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AN ANALYSIS OF IDENTIFICATION IN MALAYSIAN PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE ON LANGUAGE POLICY

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Abstract:

Language policy is important in mobilizing citizens for a certain language requirement. As the field is very contentious in nature, a language policy in any country is not free from debates and critiques. It is often associated with many intermediating factors like hegemony, language rights, mother-tongue education, imperialism, globalization, etc. In fact, it is very political. This study examined the Malaysian Parliamentarians' (MPs) discursive statements on a debatable language issue: the use of English in the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics. 10-year debate transcripts (hansards) that consist of speeches of the government-alliance MPs were analysed to see how they positioned themselves and the policy at the parliamentary level. Adopting a sign-based approach, this research investigates the use of linguistic features of identification in a large pool of data collected from verbatim written transcripts of the Malaysian parliament *Dewan Rakyat,* which were available online. Results of the study indicated that throughout the debate, whether at the point of supporting or rejecting the implementation of the policy, the MPs used selected identification features to maintain power, clarity, and confidence level, which indirectly gave the picture that they were responsible, credible, and concerned with the citizens' needs, especially when at the end the government reverted to using mother tongue as the medium of instruction for the two subjects in Malaysian schools. The study is theoretically significant in revealing a critical approach towards language policy in a multilingual country.

Keywords:

Critical Approach, Entity, Identification, Language Policy, Malaysia, Parliament, Sign-Based

Introduction

The implementation of a language policy in Malaysia, the use of English language as the medium of instruction for Science and Mathematics subjects (The PPSMI policy- Malay

acronym), has proven controversial and contentious. The policy was fiercely challenged in this multilingual country with three major ethnic groups: Malays, Indians and Chinese. Resistance came from all the three groups and the debate on its planning and implementation has grown so contentious that it has even sparked riots and protests. For instance, a demonstration against the policy in 2009 has turned into a riot which witnessed thousands of people, especially the Malays, Malay nationalists, Chinese and Indian educationalists (Samuel & Tee, 2013). The policy was perceived negatively due to several reasons; 1) English is the language of former British colonials 2) The use of mother-tongue is in jeopardy and 3) Malay students may not excel in Science and Mathematics subjects since they are generally very weak in English. It was viewed as an inferior option to mother tongue education posing a threat to other languages spoken in Malaysia, particularly minority languages (Grala, 2022). The policy was implemented in Malaysian schools in 2003 and abolished in 2012. According to Loong and Panicker (2025) the challenges and public disagreement have led to its withdrawal. This has caused the language policy issue to be researched in many different aspects.

Studies have been carried on the effectiveness of the policy (Hamzah & Abdullah, 2009; Parilah & Fauziah, 2007), the impact on mother-tongue (Gill, 2014; Pillai & Ong, 2018), opposition from political parties, nationalists, activists, and academicians (Suliman et al., 2017) and teachers' beliefs and perceptions (Tan & Lan, 2011; Yunus & Sukri, 2017). Studies on PPSMI were also done on framing issues in newspapers (Khiang, Ahmad, Ibrahim, & Kee, 2012; Yang & Ishak, 2012), and the representation of different pressure groups in newspapers (Amjad Raji, 2012; Samuel et al., 2014). Studies were also carried out on the good impacts of PPSMI for example, on students' empowerment (Nor Azmi, 2003), nation building (David & Govindasamy, 2003; Gill, 2005, 2007; Le Ha et al.,2013), issue of complex language journey (Gill & Shaari, 2019) and ethnocratic language policy (Samuel et al., 2013). However, there is a dearth of research on the PPSMI issue at the legislation and political level. The role of the government as the policy maker should be examined so as to further understand the issue that is influenced by socio-cultural and historical baggage. One-way to look at it is by examining the speeches of the government at the Malaysian parliament. It is understood that parliamentarians battle for language as a physical representation of the struggle for power, which can be waged to gain, challenge, or compete for political authority, as well as to protect and consolidate political power (Ilie, 2015). Moreover, they realize the significant of using specific linguistic devices that can be exploited for certain strategic functions (Jasim & Mustafa, 2020).

Thus, this study aims to examine linguistic devices of identification used by government alliances of MPs in deliberation of the debatable PPSMI. For that reason, statements made in the *Dewan Rakyat*, a part of the Malaysian parliament, were investigated in the Hansards (transcripts) which are available online. The present study, thus, attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the frequencies of linguistic devices of identifications used by the MPs in the parliamentary debate on language policy?
2. How did the MPs use the linguistic devices of identifications in the parliamentary debate on language policy?
3. How far linguistic devices of identifications (implicit or explicit entities) are articulated by the MPs of the government alliances?

Literature Review

There are four areas that will be discussed in the literature review.

PPSMI Language Policy

In 2003, the Malaysian government implemented the PPSMI policy, instructing schools to use English as the medium of instruction (MOI) for Science and Mathematics. Gill (2007) argued that this policy was necessary for Malays' progress and development, as English has become increasingly important in the globalized world. The PPSMI policy received support from the academic community, with David and Govindasamy (2003) and Gill (2005) describing it as a process towards a better Malaysia as a developing country. However, Malay nationalists and intellectuals opposed the policy, arguing that English is a colonial language and Malay should be widely used as a language for knowledge. Samuel and Tee (2013) also criticized the policy for being a threat to the Chinese' s mother tongue and culture. Moreover, many quarters believed it was done in a haste and they seemed to be forced or coerced into doing it and became victims of a policy which they claimed was not well-planned. The main reason of the policy formulation is to improve English proficiency among Malaysians and to prosper the country. However, it was rejected due to several impacts, for example, on national language sovereignty (Guan, 2017; Habuan, 2018; Samuel & Tee, 2013), ethnic group identity (Le Ha et al., 2013) and mother tongue education (Gill, 2014). Students in rural schools would have difficulty to understand the two subjects due to their low English proficiency (Soh et al., 2021), incompetent teachers and inadequate teaching and learning resources (Tan & Lan, 2011). Key issues highlighted in some previous studies on the PPSMI language policy are illustrated in the following table.

Table 1: Previous Studies

Author(s)/year	Title	Issues
Gill (2007)	Shift in Language Policy in Malaysia: Unravelling Reasons for Change, Conflict and Compromise in mother-tongue education.	PPSMI causes a conflict between mother-tongue and cultural identity among Chinese group.
David and Govindasamy (2003)	Language Education and Nation Building in Multilingual Malaysia.	PPSMI leads to clashes between national identity and global demands.
Gill (2005)	Language policy in Malaysia: Reversing Direction	PPSMI creates tensions to preserve national identity and linguistic nationalism.
Samuel and Tee (2013)	Malaysia: Ethnocracy and Education.	PPSMI is a part of Malaysia' s ethnocratic education system.
Guan (2017)	Education and Globalization in Southeast Asia.	PPSMI is an effort by Malaysian government to balance competitiveness with cultural identity
Habuan (2018)	Using Spolsky' Model in Examining Malaysia's National Language Policy.	PPSMI contributes to a struggle between national language and

		English as language of economic advancement.
Le Ha et al. (2013)	Nation Building, English as an International Language, Medium of Instruction, and Language debate: Malaysia and Possible Ways Forward.	PPSMI reflects tension between nation-building and globalization.
Gill (2014)	The Impact of the Change in Medium of Instruction in Malaysia on the Chinese Community and Mother-Tongue Education.	PPSMI forms more supports for Chinese-language schooling.
Soh et al. (2021)	The Impact of Language of Instruction in Schools on Student Achievement.	PPSMI broadens educational inequalities.
Tan and Lan (2011)	Teaching Mathematics and Science in English in Malaysian classrooms: The Impact of Teacher Beliefs on Classroom Practices and Student Learning.	PPSMI teachers do not have adequate proficiency and confidence.

Bauldauf (2004), a prominent theorist in language policy, identified four fundamental parts of language planning: status planning, language-in-education planning, prestige planning, and a critical approach to language planning. He believed that preserving an image is linked to the motivation and activity of the language planner and the audience for whom they design, as seen in Malaysia and, increasingly, in Quebec. Bauldauf (2004) claimed that Malaysian language policy and planning warrant a critical assessment in terms of the government's position (as language planner) in the country. With the country's chaotic socio-cultural past and linguistic sensitivity, the administration faced challenges in implementing the PPSMI language policy. At the parliamentary level, for example, the government MPs had to thoroughly discuss the policy so as to persuade the Opposition (parties) and the people (*rakyat*) of the government's goals and aspirations. It is thus important to investigate the semantic aspects of MPs' language strategies in the parliament to understand how policymakers linguistically fought for the PPSMI policy.

The 2002-2012 Malaysian Parliament

The Malaysian parliament consists of *Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara.* The 2002-2012 *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Common), is made up of members from the previous ruling coalition, *Barisan Nasional* (BN), and the opposition alliance, *Barisan Alternatif.* The BN is made up of three major political parties: UMNO (United Malays National Organisation), MCA (Malaysian Chinese Association), MIC (Malaysian Indian Congress), and other minority groupings (such as the Gerakan, SUPP, and PBS). The membership of BN's three main parties is based on ethnicity, as shown by their names. Meanwhile, the BA alliance comprises three parties: PAS (Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party), PKR (People's Justice Party), and DAP (Democratic Action Party). PAS is a Malay-Muslim party, whereas PKR and DAP are made up of Malaysia's mixed ethnicities. However, they are dominated by Malays and Chinese, respectively. Although PAS, PKR, and DAP are part of the same BA umbrella coalition, they may not always agree on many matters, particularly those touching philosophy. BN, on the other hand, adheres to the same

philosophy and typically supports one another to demonstrate to outsiders that they are a powerful, unified majority group fighting for peace and harmony (David, 2006). However, in other cases, the various ethnic groupings in BN show great loyalty to their group, such as UMNO for Malays, MCA for Chinese, and MIC for Indians. The Malaysian Federation is divided into two parts: East Malaysia (which includes Sabah and Sarawak) and West Malaysia. Sarawakian and Sabahan political parties (such as the SUPP, SPDP, and PRS in Sarawak and SAPP, PBS, and PBRS in Sabah) serve East Malaysia's indigenous community.

The *Dewan Rakyat* is the third component of the Malaysian Parliament. The Malaysian Parliament, which consists of *Yang Dipertuan Agung* (the King*), Dewan Negara, and Dewan Rakyat,* works as the legislation council for the country. It has legislative authority over a wide range of issues including finance, commerce and industry, education and defence. The *Dewan Rakyat* members are chosen through a national election, which is done once every five years. It is a place for the citizens to voice their aspirations and opinions and get their voices heard through their representatives. It is also a place to discuss domestic issues apart from questioning its policies and legal formulations. In Malaysia, the implementation of PPSMI has caused a heated argument among MPs. It has been proven to be controversial and contentious (Suliman et al., 2017). In the initial stage of its implementation, the government- alliance MPs strongly proposed the policy in the *Dewan Rakyat* while those in opposition parties were against it. The policy was announced in mid-2002 and just six months later, it was implemented in Malaysian schools. Throughout the 10 years of its implementation in the country, the government received huge criticisms and comments in the *Dewan Rakyat,* which led to its abolishment in 2012.

Linguistic Devices of Identification

Linguistic devices of identification are entities like specific nouns, noun phrases, nominalizations, abstract nouns, common referents. They can be either implicit (reduced) or explicit (enhanced). For example, the entities have reduced or implicit identifications when passive verbs without clear doer and passive adjectives and intransitive verbs are used. The identifications of the entities are reduced or they become implicit when there are no human agents or there is no doer control. Moreover, they can be recognized when there are no specific references from context to give them clear identification. According to Piantadosi, Tily and Gibson (2012), if context is not given, words may have many senses and syntactic categories, which require determination of intended meaning or part of speech by listeners. Contrary, if words in themselves resemble certain characterization or within a context that gives them identification, then they are known as entities with enhanced identity.

In a political setting like a parliamentary debate, there are instances of reduced (implicit) or enhanced (explicit) identifications used by the parliamentarians. Two distinct features that are common are nominalizations and passivization. Political discourse features a large use of nominalized forms that increases persuasiveness through the use of linguistic implicit strategies, ranging from presupposition to vagueness, to topicalization (Cominetti, 2023). Nominalization is a process where a linguistic entity which is not a noun is transformed into a noun from a morphological and/or syntactic perspective (Cominetti, 2023). It can be used either to conceal content or responsibilities (Vallauri & Masia, 2014). It disengages the doer which can lead to ambiguity or obscurity (Sušinskienė, 2010). Similarly, passivization creates vagueness in political speeches by linguistically highlighting the act and concealing the agent/doer. In passive clauses, the agents/doers indeed are transformed into certain conditions, and those conditions can be removed without making the sentence grammatically wrong.

Certainly, the passive voice foregrounds the theme and backgrounds the actor (Derakhshani, 2021).

Sign-based Approach
This study employs William Diver's (1995) linguistic sign-based theory, known as the Columbia School of Linguistics. It is a functional approach to language, in which people use language with specific meanings in mind. When communicating, specific language elements are used to convey the message. This indicates that linguistic units are chosen and used for communication rather than simply as part of a system. It is a comprehensive linguistic analysis framework (a sign-oriented examination of the meaning of meanings) that asserts that grammatical structure is impacted by human behaviours such as inference and effort minimization, as well as driven by language's communication function. This is very much in line with the current study's purpose, which is to observe how MPs choose specific linguistic qualities to acquire the audience's support and keep power. The Columbia School proponents argue that language is both a tool for human communication and an illustration of human behaviour. This implies a distinct view of language, namely that it is people-centred. Language is not self-contained. The context of utterances can provide insight into the speakers' aims.

Methodology
The data used in this study is the 10th, 11th and 12th Parliament of *Dewan Rakyat* transcripts, also known as Hansards (downloaded from www.parlimen.gov.my). The total analysed data size comprised excerpts from the three parliamentary debates covering 71, 258 words. The following table illustrates the details of the data taken.

Table 2: Total Analysed Data Size

Parliament/Session	Duration	No. of Words	No. of MPs
10th Parliament/Session 4	19/6/2002- 21/10/2002	25,034	43
11th Parliament/Session 2	24/3/2005- 28/11/2005	11,928	23
11th Parliament/Session 3	14/3/2006- 22/11/2006	9,104	30
12th Parliament/Session 1	30/4/2008 - 1/12/2008	18,347	38
12th Parliament/Session 4	16/3/2011- 23/11/2011	6,845	20
Total		**71,258**	**154**

All the transcripts of the meetings were skimmed and scanned by using the PDF find search tool for any discussions on the PPSMI issue by the government parliamentarians. The parts of the MPs' speeches taken for the analysis were statements and comments by the MPs in the government coalition. Purposive sampling was adopted for this study. A qualitative approach was then used in determining the relevant parts of the discussion of the PPSMI issue, like showing supporting or opposing the language policy and analysing the data. This process adopted the qualitative procedure of interpretative approaches proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). Then, the selected data were analysed semantically for the types of identification, used by the pro-government MPs in the debate. Each sentence was carefully examined to find the occurrence of the linguistic features. They were coded once found.

After all the relevant devices were coded, the occurrences of linguistic features were manually counted to see their frequencies in the language debate. They were put into their categories which were later compared and contrasted to see which devices were more or less used in the debate. The overall frequency counts were examined to see the usage patterns of the linguistic devices in the debates.

Next, selected excerpts of the speeches that contain semantic signs of the devices were examined and scrutinised and inferred for the motive of the MPs by looking at the immediate context. Inference was also made based on the socio and historical context that revolved around the language policy turmoil in Malaysia.

Results and Discussion

RQ1

The following are the results for answering the first research question i.e. What are the frequencies of linguistic devices of identifications used by the MPs in the parliamentary debate on language policy?

The results of the occurrence of identification features in the 10th, 11th and 12th Parliaments are shown in the table below:

Table 3: Distribution of Identification Devices

	10th parliament		11th Parliament		12th Parliament		*Total*
Enhanced	467	72.6%	294	64.6%	245	64.1%	**1006**
Reduced	176	27.4%	161	35.4%	137	35.9%	**474**
Total	**643**		**455**		**382**		**1480**

In the above table, there are altogether 1,480 signs of identification expressed by the MPs of the government sides in the three sets of data. Out of the total, it was found that 1,006 are carriers of enhanced identification, while, for reduced identification, there are only 474 signs. The 10th Parliament had the highest number of identification entities that is 643 in total with 467 (72.6%) of enhanced and reduced of 176 (27.4%). The overall number of identifications in the 11th Parliament is 455, where 64.6% of the total are signs of the enhanced identification and only 35.4% tokens of reduced or implicit identification. In the 12th parliament, there is also a half gap between the enhanced and reduced identifications. It was shown that out of 382 signs of entities, 64.1% of it is enhanced and 35.9% reduced. For a better understanding of the occurrences of the enhanced/reduced signs of identifications in the parliament, a comparison of the constructs in the three parliaments is provided below.

Table 4: Total Enhanced and Reduced Identity Entities

	Enhanced		Reduced	
10th Parliament	467	46.4%	176	37%
11th Parliament	294	29.2%	161	34%
12th Parliament	245	24.4%	137	29%
Total	**1006**		**474**	

Looking at the number of entities in comparison among the three parliaments, it was clearly illustrated that the highest number of enhanced identity of entities would be the 10th Parliament (46.4%), followed by the 11th Parliament (29.2%) and then the 12th Parliament (24.4%). In terms of the implicit (identity reduced) entities, the data shows that out of 474 entities throughout the three parliaments, 37% are from the 10th Parliament, 34% from the 11th Parliament and 29% from the 12th Parliament. The difference between the total entities between enhanced signs of identification and reduced is 532 tokens (67% and 32% respectively). The information in table shows that there is almost 20% of gap between the 10th parliament and the other parliaments in terms of enhanced identification of the entity. However, there is a just a small percentage of about 5% difference among the three parliaments in terms of the reduced identification or the implicit entities. There is a wide gap of enhanced signs but not so for the reduced.

In general, it can be inferred from the large number of enhanced identification markers and comparatively a smaller number of reduced identifications of the entities show that the entities mentioned in the parliaments have been identified clearly by the government MPs in the beginning, middle and ending of the PPSMI implementation. However, a closer look at the numbers reveals some differences where the high enhanced identification signs in the 10th Parliament are reduced from 31.6% to 19.9% in the 11th Parliament, and 16.6% in the 12th Parliament. While for the reduced identification signs, the decrease is from 11.9% from the 10th Parliament to 10.9% in the 11th Parliament, and 9.3% in the 12th parliament.

RQ2

The following are the results for answering the second research question i.e. How did the MPs use the linguistic devices of identifications in the parliamentary debate on language policy?

Table shows a few excerpts that contain usage of implicit/reduces entity by the government MPs.

Table 5: Samples of Implicit/Reduced Entity

No.	Original Text	Translated Text
Excerpt #75	*Bahasa Inggeris yang digunakan dalam pengajaran dan pembelajaran Matematik dan Sains adalah merupakan, dengan izin,* **instructional language** *yang menekan kepada arahan-arahan dan tatacara untuk menyelesaikan masalah yang dikemukakan*	The English language which is used in teaching and learning Mathematics and Science is, with the permission, an instructional language that adheres to the instructions and procedures in order to solve the problem.
Excerpt #76	**Persoalan ini** *perlu diperjelaskan dan perlu dicari penyelesaian (Datuk Bung Moktar bin Radin/DR22.10.2002)*	This question needs to be clarified and the solutions need to be sought (Datuk Bung Moktar bin Radin / DR22.10.2002)
Excerpt #77	*Saya minta agar sekolah ini diberikan perhatian yang lebih dan tidak diabaikan (Puan Sukinam Domo/DR22.10.2002)*	I wish this school be given more attention and not to be

disregarded (Mrs. Sukinam
Domo / DR22.10.2002)

Excerpt 75 shows an example of an implicit/reduced entity. This is because "instructional language" (a normalization) is used as agent to solve "problem that is brought forward". It becomes a vague statement, thus, can be considered a mere rhetoric to emphasize on the importance of the PPSMI policy. The next excerpt 76 also presents a reduced identification of the entity "*persoalan ini*/this question" when there is no clear "doer" that should explain or answer the particular question. In the third excerpt (77) the noun "*sekolah ini* /this school" is a noun phrase that becomes implicit because no specific "doer" is mentioned to make sure that "this school" is not "*diabaikan*/abandoned". As indicated in the total number of entity identification in the 10th Parliament, enhanced identifications are the majority. As such the statements by the MPs can be considered as reliable, credible and trustworthy when they gave their stand on the need to implement PPSMI in the country. The following are the excerpts on the enhanced or explicit identification of the entities in the 10th Parliament.

Table 6: Samples of Explicit/Enhanced Entity

No.	Original Text	Translated Text
Excerpt #78	*Terima kasih yang berhormat,* **saya** *dalam dewan yang mulia ini berkali-kali telah* **saya** *sebutkan, janganlah* **kita** *anggapkan bahawa apa yang* **kita** *lakukan iaitu membina segala* **system pendidikan kita** *itu dalam bahasa Malaysia adalah sia-sia belaka dan kini* **kerajaan** *pula hendak menukar dalam bahasa Inggeris. (Dato' Mahadzir bin Mohd Khir/DR7.10.2002)*	Thank you *Yang Berhormat*, in this hall, I have mentioned few times that we must not have the thought that the formation of our education system in Malay language is indeed pointless and at present the government is about to change it into English. (Dato 'Mahadzir bin Mohd Khir / DR7.10.2002)
Excerpt #79	*Keduanya, ialah boleh katakan bagaimana* **kerajaan** *buat* **keputusan** *untuk mengajar ini dalam bahasa Inggeris.* **Saya** *perlu ingatkan sekali lagi kepada Yang Berhormat, terutama sekali dari Kepong yang pemikirannya terkepung. Iaitu,* **kita** *harus ingat,* **saya** *tegaskan sekali lagi, mata pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, sebagai satu mata pelajaran, itu kita berasingan. Hari ini* **kita** *bercakap pengajaran Matematik dan Sains dalam bahasa Inggeris, iaitu bagaimana* **kita** *menggunakan* **bahasa Inggeris** *sebagai alat untuk memperolehi ilmu. (Dato Mahadzir bin Mohd Khir/DR29.10.2002)*	Secondly, it is possible to see how the government has made a decision to teach Science and Mathematics in English. I have to remind Yang *Berhormat* again, who is especially from Kepong where he is not an open-minded. That is, we should remember and strongly emphasize again that English itself is learned as a subject. Today we are having a dialogue about the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English,

		how we use English as a tool to gain knowledge. (Dato Mahadzir bin Mohd Khir / DR29.10.2002)
Excerpt #80	*Sebab dalam jawapan **saya** sebentar tadi **kita** telah menggunakan bahasa Inggeris ini sebelum itu pun, di IKM, KPM Info-Tech MARA. Ini bermakna sebelum perkara ini berbangkit pun **mereka** telah menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sudah lima enam tahun sebelum ini. (Dato Seri Mohamed Nazri bin Abdul Aziz/DR7.11.2002)*	Because in my answer just now, we have been using English at IKM, KPM Info-Tech MARA. It means that they had been using English for the past five or six years before the issue arised. (Dato Seri Mohamed Nazri bin Abdul Aziz / DR7.11.2002)
Excerpt #81	***Yang Berhormat bagi Tumpat** juga memnbangkitkan tentang isu bahasa. **Saya** tidak perlukan bahaskan di sini, telah **kita** bahaskan panjang lebar, tinggal lagi beginilah adat pembangkang, cakaplah sampai bila-bila pun, **dia** tidak akan mudah menerima segala apa yang **kita** hujahkan, masih lagi mengatakan **kita** mengetepikan keutamaan bahasa Melayu sedangkan banyak kali dijelaskan bahawa penggunaan bahasa Inggeris untuk Matematik dan Sains tidak akan menjejaskan kedaulatan bahasa melayu di negara kita. (Dato' Noh bin Haji Omar/DR12.11.2002)*	Yang Berhormat Tumpat also has risen the issue about language. I do not have to argue here since this issue has been debated at length. It is normal for the opposition not to agree with the government, they still kept still saying that we disregard the Malay language, as we had mentioned many times that the use of English in teaching Mathematics and Science will not affect the sovereignty of the Malay language in our country. (Dato 'Noh bin Haji Omar / DR12.11.2002)

It is clearly seen in the above examples (excerpt 78-81) that the MPs gave convincing reasoning to the others about the need in implementing the policy and the fact that it would not be jeopardizing the sovereignty of the Malay language. In excerpt 78 the MP used the pronouns *"saya*/I", "*kita*/we" and "*kerajaan*/government" as responsible parties that would make sure the success of the education system in the country. In excerpt 79, "*saya*/I" and "*kita*/we" were also used to remind the opponents that English language was used merely as a tool to get knowledge. Excerpt number 80 shows evidence of the success of using English in some vocational colleges in the country where clear doers like "*saya*/I", "*kita*/we" and "*mereka*/they" were used to make the statements more convincing and reliable. In excerpt 81, apart from using the first-person pronoun, the MP also adopted the second person pronoun "*dia*/he or she" as doer that was not willing to accept any justification made by the government about the policy. In all instances in the excerpts, clear doers in terms of personal pronouns were chosen which

gave enhanced identifications to the entities like educational system, English language and the supremacy of the Malay language.

RQ3

The next concern of the study is "how far implicit or explicit (identity reduced/enhanced) entities are articulated by the MPs of the government alliances?". The following are the discussions based on the three parliaments.

Identification in the 10th Parliament

The total number of entity identification in the 10th Parliament shows that enhanced identifications are the majority. As such many of the statements on the implementation of the policy by the MPs can be considered reliable, credible and trustworthy. The use of high numbers of enhanced identification signs proves that the policy is very important in the beginning of its implementation. The MPs go to the extent that the enhanced identifications fulfil the majority of signs in this parliament. Thus, they sound very clear and confident. Almost every action is justified with specific doers. Nominalizations are also rarely used as they may indicate vagueness. The MPSs are very firmed with the policy and it is a priority in the 10th Parliament. The policy is one of the main agendas of the government to make the nation excel in globalization era. The high number of enhanced identification of entities also signed that the government does not hide anything. They display truthfulness and responsibilities when speaking about the policy, thus indirectly legalizing their policy planning. This enable the government to have full control over country's population in the sense that the public should adhere to the policy implementation as everything is clearly stated. The government MPs strategize the actions of persuading the public to accept the policy through the use of highly identified doers for each statement they make.

Identification in the 11th Parliament

The 11th Parliament witnesses that some government MPSs voice their dissatisfaction towards the policy. Thus, the pattern of identification of entities in the 11th Parliament is distinctive. Data in the first session of the parliament shows many instances where clear doers are given when mentioning the roles or actions carried out by the government in investigating the effectiveness and the implementation of the PPSMI policy, confirming the responsibility of the government, solving problem and concerning the plight of those in the rural areas. Other areas are the number and roles of teachers for PPSMI, studies on PPSMI effectiveness, tools and software for PPSMI, students' academic performance and special television English programmes. Identification of the entities also become enhanced (with doers) when the MPs talk about the success and actions carried out by the government and comparison with other countries that use English in their education system. At this point, it can be seen that the MPs are very clear and confident with their stand which is supporting the policy. In this session, the policy is still being reinforced with heavy use of clear indication of the party that undertakes the responsibilities to carry out the policy. Similar to the 10th Parliament, the MPs place the position of the government in the utmost place of importance as the party that ensures bright future of the nation. At the same time, the MPs positioned themselves as experts in the language policy field and indirectly regulating the minds of the citizens to follow them. The third session of the 11th Parliament presents quite different context of the MPs' stand. Although, there are still enhanced identification entities in supporting government' s action to implement PPSMI and defending PPSMI, the signs are also used to ask for reconsidering and requesting for reusing the Malay language for Science and Mathematics. Seemingly, those who are now

against the policy are very clear and confident with their new stand. This gives the view that the government, although promoting PPSMI, is at the same time seriously concerned with the dilemma of using mother tongue in education. The use of enhanced identification of the entities in this context rationalizes the government's stand.

Meanwhile, the identifications of the entities are reduced when the government MPs talk about certain areas. Specific doer is almost none when the MPs talk about possible decision on abolishing the policy. This is perhaps due to respects to a few other MPs especially the education ministers who still believe in PPSMI. Doers are also not mentioned in matters where the government does not achieve any success or something undesirably happens or when there are weaknesses on the part of the government. This proves that the government will not jeopardize their hegemonic position. The identifications of the entities are also reduced when they talk about "*Rancangan Malaysia ke Sembilan*" (The 9th Malaysian Plan), studies/researches on PPSMI done by other than the government or any actions that have not been carried out by the government and about Mandarin books. In these areas, the MPs do not give specific identification signs to the entities, thus making their statements not serious and trustworthy. This is due to the fact that either those areas are not immediate or not of the concern of the government. Moreover, the implicit identification of the entities in this parliament revolves around feeling unsure of PPSMI and critique on PPSMI. These are expressed by the MPs who become reluctant of the policy. The use of the signs in these contexts may give the indication that the backbenchers are still respecting the implementation of the policy. However, reduced identification of the entities is also applied when talking about the Malay language in order to avoid any ethnic preferences.

Identification in the 12th Parliament
In the 12th parliament, the use of the enhanced identification of the entities is still the majority. In the first session of the parliament, specific doers are mentioned when the Education ministers explain actions taken by the government to make PPSMI successful, drawbacks of PPSMI, defending and answering accusations, explaining about re-examining PPSMI, upholding the Malay language and the importance of English. Meanwhile, the fourth session of the 12th Parliament consists of statements regarding the importance of English and the use of Malay/mother tongue, implementation of the MBMMBI policy and soft-landing process of PPSMI. In these instances, including defending what the government has done for PPSMI, the MPs clearly mention the agents or doers of the actions, thus showing that they are responsible in their claims and that they are very serious in matters regarding the use of English and mother-tongue in the country. Again, this proves that the government in any circumstances is the regulator of the country's well-being. The primary interest in the policy is no more, it is weakened, however the role of the government is still preserved. It is noticeable that in areas like suggesting and applying for not cancelling PPSMI, and improving English standard in Chinese schools, the MPs utter statements that do not have signs of specific doers, thus, showing a reduced identification of the entities. There are only a few reduced identifications of entities in these areas including a confusion at one Chinese school in Sabah about transitioning of the policy from PPSMI to MBMMBI. It can be inferred that the MPs avoid using enhanced identification of the entities when talking about ethnic matters that can lead to racial sensitivity. On the other hand, the MPs from Sabah and Sarawak choose to use reduced identification of entities when asking to implement again the PPSMI as they do not want to be clear. This is perhaps due to the pressure from fellow parliamentarians who downgrade those who support the policy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has managed to get answers for the three research questions. In debating the PPSMI language policy, the government MPs have used many enhanced/ explicit identifications of the entities where clear references are given to the actions or efforts made by the government in matters pertaining to the language issue in the country. The sign-based analysis showed that either at the point of supporting or rejecting the policy, the identification devices were always used to enhance accountability, avoid ethnic tension and show respect to other MPs. It reveals to Malaysian citizens the language behaviour of their MPs when they talk about an issue that is so debatable and sensitive. The knowledge provided in this research may also be useful for other fields like sociology, communication, and politics. Moreover, the study provides a unique perspective on a critical analysis of a language policy in a multilingual country, analysing linguistic elements from a sign-based theory, which may lead to replication and expansion of the approach. It is recommended that future research examine how other linguistic features are utilised by politicians to position themselves on critical issues.

Acknowledgements

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