. The research shows that the television news content about Agnew has no judgment sentences, either oppose or against Agnew.

Contradict with the research findings from a well-known journalism scholar in 1965, John C. Merrill in his research *How Time stereotyped three US presidents* that has used the Hayakawa Trichotomy in his research. The sampling of the research was selected based on news during the administration of Truman in 1951, Eisenhower 1955 and Kennedy 1962. The news was analyzed based on the use of language that describe about those presidents with emphasized to whether or not exist the reporting of opinion or bias language. This findings show that *Time* has portrayed a bias image to all three presidents. But, the *Time* has focused much on Eisenhower (81 times) for positive bias. Meanwhile, negative bias is more focused to Truman (92 times), followed by Kennedy 14 times.

In conclusion, reviewed literature proved that the perspective of General Semantics could be used as the mechanism to understand the level of language objectivity in news writing in Malaysia. Therefore, it is assured that objectivity is not a myth, since we actually have the mechanism that can help us to achieve objectivity.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

General Semantics is a philosophy founded by a Polish, Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950) in his book *Science and Sanity: an Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* in 1933. Korzybski's first training was in engineering at the Polytechnic Institute of Warsaw. Subsequently he did graduate work both in the natural sciences and in humanities in Germany and Italy.

His first major work is called *Manhood of Humanity: The Science and Art of Human Engineering*. The central theme of this book is what Korzybski called 'time binding', the uniquely human aspect of the life process, which allows individuals to communicate over intervals of time. This human beings can do by virtue of being able to transmit accumulated experience to succeeding generations. In defining man as time-binders, Korzybski placed crowing emphasis upon this unique characteristic and declared it to be man's principal survival mechanism (Rapoport 1950).

According to Hayakawa (1944), since the publication in 1923 of *The Meaning of Meaning* by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, interest in and controversy about semantics have become so widespread that is possible now to speak of a 'semantic movement'. The term 'semantics', in spite of its original used by Michael Breal to designate historical inquiries into changes in the meanings of words, is now used more frequently to refer to the kind of inquiry initiated and encouraged by Lady Viola Welby under the name 'significs'. Significs was to her 'the science of meaning or the study of significance,

provided sufficient recognition is given to its practical aspect as a method of mind, one which is involved in all forms of mental activity, including that of logic'. The study of 'significance' was to her far more than the study of words, it was also the study of acts and situations; 'significance' itself was more than lexical 'meaning' or 'finding the referent; it included both insight into motives and moral judgment. The object of her study, then was the total interpretative act, the reaction of the individual to signs and sign-situations.

This was how basically the interest in semantics has emerged. Besides that, there have been also contributions from the anthropological researches which further contributed to semantics. The work of Bronislaw Malinowski, studying primitive languages, finds that 'to regard (language) as a means for the embodiment or expression of thought is to take a one-sided view of one of its most derivate and specialized functions. Language is rather a 'mode of behavior'. Linguistic events are therefore not to be studied in isolation in terms merely of their lexical content of logical coherence, but in their relationship to the social institutions, activities, and rituals of which they are a part. In short, linguistic events are explicable only in terms of their non-linguistic context (Hayakawa 1944).

Another scholar, Benjamin Lee Whorf, an anthropological linguist is also someone whose work has inspired Korzybski. Korzybski's attempt to synthesize and make such scientific and linguistic findings as are here called 'semantic'. He proposes a system of 'general semantics' which discards 'theories of meaning' (which he regards as leading inescapably to verbal and terminological hair-splitting) in favour of a study of

'evaluation', i.e., the responses of the human organism-as-a-whole to signs and sign-situations (Hayakawa 1944).

Fundamentals of General Semantics

Basically, there are two (2) fundamentals of this philosophy. The first of these is the method by which the human entity receives and processes information, from the non-verbal sensing thru and including the highly verbal thinking and talking. The other basis is the methods of science, including the way knowledge grows and the process of revising theories.

In summarizing the first process, general semantics emphasizes the **abstracting of information** (selecting some and discarding the rest), transducing that information (for example, changing from the physical vibrations of sound in air to the electro-chemical impulses in nerves) and the "model" or "map" character of the information. As we process information (perceptions, words, etc.), we convert the raw data into our own internal form of representation (models). In the conversion process, we fit the information into our pre-conceived notions and develop hypotheses to account for the data. A similar process (forming hypotheses, or building models) happens even at the most nonverbal levels of nervous system processing. General semantics regards this characteristic "model-making" structure of our nervous systems as fundamentally important and implies that an awareness of this process must be considered in our daily activities as well as in the organizing philosophy of our world view.

Kodish (1998) agrees that consciousness thus involves abstracting. We select something(s) to notice and filter out others. We give our attention to some aspect of a given situation with a concomitant neglect of other aspect. By *becoming conscious that we abstract*, we develop a greater ability to *choose* what we abstract: what we attend to and what we neglect. Such consciousness makes it less likely that we become fixed in our present set of abstractions (perceiving, labeling). Remembering that we abstract gives us evaluational (semantic) flexibility and can help us to stay in better touch with what is going on in all of the 'worlds' or levels of so-called 'reality'. This flexibility is fostered by remembering the difference between what you can and your non-verbal sensory-perceptual experience. In this way, you can leave the verbal, intellectual realm at times in order to more fully experience the non-verbal realm of your senses.

Secondly, the study of Science reveals that growth of scientific knowledge and theory follows a pattern similar to the method by which the human entity receives and processes information. Information is collected, some kept and some discarded, and attempted to be fit into the current scientific theories (models). Information which doesn't fit is used to construct a new theory and a test is devised to check out the new theory (model, hypothesis, etc.). New theories can replace old, be discarded, or be neither confirmed nor denied.

The standard system of evaluating in use was derived primarily from the so-called Aristotle's laws of thought and the associated **mathematical** logic. The new system of

evaluating is quite different from the Aristotelian system and is called **non-Aristotelian**. In attempting to bridge the gap from the old to the new paradigm, analogies are used from major paradigm shifts in physics and geometry. The changes are from Newtonian to relativistic theories in physics, and from Euclidean to non-Euclidean geometries. In both cases the old paradigm can be shown to be limited, special cases of the new paradigm. The new system has a structure which is derived from the way our nervous systems work and the way the body of science works in adding new theories and knowledge. (<http://www.xenodochy.org/gs/wigs.html>).

While the Aristotelian orientation looks at intensional meanings which are generalizations of the external reality, the non-Aristotelian looks at the extensional meanings which are based on ordering observations, investigations, etc (Lee 1941: 123). The use of extensional orientation in everyday language could possibly avoid the bias inherent in writing and speaking. Because one would of course have fewer tendencies to take what is said for granted and would question the meanings of words, there would be less tendency for one to infer, prejudge and harbour a prejudicial behaviour toward others (Mohd. Rajib Ab. Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 2002).

There are three new concepts brought in the Non-Aristotelian system as explained below:

1. *Law of Identity* ($A = A$) or read as A is A. Korzybski contended that identity as absolute sameness in all respects does not appear to exist. In this sense, although we may treat them as equivalent, *A is not A*. As written on a piece of

paper, the second "A" differs in space-time coordinates and 'physical' makeup from the first (<http://www.driveyourselvesane.com/gsarticles/maxblack.html>). In the Non-Aristotelian system, the law is known as *Law of Non-Identity*.

2. The second law is called the *Law of the excluded minded* ($A \vee \sim A$), to be read as "A or not-A" which rejects the idea of neutrality and one should choose between two. In the non-Aristotelian system, the *Multi/Infinite-valued orientation* is used where a proposition is associated with an infinity of truth values which can be taken to lie between 1 and 0, whereas in Aristotelian logic, only the extreme values, 1 and 0 (true or false) are admitted (Hayakawa 1946).

3. The third law is the *Law of non-contradiction*.

This principle brings the idea that nothing can both be the case and not be the case at the same time. For example, "The sun rises in the east and does not rise in the east" is not possible, in fact absurd (<http://nafl.blogspot.com/>). But there is other side of arguments relating to this principle. In the law of non-contradiction, the notion of context and time are equally important. In contrast, in the non-aristotelian system, both notions of context and time were lost. For physicists light is only considered to be a wave or a particle depending on the nature (i.e. context) of the problem to be solved. Light is not considered to be both a particle and a wave at the same time.

Another example is when P = mostly empty space and x = a table. Or perhaps, P = is free and x = Paul. In both these case it seems we still need to be both

temporally and contextually sensitive.

Finally, what about Plato's thought, "But what about the bigness and smallness of fingers? Does sight perceive them adequately? Does it make no difference to it whether the finger is in the middle or at the end? And is it the same with the sense of touch, as regards the thick and the thin, the hard and the soft? And do the other senses reveal such things clearly and adequately? Doesn't each of them rather do the following: The sense set over the hard is, in the first place, of necessity also set over the soft, and it reports to the soul that the same thing is perceived by it to be both hard and soft?" What role do context and time play here?

Premises in General Semantics

There are three (3) premises in General Semantics:

1. A map *is not* the territory (Words *are not* the things they represent).

What this means is that our perception of reality is not reality itself but our own version of it, or our "map". No two people can have exactly the same map. While we all have similar neurological structure, it functions differently in all of us. This is the basis for our problems in communication when we try to impose our map upon another person. Learning to recognize the structure of another person's map allows us to "see the world through their eyes" and therefore understand and relate to others respectfully and accurately (<http://www.idea-seminars.com/articles/map.htm>).

2. A map covers *not all* the territory. (Words cannot cover all they represent.)

Another basic premise in general semantics which notes that no abstraction, or map, can be a complete picture of the territory it represents (<http://www.driveyourselvesane.com/dysbook/glossary.html>). Words and languages are seen as tools or medium in communication, but at the same time they have no ability to explain the reality extensively. Exactly, no word can 'map' the actual event verbatim. The word 'red' for instance is not explaining 'red' in real life. There are many questions can be asked, what kind of red?, light red? dark red? maroon? or pink?.

Kodish (2006) said that maintaining clarity as to level of abstracting contributes to managing our evaluations well. When we use the extensional devices proposed in General Semantics to describe something accurately, it can reduce misunderstanding and automatically able to manage 'emotions' or evaluations. The four extensional devices are (1) dating, (2) indexing, (3) etc., or et cetera and (4) quotes and hyphens. For instance, talking about 'red', this is how the extensional devices can help us to understand 'red' in General Semantics perspective:

Extensional devices in General Semantics with examples

Extensional devices in General Semantics.	dating	indexing	etc	quotes and hyphens
<i>Understanding 'red'.</i>	Red 1990 is not Red 2006.	Red 1 is not Red 2.	My favourite colours are yellow, red, etc.	We are now talking about 'red'.

Table 2.1 Extensional devices in General Semantics with examples

Explanation:

Dating

If we are talking about a colour that is red, for sure there is no absolutely same 'red' if you compare a colour that you have seen in 1990 and another colour you have seen in 2006. Even though both might be 'red', but in General Semantics, there is no absolutely same 'red' especially if we are comparing it over time.

Indexing

The same principal goes to the second extensional device in General Semantics. No two things are the same, so there is absolutely no way to 'red 1' to be absolutely the same with 'red 2'.

etc.

Etc or et cetera is actually 'others' or other possibilities of that particular subject/matter. To ensure accuracy, we cannot be so sure by saying some things as if everything is covered. If we add etc. at the end of any statements, we are actually reserving for any things that might be left out while making any particular statement.

Quotes and hyphens

It is so clear when we use quotes and hyphens to differentiate something from another. For instance, we are now talking about a particular 'red', so that it is written as 'red' and not simply red to assist understanding.

All the devices are applicable generally in all aspects of General Semantics, as long as it is practice, practice and practice over time.

3. A map is self-reflexive (In language we can speak *about* language).

The third premise turns out to be an application to everyday life of the extremely important work of Bertrand Russell, who attempted to solve self-contradictions in the foundations of mathematics by his theory of mathematical or logical types. In this connection the term *self-reflexive* was introduced by Josiah Royce. The theory of mathematical types made me aware of new kinds of linguistic perplexities to which practically no one, except a very few mathematicians, had paid attention before. The realization and analysis of such difficulties led me to the discovery that the principles of different orders of abstractions, multi-ordinality of terms, (over/under)-defined terms, second-order reactions ("thinking" about "thinking," doubt of doubt, fear of fear, etc.), thalamo-cortical interaction, the circularity of human knowledge, etc., may be considered as generalizing the theory of mathematical types (www.esgs.org/uk/art/ak3.htm).

Some Applications of General Semantics in Journalism Studies

Russel (in Russel and Many 1992) has adapted earlier perception models proposed by Korzybski that offered models that explained how perception necessarily differs from a given stimulus field. The models also show how perception may even result in reports that add up to more, or in some cases less, than the sum of the stimuli observed. This

modified model may help basic news writing students understand that, much like a camera, their perception is limited and subject to distortion.

Human Perception Model

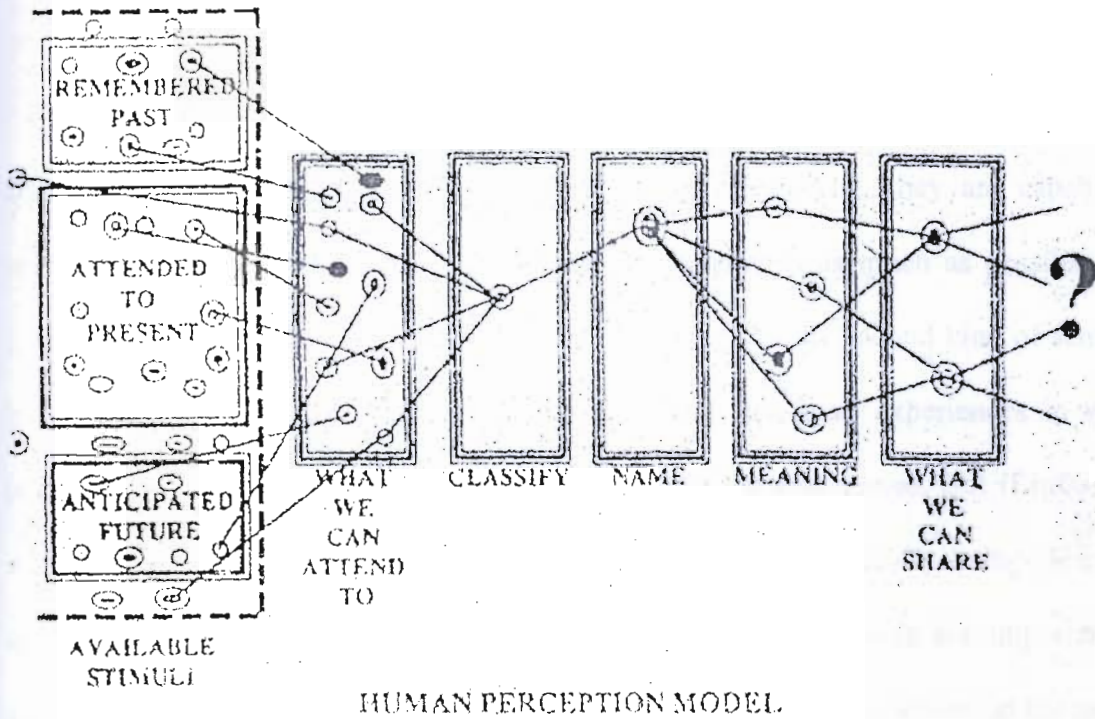


Figure 2.1 Human Perception Model

Basic news reporting students who can understand and appreciate that human perception is not a simple stimulus-response act, and is always incomplete can perhaps begin to demonstrate what has been called maturity and good news judgment. If they can be taught their observations are by definition incomplete, perhaps they will learn to ask even more questions and search for more sources and vantage points before concluding they have observed and reported everything (Russel and Many 1992).

Hayakawa's Trichotomy

The study of General Semantics has brought some understanding to the confusion resulting from the controversy over objectivity. Hayakawa (1954) introduces three kinds of sentences that people make – reports, inferences and judgments. These sentence types are derived from the fundamental teaching of General Semantics.

Hayakawa said that reports adhere to the following rules: First, they are capable of verification; second, they exclude inferences and judgments as much as possible. The language of reports is the language of science. Inference, is the second kind of sentence introduced by Hayakawa. Because reports are about first-hand experiences in which journalists witness first-hand events or meetings that have happened. But if inferences are made in their news writing, then the actual events are actually being described according to the journalist's own opinion. Nevertheless, inferences are important. In journalism, inferences can distort the entire world of fact because inference in the printed form become an immediate statement of facts (Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani 1984). The third category of sentence is judgment sentence which also must be excluded in objective reporting. Hayakawa describes judgment sentence as "all expressions of the writer's approval and disapproval" of all the occurrences, persons or objects that he or she is describing. Based on Hayakawa's Trichotomy, Mohd. Rajib identified seven subcategories namely, (1) Report sentence attributed (RSA), (2) report sentence unattributed (RSU), (3) inference sentence attributed (ISA), (4) inference sentence

unattributed (ISU), (5) judgment sentence attributed (JSA), (6) judgment sentence unattributed (JSU) and (7) label (L) (either attributed or unattributed).

2.4 CONCLUSION

Generally, General Semantics is a field of study that helps human beings to improve evaluations therefore improving reactions toward something (here it refers to words, language). The more delayed the response is, the closer we are in understanding and applying General Semantics in our daily life. It is applicable in the human communications, and also in other types of communication such as journalism, broadcasting etc. The more careful we are in writing a text (which words can cause hazard even to the whole world) and the more careful we are in reacting to a statement in a media (this goes not only among politicians, but also ordinary persons) will make us a more 'sane' person.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section will explain in details the research method used in the study. Explanations will include sampling, measures and the pilot study done.

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

This research will adopt a *survey* method by using questionnaires to meet the objectives of the research. According to Wimmer & Dominick (2003), the advantages of conducting a survey are (1) They can be used to investigate problems in realistic settings, (2) The cost of survey is reasonable when one considers the amount of information gathered, (3) A large amount of data can be collected with relative ease from a variety of people, (4) Surveys are not constrained by geographic boundaries; they can be conducted almost anywhere and (5) Data helpful to survey research already exist. Since this research is an audience analysis, survey is one of the best methods to be applied and to meet the research objectives.

3.2.1 Sampling

The sample of the study consists the undergraduate students of USIM from various faculties. The sampling method used in this research will be purposive sampling in which students who only read newspapers will be asked to answer the self-administered questionnaires. Patton (1990) stated that under this scheme, subjects are selected based on certain characteristics listed by researchers. In this research, purposive sampling will be conducted because of the criterion stated by the researcher that is students who read newspapers. In this research, students are selected purposely only for students who read

mainstream newspaper (either one – Berita Harian, Utusan Malaysia, The Star or The New Straits Times/print or electronic) more than twice a week. Respondents are asked for this criterion first, if they meet this criterion, then only they can answer the questionnaire. The sample are chosen randomly from all the various faculties in the university.

According to Jensen (2002), a descriptive survey simply attempts to document current conditions or states of affairs. So, descriptive statistics have been chosen to be the statistics presentation method since it is able to provide the outlook of the studied scenario.

3.2.2 Respondents

The researchers randomly distributed 300 copies of questionnaires to University Sains Islam Malaysia undergraduate students. A total of 265 completed questionnaires were obtained from both Communication and non Communication students and this formed the final sample – a response rate of 88.33%. Table 3.1 shows the students' programmes with the numbers of questionnaires collected.

The sample number chosen based on Roscoe in Hill (in <http://www.emoderators.com/ipct-j/1998/n3-4/hill.html>) rules of thumb that stated that a sample size larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research.

Sample Characteristics

Variables	Categories	<i>N</i>
		Questionnaires collected
Gender	Male	60
	Female	205
Programme	Communication	44
	Non Communication	221

Table 3.1 Sample Characteristics

3.3.3 Instrument

The tool of the research is questionnaire. 300 questionnaires have been distributed to the samples.

3.3.4 Measures

A booklet of structured questionnaires was developed to assess the proposed variables. It was divided into seven parts: items relating to profile, objective and non-objective statements used in news headlines, objective and non-objective statements used in news contents, objective and non-objective words used in news headlines and news contents, impact of non-objective words to readers' minds, level of understanding of language objectivity and readiness to acquire related knowledge.

Profile

Personal information was obtained by using single statement items relating to gender and programme of the respondents.

Objective and Non-Objective Statements Used in News Headlines

The 10-item measure developed by the researcher was used to assess the level of respondents' knowledge with regard to the objective and non-objective statements used in news headlines. All items listed in this scale were non-objective statements.

Objective and Non-Objective Statements Used in News Contents

The 10-item measure developed by the researcher was used to examine the level of respondents' knowledge with regard to objective and non-objective statements used in news contents. All items listed in this scale were non-objective statements.

Objective and Non-Objective Words Used in News Headlines and News Contents

The 10-item measure developed by the researcher was used to assess the level of respondents' knowledge with regard to objective and non-objective words used in news headlines and news contents. All items listed in this scale were non-objective words.

Impact of Non-Objective Words to Readers' Minds

The 10-item measure developed by the researcher was used to examine the impact of non-objective words to readers' minds. The internal consistency for the 10-item measure of impact of non-objective words to readers' minds was .56.

Level of Understanding of Language Objectivity

The 5-item measure developed by the researcher was used to examine the level of

understanding of language objectivity of the respondents.

Readiness to Acquire Related Knowledge

The 4-item measure developed by the researcher was used to assess the readiness of the respondents to acquire related knowledge to General Semantics. Three items required respondents to give feedback either yes or no and another item was asked by using Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

3.4 PILOT STUDY

According to Wimmer & Dominick (2003) a pilot study will often help to eliminate potential problems in research procedures, testing, and methodology before the final research study is attempted. It tests whether people understand the directions of the questionnaires. It is also used to refine both the research design and the field procedures. Variables that were not foreseen during the design phase can emerge during the pilot study, and problems with the protocol or with study logistics can also be uncovered. The pilot study also allows the researchers to try different data-gathering approaches and to observe different activities from several trial perspectives. The results of the pilot study are used to revise and polish the study protocol. Conducting a pilot study will help to improve the reliability of the research.

There are several ways to pretest a questionnaire. When an acceptable draft of the questionnaire is completed, a focus group can be used to discuss the questionnaire with

potential respondents. But, the best pretest is to call 10 to 20 people and do a run-through (Wimmer & Dominick 2003).

10 respondents were selected for the pilot study. However, only eight of them completely answered the questionnaires. Therefore, the pilot study had a response rate of 80%. Among them, two are students from Communication programme while the rest are from various faculties.

A reliability analysis was conducted on the scale of the impact of non-objective words to readers' minds and it was found that the alpha level for the 10 item measure was .67.

The internal consistency for the 3 item scale on the readiness of respondents to acquire related knowledge was .75.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Survey has been chosen to answer the research questions formed to achieve the research objectives. In order to study the understanding of audience, a survey would provide a useful data for further discussion. The pilot study has made the research able to be conducted accordingly. The data are to be analysis and presented systematically based on questionnaires answered.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

General Semantics has been first studied in 1984 by local scholars (Mohd. Rajib Ab. Ghani, 1984 & Faridah Ibrahim 1984). The research findings basically reveal that the level of language objectivity is very low in Malaysian main streams newspapers studied. Further research was undergone to study the trend of the phenomena. This section will discuss related literature in order to understand General Semantics and language objectivity in Malaysian media practice.

2.2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The latest research is by Faridah Ibrahim and Emma Mirza Wati Mohamad (2005) entitled *War Heroes, Terrorists, Freedom Fighter and Fragile Economy: From Metaphors to 'WMDs'*. This qualitative content analysis and from the interpretive perspective research, the researchers explored how four Malaysian mainstream newspapers used language, especially metaphors and to what extent metaphors are appropriately used. The newspapers namely The New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian and The Star were systematically selected over a one-month period in June 2005 using Carter's constructed one-week sampling.

The findings show that the words used as metaphors in English newspapers are different from the ones used in Malay newspapers. Some metaphors categorized in this research are health metaphor, orientational metaphor, object metaphor, culture metaphor and war metaphor. Findings in the cultural and war metaphors show some appropriate and

inappropriate usage of metaphors such as The Star 27 June 2005 used bull-run to describe a rough situation. To most of us, bull is almost always associated to rough and brutal. This metaphor may easily mean that you are facing a challenging journey. But to the Indian community, bull is a sacred animal as the Hindus consider them as their god. Another example is an inappropriate use of the war metaphor. In UM 18 June 2005, the headline was "Michael Jackson wants to take revenge on individuals who have planned to damage his image". The word "revenge" is too strong a word and emotion-laden. Here, the war metaphor used to signify seriousness and anger, has an impact especially for Jackson's fans worldwide.

From the General Semanticists point of view, journalists' words have the potential to become Weapons of Mass Deception or rather Words of Mass Destruction when inappropriately used. Hence, metaphors do matter because they structure our perceptions, the way we make sense of the world around us, and the way we talk and understand about things that affect our lives and identities. And for the media, to be aware of the use and misuse of language, to be aware of what are being said, and how they say it, they can achieve enough impartiality for practical purposes.

Another research entitles *War Reporting: A Symbiosis between the Media and Protagonist of War?* by Mohd Rajib Ab. Ghani and Faridah Ibrahim (2005). This study looks at the use and misuse of words where reporting is concern. Through a qualitative content analysis, this paper tries to identify how war is reported, from which angles and in whose perspectives. Research was done to Malaysia newspapers over a period of two

months (March and April 2005) – in both print and electronic media alike – it is found that war coverage is definitely not missing in the daily news diet.

The electronic media also showed similar trends as the print media during the period of study. Like the Malaysian dailies, the electronic media in this country is dependent on the dominant four international news agencies for foreign news with AFP and Reuters remaining their favorite suppliers of news, news reels, actualities and visuals. One news producer told the writers in an interview that these two agencies are popular among Malaysian media organizations because of their “more of less” unbiased coverage.

With the shortage of trained staff, funds and equipments, the Malaysian newspapers, like their counterparts in most developing countries are still dependent on the dominant four international news agencies for foreign news especially war news (*Reuters, AFP and AP* and publish it under the *Agencies*). Only of late, after the 2003 Iraq War that the Malaysian editors see the need to train Malaysian journalists to be war correspondents.

This study has shown that while care is taken by local gatekeepers to create a more presentable war news by combining news from Reuters, AP, UPI and AFP and place them under agencies, there are instances where the choice of “facts” in news. By applying Hayakawa Trichotomy, the analysis shows that all the four newspapers had achieved about 55 to 66 percent objectivity in resending their war news but the remaining 36 to 45 percent of non objective coverage remained questionable. Using news from the international news agencies, the local media are still far from propagating world peace.

Another recent research done by Siti Suriani Othman (2004) entitled *Objektiviti Bahasa dari Perspektif Semantik Umum dalam Utusan Malaysia dan Berita Harian: Satu Kajian Terhadap Berita Pelaksanaan Bahasa Inggeris dalam Mata Pelajaran Sains dan Matematik* concluded that the level of language objectivity in Malaysian newspapers should be increased. Source bias which is noted more than 10% which is 22% and editor bias that reached 51% shows that this scenario needs immediate improvement. This research did also study the journalist bias which shows the level of awareness among journalists is good—1.7% only. According the General Semantics perspective, any type of bias which is higher than 10% is critical and needs improvement. This research examined 1339 news statements using qualitative content analysis method to measure source bias and journalist bias, which in examining editor bias, 100 headlines was analyzed.

Another research by Faridah Ibrahim (2003) entitled *Penggunaan dan salahguna bahasa dalam tajuk berita daripada perspektif Semantik Umum* examined misuse of language in headlines and this should be avoided in news writing. Applying the Hayakawa Trichotomy which consists (1) Report Statement, (2) Inference Statement and (3) Judgment Statement based on General Semantics perspective, the researcher evaluated language objectivity in 891 headlines from four mainstream newspapers in this country i.e. (1) *The New Straits Times* (NST), (2) UM, (3) *The Star* (TS) and (4) *Berita Harian*. The analysis done within seven days in March and April 2002. This research has also analyzed the headlines orientation whether positive, negative, neutral or balance, source

presentation either individual source or collective source and the use of words such as noun, verb or adjective in headlines.

In this research, the headline was examined in overall, not by comparing them according to different newspapers. The analysis was done in quantitative and qualitative analysis. The findings show that the headlines are mostly categorized in the inference statement and judgment statement. When these two types of statements were combined, it reached up to 29.5 %. Overall, neutral news orientation was 65 % compared to the positive ones which is 23 % and 13 % negative. But, this research found out that the percentage of non-objective headlines are higher compared to the objective headlines. The question of how the percentage was higher than 10% is questioned, where neutrality is highly emphasized by editors in all examined newspapers.

A research by Mohd. Rajib Ab Ghani and Faridah Ibrahim (2002) entitled *Symbols, Labels and Straight News: A Study on the Nature of Prejudice in the Media* provide insights on alternatives to view the nature of prejudice that are reflected in the use of language, symbols and terms that sometimes dominate most news stories, from the perspectives of General Semantics and philosophy of ethics. This research combining both the quantitative and qualitative content analysis based on four basic problems that inhibit factual communication i.e. (1) *two-value orientation*, (2) *dead-level abstracting*, (3) *undue-identification*, and (4) *unconscious projection*. Four mainstream local newspapers (1) The New Straits Times, (2) The Star, (3) Utusan Malaysia and (4) Berita

Harian with the total of 444 news and 1282 analyzed sentences. Two issues from each newspaper were chosen randomly since April 2002.

In this research, the unit analysis is the newspaper. Since the issue studied is the nature of prejudice in the Malaysian media as manifested by the news content, the straight news articles were selected as the unit of observation. Features, editorials, letters and opinion pieces were excluded from the analysis because they do not purport to be objective.

The overall findings of the research show that 82 or 18.4 % of studied news contain prejudicial words. From this amount, English newspapers were found to have more inaccurate words compared to Malay newspapers. Most of the prejudicial words are originated from international news agencies, but the fact is the editors always have the choice whether or not to publish these kinds of headlines.

Another research was done by Aini Faezah Ramlan (2002) entitled *Paparan Imej Wanita dalam Akhbar: Satu Analisis Objektiviti Semantik*. This research examined the use of language in news based on semantic objectivity. The objectivity level was measured through the abstract level of a news based on the Structural Differential Model introduced by Alfred Korzybski. Two mainstream newspapers were studied i.e. Utusan Malaysia and The New Straits Times using both the qualitative and quantitative content analysis.

The conclusion of the research shows that there has not been so many changes happen in the women portrayal in the Malaysian media compared to the research done by previous

researchers. Besides that, the findings of the research also show that the women's' image is now portrayed more positively through theme selection and objective language use.

A research by Faridah Ibrahim and Chau Pao Ling (1997) concentrated on the image objectivity among women local and international politicians through their research *Analisis Semantik Objektiviti Citra Ahli Politik Wanita Tempatan dan Antarabangsa*. This research has listed 206 current news, features/column/editorial/comic and picture/cartoon/illustration that have been collected for two months starting from September and October 1996 from the mainstream newspapers i.e. Utusan Malaysia and The Star. 116 samples are from Utusan Malaysia, and another 90 from The Star.

This research focused on the use of Hayakawa Trichotomy components as a means in categorizing speech, instructions, opinion and any decision in written form that the sources are women political figure and government leaders especially in Malaysia and its regions. This research also applied seven statements introduced by a local scholar, Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani (1984) that consists of (1) Report sentence attributed (RSA), (2) report sentence unattributed (RSU) (, (3) inference sentence attribute (ISA), (4) inference sentence unattributed (ISU), (5) judgment sentence attributed (JSA), (6) judgment sentence unattributed (JSU) and (7) label (L) (either attributed or unattributed) and also examining two types of bias which might possible to any news and headlines that are source news and journalist news,

Overall, this research shows that the image portrayal toward women politicians have the tendency of being negative because news and features that are published contained lots of biasness in terms of action, labeling issues and sentences that are inference and judgmental in nature. This research shows that the levels of objectivity of both newspapers are not high which is less than 60 % use of objective sentences respectively. This would give the implication that both newspapers need to take immediate initiative to increase the objectivity level to ensure the reputation of newspapers is not questioned. Besides that, the most important one is Malaysian won't get wrong perception regarding women's' image in the political world.

This research also studied two types of bias i.e. source bias and journalist bias shows a positive source bias in image portrayal (9.6 %), 17.1 % negative, 49.25 neutral and 17.1 % balance. Meanwhile, in terms of journalist bias, the image portrayal is 4.5 % positive, 24.1 % negative, 60.8 % neutral and 10.6 % balance. The findings show that the reporters have the tendency to concentrate their reporting neutrally which is a good attempt in avoiding source bias.

One of the ways to evaluate either the media organizations through the editors play their roles as the party that develop the image is by examining the headlines orientation in a news or feature. The analyzed news and feature headlines shows a neutral, positive and negative orientation, the headlines have the tendency to be quite similar i.e. 33.2 % positive, 32.2 % negative and 31.7 % neutral.

A research by Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani and Faridah Ibrahim (1996) aimed to highlight the trend of human rights coverage in the Malaysian media with special emphasis on several of leading daily newspapers in Malaysia i.e. The New Straits Times, Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian, The Star and The Sun. Apart from that, this research also examines the use and misuse of media language in the explication of human rights stories. Hayakawa Trichotomy and the extended version of this trichotomy (Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani 1984) has been used as the research methodology.

The total of 218 news with 2564 sentences were analyzed through the qualitative and quantitative content analysis of five major local newspapers. The sample was collected in the forth week of March 1996 and the first week of April 1996. In this particular research, only current news and features have been analyzed. Editorial, letters to the editor and other types of newspaper writing have not been studied.

The findings show that there are so many non-objective sentences in the news have been published in the newspapers that is 25.5 %. This percentage is considered too big and the number could possibly be reduced if the journalists are aware of the importance of evaluating their thoughts prior to making statements. Generally, the data suggested that the newspapers in selecting human rights stories were not "sensitive" or "aware" of the potential meaning of the words they used and consequently were imprecise in the language they used to describe factual events.

The next research, *Image of superpowers in two Malaysian national dailies* (Faridah Ibrahim 1984) has used the approach introduced in General Semantics. Statements that contain inference, judgment and negative adjective such as 'mendakwa', 'menyelar', 'mendesak', 'menuduh', 'slams', 'snubs', 'criticized', 'demands' etc. has portrayed the superpowers in dual images. This research studied 459 items from the national newspapers Utusan Malaysia and The New Straits Times found out the American, Great Britain and Russia have been categorized as neutral and non partisan while Japan and People Republic of China in neutral and partisan.

Another research by Mohd Rajib A. Ghani (1984) entitled *Semantic analysis of objectivity in two Malaysian newspapers* applied the Hayakawa Trichotomy to measure the objectivity level in Utusan Malaysia and The New Straits Times in political news writing. The findings out of the analysis of 2546 sentences in the news show that the practice of objective news writing is 65.8 % and the non objective sentences is 34.2 %. The number of the non objective sentences is considered high. The sentences categorized in non objective is quite high. The sentences categorized in non objective sentences containing inference sentence and judgment sentence, written by reporters that contained subcategorizes such as ISA, ISU, JSA, JSU and (L). This is actually the research that identified the seven subcategorizes in examining language objectivity through the General Semantics perspective.

A well-known professor in journalism, Dennis T. Lowry (1971) in his research *Agnew and the network TV news: a before/after content analysis* examined a television news

regarding the Vice President Spiro Agnew through content analysis. Lowry applied the Hayakawa Trichotomy to examine either the speech of Spiro in Des Moines has any impact to the television news. The research shows that the television news content about Agnew has no judgment sentences, either oppose or against Agnew.

Contradict with the research findings from a well-known journalism scholar in 1965, John C. Merrill in his research *How Time stereotyped three US presidents* that has used the Hayakawa Trichotomy in his research. The sampling of the research was selected based on news during the administration of Truman in 1951, Eisenhower 1955 and Kennedy 1962. The news was analyzed based on the use of language that describe about those presidents with emphasized to whether or not exist the reporting of opinion or bias language. This findings show that *Time* has portrayed a bias image to all three presidents. But, the *Time* has focused much on Eisenhower (81 times) for positive bias. Meanwhile, negative bias is more focused to Truman (92 times), followed by Kennedy 14 times.

In conclusion, reviewed literature proved that the perspective of General Semantics could be used as the mechanism to understand the level of language objectivity in news writing in Malaysia. Therefore, it is assured that objectivity is not a myth, since we actually have the mechanism that can help us to achieve objectivity.

2.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

General Semantics is a philosophy founded by a Polish, Alfred Korzybski (1879-1950) in his book *Science and Sanity: an Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* in 1933. Korzybski's first training was in engineering at the Polytechnic Institute of Warsaw. Subsequently he did graduate work both in the natural sciences and in humanities in Germany and Italy.

His first major work is called *Manhood of Humanity: The Science and Art of Human Engineering*. The central theme of this book is what Korzybski called 'time binding', the uniquely human aspect of the life process, which allows individuals to communicate over intervals of time. This human beings can do by virtue of being able to transmit accumulated experience to succeeding generations. In defining man as time-binders, Korzybski placed crowing emphasis upon this unique characteristic and declared it to be man's principal survival mechanism (Rapoport 1950).

According to Hayakawa (1944), since the publication in 1923 of *The Meaning of Meaning* by C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, interest in and controversy about semantics have become so widespread that is possible now to speak of a 'semantic movement'. The term 'semantics', in spite of its original used by Michael Breal to designate historical inquiries into changes in the meanings of words, is now used more frequently to refer to the kind of inquiry initiated and encouraged by Lady Viola Welby under the name 'significs'. Significs was to her 'the science of meaning or the study of significance,

provided sufficient recognition is given to its practical aspect as a method of mind, one which is involved in all forms of mental activity, including that of logic'. The study of 'significance' was to her far more than the study of words, it was also the study of acts and situations; 'significance' itself was more than lexical 'meaning' or 'finding the referent; it included both insight into motives and moral judgment. The object of her study, then was the total interpretative act, the reaction of the individual to signs and sign-situations.

This was how basically the interest in semantics has emerged. Besides that, there have been also contributions from the anthropological researches which further contributed to semantics. The work of Bronislaw Malinowski, studying primitive languages, finds that 'to regard (language) as a means for the embodiment or expression of thought is to take a one-sided view of one of its most derivate and specialized functions. Language is rather a 'mode of behavior'. Linguistic events are therefore not to be studied in isolation in terms merely of their lexical content or logical coherence, but in their relationship to the social institutions, activities, and rituals of which they are a part. In short, linguistic events are explicable only in terms of their non-linguistic context (Hayakawa 1944).

Another scholar, Benjamin Lee Whorf, an anthropological linguist is also someone whose work has inspired Korzybski. Korzybski's attempt to synthesize and make such scientific and linguistic findings as are here called 'semantic'. He proposes a system of 'general semantics' which discards 'theories of meaning' (which he regards as leading inescapably to verbal and terminological hair-splitting) in favour of a study of

'evaluation', i.e., the responses of the human organism-as-a-whole to signs and sign-situations (Hayakawa 1944)

Fundamentals of General Semantics

Basically, there are two (2) fundamentals of this philosophy. The first of these is the method by which the human entity receives and processes information, from the non-verbal sensing thru and including the highly verbal thinking and talking. The other basis is the methods of science, including the way knowledge grows and the process of revising theories.

In summarizing the first process, general semantics emphasizes the **abstracting of information** (selecting some and discarding the rest), transducing that information (for example, changing from the physical vibrations of sound in air to the electro-chemical impulses in nerves) and the "model" or "map" character of the information. As we process information (perceptions, words, etc.), we convert the raw data into our own internal form of representation (models). In the conversion process, we fit the information into our pre-conceived notions and develop hypotheses to account for the data. A similar process (forming hypotheses, or building models) happens even at the most nonverbal levels of nervous system processing. General semantics regards this characteristic "model-making" structure of our nervous systems as fundamentally important and implies that an awareness of this process must be considered in our daily activities as well as in the organizing philosophy of our world view.

Kodish (1998) agrees that consciousness thus involves abstracting. We select something(s) to notice and filter out others. We give our attention to some aspect of a given situation with a concomitant neglect of other aspect. By *becoming conscious that we abstract*, we develop a greater ability to *choose* what we abstract: what we attend to and what we neglect. Such consciousness makes it less likely that we become fixed in our present set of abstractions (perceiving, labeling). Remembering that we abstract gives us evaluational (semantic) flexibility and can help us to stay in better touch with what is going on in all of the 'worlds' or levels of so-called 'reality'. This flexibility is fostered by remembering the difference between what you can and your non-verbal sensory-perceptual experience. In this way, you can leave the verbal, intellectual realm at times in order to more fully experience the non-verbal realm of your senses.

Secondly, the study of Science reveals that growth of scientific knowledge and theory follows a pattern similar to the method by which the human entity receives and processes information. Information is collected, some kept and some discarded, and attempted to be fit into the current scientific theories (models). Information which doesn't fit is used to construct a new theory and a test is devised to check out the new theory (model, hypothesis, etc.). New theories can replace old, be discarded, or be neither confirmed nor denied.

The standard system of evaluating in use was derived primarily from the so-called Aristotle's laws of thought and the associated mathematical logic. The new system of

evaluating is quite different from the Aristotelian system and is called **non-Aristotelian**.

In attempting to bridge the gap from the old to the new paradigm, analogies are used from major paradigm shifts in physics and geometry. The changes are from Newtonian to relativistic theories in physics, and from Euclidean to non-Euclidean geometries. In both cases the old paradigm can be shown to be limited, special cases of the new paradigm.

The new system has a structure which is derived from the way our nervous systems work and the way the body of science works in adding new theories and knowledge.

(<http://www.xenodochy.org/gs/wigs.html>).

While the Aristotelian orientation looks at intensional meanings which are generalizations of the external reality, the non-Aristotelian looks at the extensional meanings which are based on ordering observations, investigations, etc (Lée 1941: 123).

The use of extensional orientation in everyday language could possibly avoid the bias inherent in writing and speaking. Because one would of course have fewer tendencies to take what is said for granted and would question the meanings of words, there would be less tendency for one to infer, prejudge and harbour a prejudicial behaviour toward others (Mohd. Rajib Ab. Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim 2002).

There are three new concepts brought in the Non-Aristotelian system as explained below:

1. *Law of Identity* ($A = A$) or read as A is A. Korzybski contended that identity as absolute sameness in all respects does not appear to exist. In this sense, although we may treat them as equivalent, *A is not A*. As written on a piece of

paper, the second "A" differs in space-time coordinates and 'physical' makeup from the first (<http://www.driveyourselvesane.com/garticles/maxblack.html>). In the Non-Aristotelian system, the law is known as *Law of Non-Identity*.

2. The second law is called the *Law of the excluded minded* ($A \vee \sim A$), to be read as "A or not-A" which rejects the idea of neutrality and one should choose between two. In the non-Aristotelian system, the *Multi/Infinite-valued orientation* is used where a proposition is associated with an infinity of truth values which can be taken to lie between 1 and 0, whereas in Aristotelian logic, only the extreme values, 1 and 0 (true or false) are admitted (Hayakawa 1946).

3. The third law is the *Law of non-contradiction*.

This principle brings the idea that nothing can both be the case and not be the case at the same time. For example, "The sun rises in the east and does not rise in the east" is not possible, in fact absurd (<http://nafl.blogspot.com/>). But there is other side of arguments relating to this principle. In the law of non-contradiction, the notion of context and time are equally important. In contrast, in the non-aristoteiiian system, both notions of context and time were lost. For physicists light is only considered to be a wave or a particle depending on the nature (i.e. context) of the problem to be solved. Light is not considered to be both a particle and a wave at the same time. Another example is when $P =$ mostly empty space and $x =$ a table. Or perhaps, $P =$ is free and $x =$ Paul. In both these case it seems we still need to be both

temporally and contextually sensitive.

Finally, what about Plato's thought, "But what about the bigness and smallness of fingers? Does sight perceive them adequately? Does it make no difference to it whether the finger is in the middle or at the end? And is it the same with the sense of touch, as regards the thick and the thin, the hard and the soft? And do the other senses reveal such things clearly and adequately? Doesn't each of them rather do the following: The sense set over the hard is, in the first place, of necessity also set over the soft, and it reports to the soul that the same thing is perceived by it to be both hard and soft?" What role do context and time play here?

Premises in General Semantics

There are three (3) premises in General Semantics:

1. A map *is not* the territory (Words *are not* the things they represent).

What this means is that our perception of reality is not reality itself but our own version of it, or our "map". No two people can have exactly the same map. While we all have similar neurological structure, it functions differently in all of us. This is the basis for our problems in communication when we try to impose our map upon another person. Learning to recognize the structure of another person's map allows us to "see the world through their eyes" and therefore understand and relate to others respectfully and accurately (<http://www.idea-seminars.com/articles/map.htm>).

2. A map covers *not all* the territory. (Words cannot cover all they represent.)

Another basic premise in general semantics which notes that no abstraction, or map, can be a complete picture of the territory it represents (<http://www.driveyourselfsane.com/dysbook/glossary.html>). Words and languages are seen as tools or medium in communication, but at the same time they have no ability to explain the reality extensively. Exactly, no word can 'map' the actual event verbatim. The word 'red' for instance is not explaining 'red' in real life. There are many questions can be asked, what kind of red?, light red? dark red? maroon? or pink?.

Kodish (2006) said that maintaining clarity as to level of abstracting contributes to managing our evaluations well. When we use the extensional devices proposed in General Semantics to describe something accurately, it can reduce misunderstanding and automatically able to manage 'emotions' or evaluations. The four extensional devices are (1) dating, (2) indexing, (3) etc., or et cetera and (4) quotes and hyphens. For instance, talking about 'red', this is how the extensional devices can help us to understand 'red' in General Semantics perspective:

Extensional devices in General Semantics with examples

Extensional devices in General Semantics.	dating	indexing	etc	quotes and hyphens
<i>Understanding 'red'.</i>	Red 1990 is not Red 2006.	Red 1 is not Red 2.	My favourite colours are yellow, red, etc.	We are now talking about 'red'.

Table 2.1 Extensional devices in General Semantics with examples

Explanation:

Dating

If we are talking about a colour that is red, for sure there is no absolutely same 'red' if you compare a colour that you have seen in 1990 and another colour you have seen in 2006. Even though both might be 'red', but in General Semantics, there is no absolutely same 'red' especially if we are comparing it over time.

Indexing

The same principal goes to the second extensional device in General Semantics. No two things are the same, so there is absolutely no way to 'red 1' to be absolutely the same with 'red 2'.

etc.

Etc or et cetera is actually 'others' or other possibilities of that particular subject/matter. To ensure accuracy, we cannot be so sure by saying some things as if everything is covered. If we add etc. at the end of any statements, we are actually reserving for any things that might be left out while making any particular statement.

Quotes and hyphens

It is so clear when we use quotes and hyphens to differentiate something from another. For instance, we are now talking about a particular 'red', so that it is written as 'red' and not simply red to assist understanding.

All the devices are applicable generally in all aspects of General Semantics, as long as it is practice, practice and practice over time.

3. A map is self-reflexive (In language we can speak *about* language).

The third premise turns out to be an application to everyday life of the extremely important work of Bertrand Russell, who attempted to solve self-contradictions in the foundations of mathematics by his theory of mathematical or logical types. In this connection the term *self-reflexive* was introduced by Josiah Royce. The theory of mathematical types made me aware of new kinds of linguistic perplexities to which practically no one, except a very few mathematicians, had paid attention before. The realization and analysis of such difficulties led me to the discovery that the principles of different orders of abstractions, multi-ordinality of terms, (over/under)-defined terms, second-order reactions (“thinking” about “thinking,” doubt of doubt, fear of fear, etc.), thalamo-cortical interaction, the circularity of human knowledge, etc., may be considered as generalizing the theory of mathematical types (www.esgs.org/uk/art/ak3.htm).

Some Applications of General Semantics in Journalism Studies

Russel (in Russel and Many 1992) has adapted earlier perception models proposed by Korzybski that offered models that explained how perception necessarily differs from a given stimulus field. The models also show how perception may even result in reports that add up to more, or in some cases less, than the sum of the stimuli observed. This

modified model may help basic news writing students understand that, much like a camera, their perception is limited and subject to distortion.

Human Perception Model

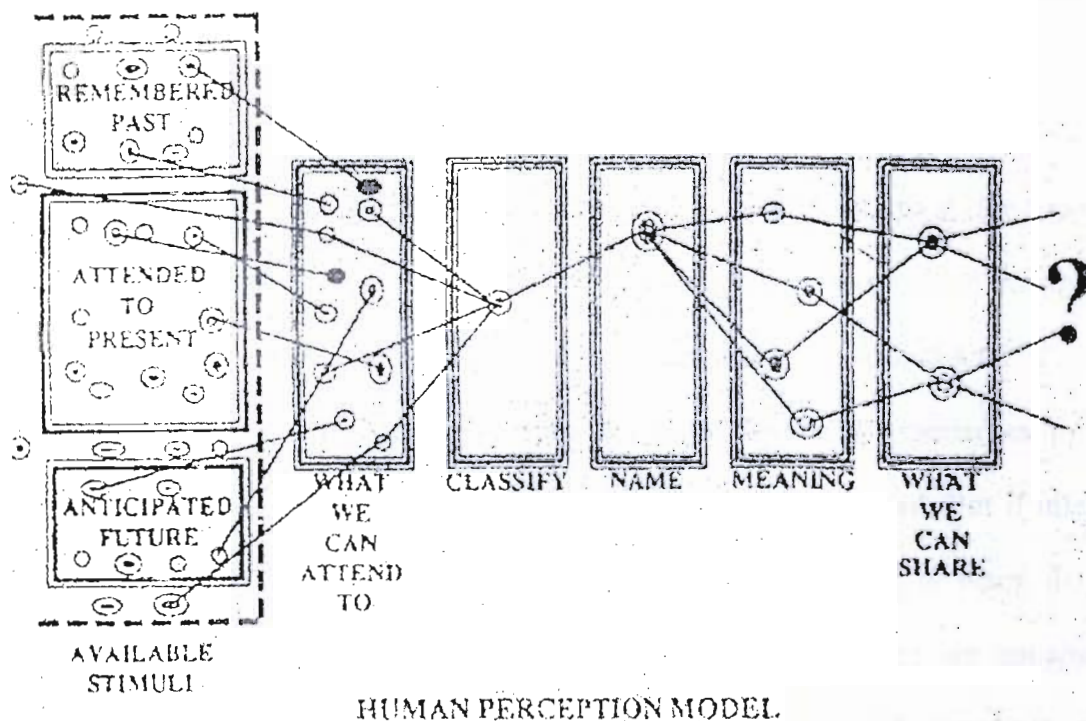


Figure 2.1 Human Perception Model

Basic news reporting students who can understand and appreciate that human perception is not a simple stimulus-response act, and is always incomplete can perhaps begin to demonstrate what has been called maturity and good news judgment. If they can be taught their observations are by definition incomplete, perhaps they will learn to ask even more questions and search for more sources and vantage points before concluding they have observed and reported everything (Russel and Many 1992).

Hayakawa's Trichotomy

The study of General Semantics has brought some understanding to the confusion resulting from the controversy over objectivity. Hayakawa (1954) introduces three kinds of sentences that people make – reports, inferences and judgments. These sentence types are derived from the fundamental teaching of General Semantics.

Hayakawa said that reports adhere to the following rules: First, they are capable of verification; second, they exclude inferences and judgments as much as possible. The language of reports is the language of science. Inference, is the second kind of sentence introduced by Hayakawa. Because reports are about first-hand experiences in which journalists witness first-hand events or meetings that have happened. But if inferences are made in their news writing, then the actual events are actually being described according to the journalist's own opinion. Nevertheless, inferences are important. In journalism, inferences can distort the entire world of fact because inference in the printed form become an immediate statement of facts (Mohd. Rajib A. Ghani 1984). The third category of sentence is judgment sentence which also must be excluded in objective reporting. Hayakawa describes judgment sentence as "all expressions of the writer's approval and disapproval" of all the occurrences, persons or objects that he or she is describing. Based on Hayakawa's Trichotomy, Mohd. Rajib identified seven subcategories namely, (1) Report sentence attributed (RSA), (2) report sentence unattributed (RSU), (3) inference sentence attributed (ISA), (4) inference sentence

unattributed (ISU), (5) judgment sentence attributed (JSA), (6) judgment sentence unattributed (JSU) and (7) label (L) (either attributed or unattributed).

2.4 CONCLUSION

Generally, General Semantics is a field of study that helps human beings to improve evaluations therefore improving reactions toward something (here it refers to words, language). The more delayed the response is, the closer we are in understanding and applying General Semantics in our daily life. It is applicable in the human communications, and also in other types of communication such as journalism, broadcasting etc. The more careful we are in writing a text (which words can cause hazard even to the whole world) and the more careful we are in reacting to a statement in a media (this goes not only among politicians, but also ordinary persons) will make us a more 'sane' person.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 SUMMARY

In this research, the main objective is to understand the level of awareness among USIM students regarding General Semantics, an approach to improve daily communication that includes to improve language objectivity in the media. The research started by knowing how the students perceive objective and non-objective words and statements. All words and statements presented in the questionnaire are actually non-objective, but the data reveals that there are still so many of the respondents that perceived them (non-objective words and statements) as objective. For instance, a headline “*Negara Arab desak satu lagi ketetapan di PBB*” has the highest percentage of incorrect answers from the respondents (76.5 %). This means that nearly 80% of the respondents who read this statement will perceive it as an objective statement. The word ‘*desak*’ or ‘urge/urged’ is not accepted among general semanticists because it is a bias adverbial compared to ‘said’, ‘added’ and ‘told’ (Faridah Ibrahim & Chau PaoLing, 1997).

For statements used in news content, “Vitamin A is good for your health” has been perceived as an objective statement by 75.8 % of the respondents. This statement is considered non-objective among General Semantics researchers because it is a judgment statement. The word ‘is’ shows that the statement is unarguable, where overdose vitamin A might harm health. According to the article, overdose of Vitamin A usually due to Vitamin A supplement overuse or poisoning (http://www.wrongdiagnosis.com/v/vitamin_a_overdose/intro.htm). This statement supports the argument that vitamin A is not necessarily good for your health if we

overuse it. This is actually the application of non-Aristotelian system that rejects the idea of $A = A$. according to the non-Aristotelian system, there is no absolute things in life. No matter what happen, there is nothing perfectly the same in this world.

For words perceived as objective by most of the respondents either in news headlines or news contents, 76.9 % confused in perceiving '*perlu*' or 'have to'. Even though this word sounds normal to most of us, but to general semanticists, this word is inference in nature. According to Hayakawa (1972), inference statements are about matters which are not directly known, made on the basis of what has been observed. The fact is, nobody can tell anybody what you 'have to' do. A newspaper report and headline which contains this word seems to propose something that the audience/news source 'have to' do. This is not acceptable in news reporting because it may create guesses as to what is going on in other people's minds. This might be accurate or inaccurate. If it is inaccurate, there will be problems in the future with regards to our reporting.

When respondents are asked to choose some words that might give negative impact to their minds, 82.6% agreed that the word 'sexism' providing them with some negativity, followed by 'terrorist', 'capitalist' and 'angry students'. All these words are not accepted to be applied in journalism according to the General Semantics perspective. This is due to the fact that these words are words with high level abstraction that might differently define by different people. According to Chase (1953) a well known general semanticist in his book "The Tyranny of Words", the higher a word is in the abstraction ladder, the more vague it is to be defined. So journalists should be very careful using some words for

writing. Those words listed in this research are words that are categorized in the high abstraction ladder (Refer to the appendix – questionnaire, and list of non-objective words and statements provided).

52.1% of respondents admitted that they have heard or read about General Semantics. But the irony is, when they are asked to give some general information about the approach, they failed. 93.9% of the respondents left the answer spaces blank, while those who answered this question were not able to provide correct information about General Semantics. For instance, after the open ended questions were categorized, these are basically their answers: standard language, meaning of something, information, knowledge/research and entertainment. This shows a very low of understanding about General Semantics among the respondents which contradict with former question. At the same time, they might have heard about the approach, but they never understand what it is all about because of their education background. As noted before, majority of the respondents are non-communication students, while only about 8% are communication students (the most mature students were in semester 4 when the research was conducted). A subtopic on General Semantics is only taught for Journalism students in semester 5 in this university. This may be some of the reasons why the respondents don't really understand the approach.

Regardless of their education background, respondents were asked about their perception with regards to level of language objectivity in Malaysian media in general. 74.3% of the respondents agreed that the level is moderate, 4.2% very low and 14.7% very high.

According to research done by local general semanticists, the level of language objectivity in the local media (all research done locally referred to newspapers) is low. 'Low language objectivity level' according to general semanticists is where the non-objective words and statements published in the newspapers are higher than 10%. Since this research realize that most of the respondents do not understand what General Semantics is all about, researchers concluded that they might not be able to evaluate language objectivity in the local newspaper as well.

Fortunately, 91.3% of the respondents are ready to learn the approach. 76.2% agreed to learn the approach even though over some times and 81.1% ready to enrol General Semantics as a course. The high percentage shows that even though the respondents do not familiar with the approach they are willing to learn about it, willing to learn it even over time (because General Semantics cannot be learnt in 2-3 days) and ready to enrol General Semantics as a course if it is offered by the Programme. This is a good news to academicians who are interested to introduce General Semantics among students.

In conclusion, majority of the respondents in this research perceived non-objective words and statements as objective. This may due to the low level of awareness and understanding about General Semantics among themselves. But, their readiness to learn the approach is a good news to all academicians.

5.2 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

5.2.1 Research implication toward the research method

This research has applied survey research method. This method is very useful in studying audience of media. The application of the research method has assisted the researchers to achieve the objectives of the research.

5.2.2 Research implication toward media practitioners

The literature review and the findings of the research reveal a significant signal to the media practitioners. Even though this research has studied the understanding among students only, the fact is the research was founded from findings of various previous researches done related to the subject being studied. Low level of language objectivity understanding among university students is a cue for more effort that should be done from all parties related to news making. For media practitioners, the quest for objective reporting should never be stopped since it is one of the most essential journalism ethics.

5.2.3 Research implication toward communication curriculum

This research reveals a low understanding toward General Semantics among USIM students. The understanding will improve in the future among journalism students because General Semantics is offered in one of the course subjects. This approach should be introduced to broadcasting students as well to improve communication ability among future media practitioners.

5.2.4 Research implication toward USIM

This research is the first research done applying the particular research method in Malaysia. The findings of the research will be presented at the international level that shows the ability of USIM researchers to study unexplored components in social sciences. This will help researchers to provide more exposure and information for optimum application among USIM communication students. Consequently, communication graduates from USIM will become a more effective communicator and able to contribute fairly to the industry and the nation.

5.3 RESEARCH LIMITATION

This research has been conducted among KUIIM students only. Students from other universities in Malaysia are not included in this research.

In this research, majority of the respondents are non-communication students. This is due to the small number of overall communication students in this university. But since this is a study on understanding, this should not affect the reliability and validity of the research, but with more communication students, the research will be more interesting for discussion.

Some respondents do not really understand English well. Due to this limitation, some statements have not been correctly chosen as objective or non-objective.

5.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This is only an exploratory research to examine the understanding level of USIM students toward General Semantics. In the future, a nationwide survey can be conducted to all communication students in Malaysian universities to study their understanding of this on-going-introduced approach.

In the future, when General Semantics is not rare among Malaysians, a nationwide survey among all university students from various faculties can be conducted. This may take many years to achieve, but with continuous effort it can be realized.

A nationwide survey among people involve in news making i.e. reporter, editor, news source etc. could also be done. This would be very useful to study not only their understanding of the approach, but also the application in their daily working routine (for media practitioners).

A triangulation study can be done in the future combining a survey research method and a content analysis to study the matter more extensively.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Perhaps many people would agree that achieving objective reporting is a worthless effort but among general semanticists, it is not. According to Mohd. Rajib Ghani and Faridah Ibrahim (1996), by being aware of the favourable and unfavourable feelings that certain facts and words can arouse, we can attain enough impartiality for practical purposes.

Even though General Semantics is not yet gaining a large portion in Malaysian journalism theory and practice, with a practical mechanism proposed it should be able to assist newspaper reporting in this country.

In summary, this study barely scratched the surface of the potential study on the understanding of language objectivity in Malaysia. This study is hoped to lay the foundation for more intensive exploration of journalistic awareness toward the use and misuse of language among parties involve in the news making process.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Assalamualaikum wbt,

Dear all respondents,

We are conducting a survey on **Students' Understanding Towards the Use and Misuse Of Language in Malaysian Newspapers**. Kindly answer the following questions to be part of the research participants. Your sincere answers will help the researchers to gather accurate data, hence ensuring beneficial research results. Your answers are **confidential** and will never be exploited for any purpose except for this research.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Wassalam.

SITI SURIANI HAJI OTHMAN

RUHAYA HUSSIN

Research Team

**SECTION A
PROFILE**

Please tick [/] for the following details.

1. Gender

- Male
- Female

2. Program

- Communication students
- Non-communication students

SECTION B

OBJECTIVE AND NON-OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS USED IN NEWS HEADLINES.

Please tick [/] in the space provided.

No:	Sentence	Objective	Non-Objective
3	GPC Yemen tuduh duta AS campur tangan.		
4	Negara Arab desak satu lagi ketetapan di PBB.		
5	Amaran keras Putera Abdullah kepada Powell.		
6	Isteri kuat berleter antara punca penderaan.		
7	Rakyat Singapura ceroboh Pulau Pisang.		
8	Government proposes limit on foreign hypermarts.		
9	English from Standard One for all vernacular schools.		
10	Chong bitter about suffering third straight loss.		
11	By being more Muslim, are we becoming less Malay?		
12	Tajudin's bid to stop TRI share sale dealt a blow.		

SECTION C

OBJECTIVE AND NON-OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS USED IN NEWS CONTENTS.

Please tick [/] in the space provided.

No:	Statements	Objective	Non-Objective
13	Majoriti rakyat Indonesia mangsa rasuah		
14	Dona Babel akan berhadapan seorang wanita, Mariam Musa, yang disifatkan oleh para pemerhati politik bertanding kerana kecewa berikutan tindakan Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara merobohkan kedai setinggannya yang menghalang laluan orang ramai.		

15	Hajat Zaharah itu menyebabkan Rafidah melontarkan peluru pertamanya kepada Timbalan Menteri Kesihatan tersebut.		
16	Musa minta batal niat saman, NUTP		
17	Pemimpin yang berani.		
18	Elusive Osama still cast shadow over US campaign in Afghanistan.		
19	You're either part of the problem or part of the solution.		
20	Vitamin A is good for your health.		
21	She is beautiful.		
22	World leaders today urge Israel to immediately stop surrounding the office of Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat at West Bank.		

SECTION D

OBJECTIVE AND NON-OBJECTIVE WORDS USED IN NEWS HEADLINES AND NEWS CONTENTS.

Please tick [/] in the space provided.

No:	Word	Objective	Non-Objective
23	... menuduh ...		
24	... sepatutnya ...		
25	... seharusnya ...		
26	... mestilah ...		
27	... perlu ...		
28	urge ...		
29	sarcastic ...		
30	want ...		
31	accuse ...		
32	lash ...		

SECTION E

IMPACT ON NON OBJECTIVE WORDS TO READERS' MINDS.

Please read these words and phrases, and tick [/] in the space provided if you think the words have negative impact to your thinking.

No:	Word/phrases	Negative impact to your minds
33	... capitalists ...	
34	... conservatism ...	
35	... sexism ...	
36	... fundamentalism ...	
37	... angry students ...	
38	... white extremists ...	
39	... terrorists...	
40	... frustrated white ...	
41	... conservative ...	
42	... war heroes ...	

SECTION F

IMPACT OF NON OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS TO READERS' MINDS.

Please read these statements, and tick [/] in the space provided if you think the words have negative impact to your thinking.

No:	Statements	Objective	Non-Objective
43	... hebat dan berdedikasi ...		
44	Britain boleh serang Iraq tanpa mandate PBB		
45	Dunia kian marah kepada Israel		
46	Bush tuntutan Yasser henti pembunuhan		
47	Michael Jackson wants to take revenge (balas dendam) on individuals who planned to damage his image		
48	Kenya has become a sick society with no respect for life		
49	Women better at finance than men		
50	... giant killer ...		
51	The stock market is closed at sky high		
52	The current exchange rate is up		

SECTION G

LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF LANGUAGE OBJECTIVITY.

Please answer the following questions. Some questions may require you to tick [/] and some may require you to circle your answers.

53. Have you heard/read about General Semantics Theory/approach? Yes / No
 (If no, proceed to question no. 55)

54. Tick [/] to the following sources of your information about General Semantics (You may tick more than one).

Books	
Journal	
Magazine	
Television	
Radio	
Internet	
Friends	
Lecturer	
Others (Please state)	

55. What is the general information you know about General Semantics? (You may state as much as you know).

56. What do you think of the level of language objectivity in the Malaysian mass media?

- 1 Very low
- 2 Low
- 3 Moderate
- 4 High
- 5 Very high

57. Please state the reason for your answers.

SECTION H
READINESS TO ACQUIRE RELATED KNOWLEDGE

Please circle your answers.

58. If there is a mechanism to improve our communication skills, will you learn about it? Yes / No

59. Are you willing to learn the skills *over time* (since there are some skills that you need to learn and familiarize yourselves in order to master them)? Yes / No

60. If the skills are included in your communication subject (as an elective subject), will you enroll the course? Yes / No

61. If the skills are included in one of the subtopics in your core communication subject(s), do you agree?

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neutral
- 3 Agree
- 4 Strongly agree

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX B

List of non-objective words and statements from various researches done by Malaysian scholars in General Semantics.

Faridah Ibrahim (2003). Penggunaan dan salahguna bahasa dalam tajuk berita daripada perspektif Semantik Umum.

NO	WORDS/STATEMENTS
1	GPC Yemen tuduh duta AS campur tangan
2	128 cendekiawan AS mohon rakan Eropah kritik dasar Bush
3	Negara Arab desak satu lagi ketetapan di PBB
4	Amaran keras Putera Abdullah kepada Powell
5	'Killer blow' tactics backfire on DAP; 'Ah Lek' factor helped swing vote
6	Chong bitter about suffering third straight loss
7	Isteri kuat berleter antara punca penderaan
8	Rakyat Singapura ceroboh Pulau Pinang
9	... a Lesbian NGO ...
10	... freedom fighter Aung San Suu Kyi ...
11	... burning bras feminists groups ...
12	... mendesak/urge ...
13	... sinis/sarcastic ...
14	... mahu/want ...
15	... tuduh/accuse ...
16	... selar/lash ...
17	By being more Muslim, are we becoming less Malay?
18	Tajudin's bid to stop TRI share sale dealt a blow
19	Arab Saudi tunduk kepada arahan AS
20	Liga Arab lemah
21	Kelab Sukan di Malaysia gagal lahir atlit berbakat
22	Majoriti rakyat Indonesia mangsa rasuah
23	Rakyat Singapura ceroboh Pulau Pisang
24	Singapore MP criticized over remarks on reclamation issue (+ve)
25	Malaysia ada asas kukuh bantah tambak laut (+ve)
26	Syed Hamid denies Singapore's allegations (+ve)
27	DPM: Malaysia won't lost if public changes water source (+ve)
28	Singapore MP asks shoppers to boycott JB (+ve)
29	Official held for raping boys (-ve)
30	Play advisory role, Suhakam urged (-ve)
31	Indonesia dakwa Malaysia longgok pekerja di sempadan (-ve)
32	Elusive Osama still cast shadow over US campaign in Afghanistan
33	China's strength could jolt lethargic Japan
34	Survey: Rude Americans everywhere
35	Musa minta batal niat saman NUTP
36	Singapura mesti peka hak jiran
37	Develop own brands and designs, producers urged
38	Rape and incest must be dealt firmly
39	... pemimpin yang berani ...
40	... gadis yang pemalu ...
41	... a very kind man ...

Mohd. Rajib Ab. Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim (2002). Symbols, labels and straight news: A study on the nature of prejudice in the media.

NO	WORDS/STATEMENTS
1	Either you're with us or you're against us
2	You're either part of the problem or part of the solution
3	Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it.
4	You'll never have a quiet world till you knock the patriotism out of the human race
5	... liberalism ...
6	... chauvinism ...
7	... racism ...
8	.. terrorism ...
9	... democracy ...
10	... dictatorship ...
11	... terrorists ...
12	... suicide bombers ...
13	... Islamic fundamentalist ...
14	Women cannot be leaders because they are weak and emotional
15	Statistics are boring and don't prove anything
16	Vitamin A is good for your health
17	Moslems are terrorists
18	He is a weak leader
19	He is clever
20	She is beautiful
21	... a defiant Arafat ...
22	... Sharon is a war criminal and Israel is a racist regime ...
23	... giant neighbour Russia ...
24	... media manipulation and intimidation ...
25	... a bitter three-month election campaign in Ukraine ...
26	... troubled Southern Province of Thailand ...
27	... tightest security plan ever ...
28	... to neutralise Palestinian leader ...
29	... Israel need to break this chain of terror ...
30	I fully understand Israel's need to defend herself
31	Arafat can do a lot more to prevent attacks' against Israelis
32	Occasional hiccups in our relations (Malaysia-Singapore) with our neighbours are inevitable. But we will continue to take a broad and long term perspective of these relations, and not be side tracked by differences over individual issues.
33	Israel military spokesman Gen. Ron Kitrey was asked on public radio what he meant by 'neutralise', Kitrey said he was "not here to play semantic games". He said, "We are aware of the fact that Arafat could be hit accidentally, but the officers and soldiers on the spot are perfectly alive to this danger". And he went on saying, "He who plays with fire can get burned".
34	... the majority of Thailand's political figures try to hide their wealth, especially cash money in order to escape the anti-corruption act ...
35	World leaders today urge Israel to immediately stop surrounding the office of Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat at West Bank
36	Arabs angry over US support for Israel actions
37	Jewish butcher's shop fired at ...
38	Israeli army ordered to 'neutralise' Arafat
39	Israel attack on Palestine - US gives blessing

40	Ex-stripper loses mayor's post in recall elections
41	Afghan radicals 'plotting attacks'
42	Hadi admits promises not kept
43	Erakat: Israel wants to kill Arafat
44	World urges Israel stop surrounding Yasser
45	... chain of terror ...
46	... racist regime ...
47	... occasional hiccups ...
48	... giant neighbour ...
49	... religious extremists ...

Faridah Ibrahim & Chau Pao Ling (1997). Analisis Semantik Objektiviti citra ahli politik wanita tempatan dan antarabangsa.

NO	WORDS/STATEMENTS
1	... boat people ...
2	... pelarian Vietnam ...
3	... orang hanyut ...
4	... pelampau ...
5	... mulut laser ...
6	... iron lady ...
7	... female parliamentarians ...
8	... hardcore feminists ...
9	... nude women running around the streets of Huairou ...
10	Kereta ini menaljubkan
11	... imperialisme dalam polisi luar Amerika
12	... diplomasi atomik ...
13	... dictator wang ...
14	... kapitalis monopoli ...
15	... mendakwa ...
16	... menyelar ...
17	... mendesak ...
18	... menuduh ...
19	... slams ...
20	... snubs ...
21	... criticised ...
22	... demands ...
23	... menuduh ...
24	... memberi amaran ...
25	... actress Jane Fonda, wife of Ted Turner, CNN's ...
26	... outspoken Western feminist ...
27	... eloquent speaker ...
28	... giant killer ...
29	... hebat dan berdedikasi ...
30	... serius dan garang ...
31	... democracy leader ...
32	... rapid fire Rafidah ...
33	... sepatutnya ...
34	... seharusnya ...
35	... mestilah ...
36	... perlu ...
37	... should ...
38	... must ...
39	... need to ...

41	... warned ...
42	... stressed ...
43	... insisted ...
44	... said/saying/spoke/says ...
45	... told ...
46	... added/adding ...
47	... urged/urge ...
48	... claimed ...
49	... according ...
50	... accused ...
51	... warned ...
52	Margaret Thatcher, who served as British premier for 11 years, is rumoured to be about to leave the Conservative Party and support the anti-European Referendum Party in the next general election, <i>The Guardian</i> reported yesterday.
53	Dr. Siti Zaharah announcement of the new line-up caught many in her exco unaware. This was evident when they were seen writing down the names as she read them out.
54	Dona Babel akan berhadapan seorang wanita, Mariam Musa, yang disifatkan oleh para pemerhati politik bertanding kerana kecewa berikutan tindakan Dewan Bandaraya Kuching Utara merobohkan kedai setinggannya yang menghalang laluan orang ramai.
55	Hajat Zaharah itu menyebabkan Rafidah melontarkan peluru pertamanya kepada Timbalan Menteri Kesihatan tersebut.
56	Rafidah, 53, once told reporters: "I am a person who speaks my mind and I have been known to be harsh-stubborn at times".

Mohd. Rajib Ab. Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim (1996). The use and misuse of language in the media: Semantic analysis of human rights coverage in Malaysian Dailies

NO	WORDS/STATEMENTS
1	... human rights ...
2	... capitalists ...
3	... freedom of expression ...
4	... conservatism ...
5	... sexism ...
6	... fundamentalism ...
7	You've seen one tree, you've seen them all
8	You cannot trust another corporate person
9	He is a weak leader
10	She is beautiful
11	Circumstances force men to agree or disagree
12	It is a wonderful car
13	... demands ...
14	... press ...
15	... appeared ...
16	... maybe ...
17	... presumed ...
18	... as if ...
19	Libya threatens Seoul ...
20	Kenya has become a sick society with no respect for life
21	Women better at finance than men
22	In a male-dominated society ...
23	... drift people ...

24	... boat people ...
25	... terrorists or anti-terrorists ...
26	... global plot ...
27	... frustrated white ...
28	... angry students ...
29	... white extremists ...
30	... draconian measures ...
31	... white skinned, desperado with a superiority complex ...
32	... ill-informed politician ...
33	... wild libertarian ...

Mohd. Rajib Ab. Ghani & Faridah Ibrahim (2005). War reporting: A symbiosis between the media and protagonist of war?

NO	WORDS/STATEMENTS
1	... conservative ...
2	... dictator ...
3	Osama e-mail slams Saudi peace plan
4	Britain boleh serang Iraq tanpa mandate PBB/Britain can attack Iraq without UN's mandate
5	Bush tuntutan Yasser henti pembunuhan/Bush demands Yasser to halt killing
6	Amaran keras Putera Abdullah kepada Powell/Harsh warning from Prince Abdullah to Powell
7	Dunia kian marah kepada Israel/The world is angry with Israel
8	Israel quits two cities under pressure
9	... both sides suffered heavy losses ...

Faridah Ibrahim & Emma Mirza Wati Mohamad (2005). War heroes, terrorists, freedom fighters and fragile economy: From metaphors to 'WMDs'

NO	WORDS/STATEMENTS
1	... plunged ...
2	... upright ...
3	... low ...
4	... failing ...
5	The current exchange rate is up
6	The stock market is closed at sky high
7	The company is facing a downturn
8	The margin has shrunk to half
9	... war heroes ...
10	... pemulihan (recovery) ... to describe the improving economic situation
11	... tenat/dying ... to describe a company's bad financial condition
12	... plunged dramatically ... to describe negative movements
13	... slower ... to describe negative movements
14	... slumping ... to describe negative movements
15	... pent up ... to describe the positive shift
16	... shoring up ... to describe the positive shift
17	... helter-skelter records (lintang pukang) ... to describe the chaotic situation the educational funding board is facing in getting borrowers to pay up their loans
18	... goyang gerudi (drill) ... to describe an exciting hula-hoop dancer routine by a famous Dangdut singer
19	... jajaran sempit (narrow path) ... to describe the difficulties faced by a company

20	... dipahat (carved) ... to describe an unchanging currency rate
21	... candlestick ... to describe stock charts
22	... kain singkat (short skirt) ... to bear a resemblance of a water crisis
23	... syurga (heaven) ... to describe Kuantan city as an entertainment center for youth
24	... tercalar (scratched) ... to describe America's bad image
25	... marathon penalty shootout ... to describe the long endured penalty shoot at a football game
26	... slapped ... to describe a sudden blow towards a football coach when he was fined RM50,000.00
27	... menuai (harvesting) ... to describe victory
28	... bull-run ... to describe a rough situation
29	... MAHB bullish on performance ... to indicate the perseverance and optimism of MAHB (Malaysian Airports Holding Berhad) in time of economic challenges
30	Lions out for revenge ... to show the seriousness of Singapore's football association to win in a tournament
31	Malaysia go down tamely
32	Abdullah: War on corruption a continuous effort ... to describe the government's seriousness and intensified effort to fight against graft
33	Michael Jackson wants to take revenge (bias dendam) on individuals who planned to damage his image

RESEARCH REPORT

**A STUDY ON STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING TOWARD
THE USE AND MISUSE OF LANGUAGE
IN MALAYSIAN NEWSPAPERS**

CODE: P (1) / K / 2006

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NOVEMBER 2006**