Nation-Building to Global Leadership: A Corpus-Based Study of Dr. Mahathir Rhetoric

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Abstract

The study talks about Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's rhetorical strategies and verbal choices in his speeches and interviews. It throws lights on his professional career and political affiliation that transform effectiveness in his language. This study employed a mixed method by analyze a corpus of Mahathir's speeches and interview both statistically and qualitatively. It draws a general understanding and assumption of his unique rhetorical choices which he exhibited in his political and social converse. It shows that a politician use an artistic and skillful language in communication to attain major support, address serious issue and make impactful discussion. This study highlights the importance of rhetorical strategy and communication skills and also provide a new outlook for the analysis of public speaking and discussion.

Key words: Rhetoric, Communication, Sketch Engine, Framing Analysis, Discourse Studies

Introduction

The role of language in speech, rhetoric and communication is complex as language fulfils several functions such as it express information, emotional, instruction, interactional, and cognitive. According to Roman Jakobson (1960), the functions of language are to give reference, expressions thoughts and emotions, exhibit conative, phatic, metalingual and poetic functions. Michael Halliday (1975) also uncover the functions of language in terms of ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. The outlooks of these critics focusing on the facts that language performs several functions other than communication. It helps in the construction of identity, establish social relations, deliver cultural elements and also create meanings through its structure and functions.

Speech language should not resemble that one in the daily life conversation because it is spoken with the intent of creating a certain impression on people because of which so many vocabularies are being used in this form of speech. It is the requirement of the speech that it should have some thematic impact and practical consequences on the audience. It is in a position to establish objectives on a basis of

its functions.

The usage of an orator and a politician as it is revealed in the vocabulary has a specific purpose to convince and persuade other people by means of smart words and eloquent speech. With this, such capacity to speak language using fluency requires strategy, beautification and intent to persuade people.

The speeches of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad attracted audience from diverse background for which he is regarded as one of the influential political leader. His achievements in medical career and political affiliation are acknowledged by the majority of the Muslims. He is considered as one of the successful politician for his longest serving and twice premiership and people are considering him as role model in the political context. Based on his experience and success, he is using an impactful language during his interview and speeches reflecting specialized vocabulary and unique rhetorical strategies.

Problem Statement

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad is regarded as one of the influential political leader and he has a great potential to lead his country and attract people for getting vote and majority. He is known for his rhetorical strategies, the skills of manipulation and effective communication for which he got majority in his country. He has used his unique choices of verbal expressions and rhetorical strategies in his communication to persuade and influence people. He is regarded as one of the prevalent and noticeable leader of the Muslim world and we can see his charismatic personality from his twice premiership. He served his country as Prime Minister for twenty years and elected twice as the Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003 and from 2018 to 2020. His speeches are studied from different angles such as discourse analysis, stylistic analysis, metaphor analysis but the main task of this study is to underpin the framing ideas of his speeches and interviews, most frequent words used, collocations, reflection of his ideology, power and identity to influence his audience.

Research Objectives

To identify the most dominant topographies of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's verbal expressions in his speeches and interview

To analyze the rhetorical strategies, persuasive skills and effective communication of

Dr. Mahathir Mohamad that made a successful attempt.

Research Questions

What are the dominating topographies that contribute to the verbal expressions of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's speeches and interview?

In what ways, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad used his rhetorical strategies, persuasive skills and effective communication that made a successful endeavor?

Significance of the Study

The study can have an important role to play in the process of political discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, and in the history of Malaysian politics because it presents the analysis of the rhetorical devices in the speeches of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in a consistent way over the various phases of his leadership rule. With the help of the corpus-based methods, the study demonstrates how language has been strategically used to screen issues of nation-building, development, identity, and international leadership. It points to how rhetoric of Dr. Mahathir changed to focus on domestic consolidation and ethnic unity of Malaysia to expressions of relevance and leadership of Malaysia as part of the Global South.

The results can be used as a means of enhancing the knowledge base on the role of political leaders in the use of language by not only shaping ideologies of nations but also presenting worldly accounts of development, opposition, and international relationship. To researchers of the Southeast Asian politics, this paper presents facts through which the growth of the Malaysia politics can be explained due to one of its powerful figures. In addition, it adds value to the use of computational tools in discourse study with an example of how, linearly, linguistic patterning, keywords and framing mechan In practice, the book can be used to advance in the field of political communication, leadership, and civil discourse as other rising leaders and policymakers may study the model of rhetorical adaptation that the research proposes to learn how to communicate effectively in multicultural, postcolonial, and globalized contexts of politics.isms can be traced through time based on ideological shifts.

Literature Review

The nature of political speeches and interviews is not easy to understand and always need focus and appreciation to uncover meanings from it. It is a complicated task to

uncover the complex structure and meanings and it is time consuming. Corpus analysis tools are suggested to extract a statistical data from a larger corpora to determine the key concepts and ideas. These tools are used to investigate the hidden treasure of language to uncover a generalize result. Different analysis tools are used to analyze larger data with specific functions such as Antconc is used to do concordance analysis and expressions, WMatrix is used to identify the most frequent words in larger corpora and Sketch Engine is used to do more complicated analysis such as chancing words and expression that are used together, finding concordance analysis, N-gram and collocates.

Huang et al. (2005) considered the grammatical collocations with the Chinese Sketch Engine (CSE) based on the Sketch Engine by Kilgarriff et al. (2004) that was initially designed over the BNC corpus. Through combining the Chinese Gigaword corpus of the LDC, they came up with a prototype that could be used to show the tool could extract collocations over large scales of information. The paper points to the fact that even language-independent qualities of Sketch Engine may be relevant to Chinese simply by including certain grammatical expertise showing its strength and cross-lingual characteristics.

Kang and Yu (2011) describe a corpus-based stylistic study of tourism English which they describe as a subset of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). By comparing the Freiburg-LOB Corpus (FLOB) with the Tourism English Corpus (TEC), which is collected out of U.S and U.K government tourism websites, they discovered the existence of special stylistic characteristics in tourism English. There are more nouns and adjectives in TEC, particularly proper nouns and scenic nouns and positive descriptive adjective, and less frequent pronouns and verbs. It is also marked by various breaks in the sentences. These features underline the specific style of tourism English that should be considered as the basis of its further research, teaching, and translation.

In the study of Pearce, M. (2008), it presents an analysis of representations of the noun man and woman in the British National Corpus (BNC) based on their collocational and grammatical tendencies with the help of Sketch Engine. The research demonstrates that the use of these gendered words with different words is

subjected to systematic differences showing structured regularities in their usages in different grammatical settings.

Critical Discourse Analysis is an approach used to reflect power, ideology and persuasion through language. It aims to look at language from social and political context. It stands how skillful use of language brings inequality, express dominance and shows power relation in a social context.

Shukry (2013) applied the application of Critical Discourse Analysis to identify the discursive strategies of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in ten speeches against the war on terror of the U.S. President Bush after the 9/11 attack. Mahathir destroyed U.S. military ideology of freedom, justice, human rights with reference to unequal treatment of Muslims. Rhetoric, based on nationalism, glorification of self, and references to the past were used in his speeches to project a favorable image of self, as both Prime Minister and leader of the Muslim majority. By means of his control over communicative events, Mahathir claimed his power and established himself as a reputable voice of opposition and a protector of human rights.

The analysis developed by Ghazali (2003) was the Discourse Analysis of the key note address by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. It took into account three predominant themes including Economy, Islam, and UMNO. The paper has applied the Critical Discourse Analysis framework advanced by Fairclough to analyse the way in which the speeches by Mahathir produced solidarity among the social groups. The analysis pointed out to his combination of language strategy, simplifying of complex terms by pursuing the broader audiences, and the concept of relational values. The results indicate that the speech by Mahathir was developed to integrate other sections of Malaysian society and affect social frameworks using his political rhetoric.

Going through the available literature, this paper intended to investigate a corpus-based analysis of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad rhetoric and communication. It is going to underpin the most frequent use of collocates, lexical choices, rhetorical strategies, highlighting issues and established power relation in a larger data of the political speaker.

Methodology

This study involves a mixed approach by analyzing the data both statistically and

qualitatively. It gives a statistical results using corpus analysis tool such as Sketch Engine and disclose qualitative data through critical discourse analysis and framing analysis. It utilizes data collection from Youtube by downloading Mahathir's famous speeches and interviews and are transcribed for analysis. Using a sample of 18 well known presentations were taken which include mostly speeches and some interview. Transcribing the text serves is an initial step for data analysis and undergoes through sketch engine to analyze it statistically. It serves to uncover the most focus ideas and concepts, frequent words and collocates which are then compiled with the qualitative data to get a conclusions.
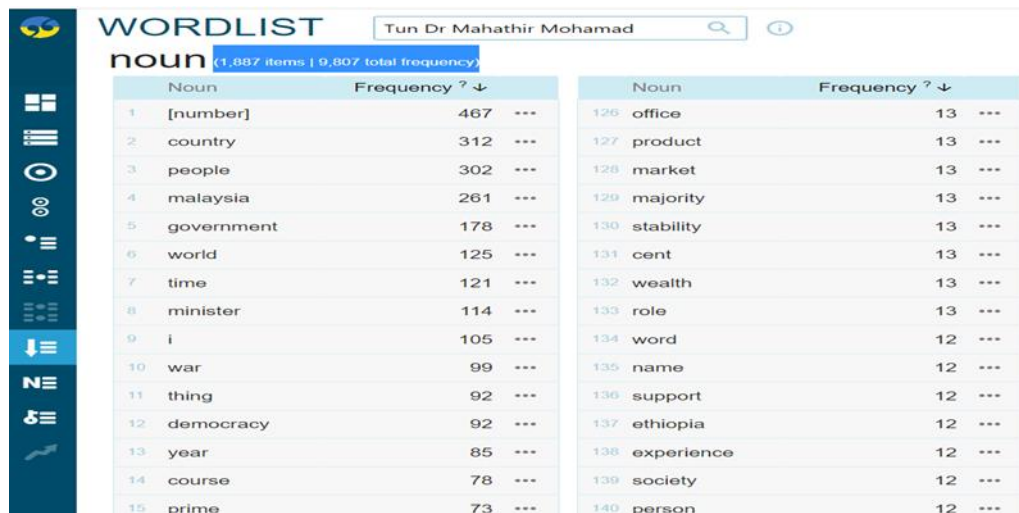
Analysis and Discussion

The study explored some famous presentations of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad which were available on Youtube and were analyzed both statistically and qualitatively. A corpus of about 44579 words was generated and were analyzed through sketch engine. This analysis discover the most frequent words such as nouns, verbs and adjectives which are used most frequently by Dr. Mahathir in his communication. It also discern collocates, key words and N-gram of the speeches. The frequency of wordlist shows the verbal choices of his speeches which are expressed in the table1.

S.NO	Verbal Choices	Frequency
1	Noun	9,807
2	Verb	7,708
3	Adjective	2,752

The frequency of nouns in the speeches used by Mahathir is high with 9,807 cases being registered. It indicates his carefulness in using specific and formal terms to utter clear points of this detailed work. The high rate of use of nouns reveals his level of concern with clarity and formality in the speech. Mahathir exploits the use of noun extensively in his speeches in order to come out as authoritative, unambiguous and addressing deeply-seated matters such as educational development and economic growth. This deliberation increases his credibility and makes him a person who should be taken seriously as a knowledgeable and responsible leader to solve national issues. For instance, "our discussion focused on trade and commodities which is significant to the well-being of Malaysia". It shows his unique rhetorical and
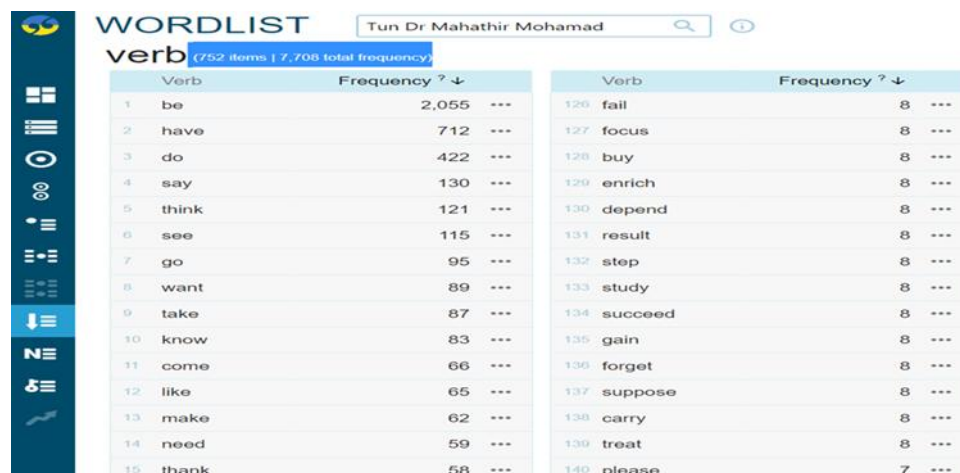
persuasive strategy to influence people.

In terms of speech frequency, the verbs were highly employed by Mahathir in his speeches (7,708 times), which is a characteristic trait of an action-oriented dynamic style. This increased his presentation and made it captivating, passionate and convincing. Though the use of verb gives vigor, other characteristics such as structure and rhetoric influenced the success and influence of his speeches.
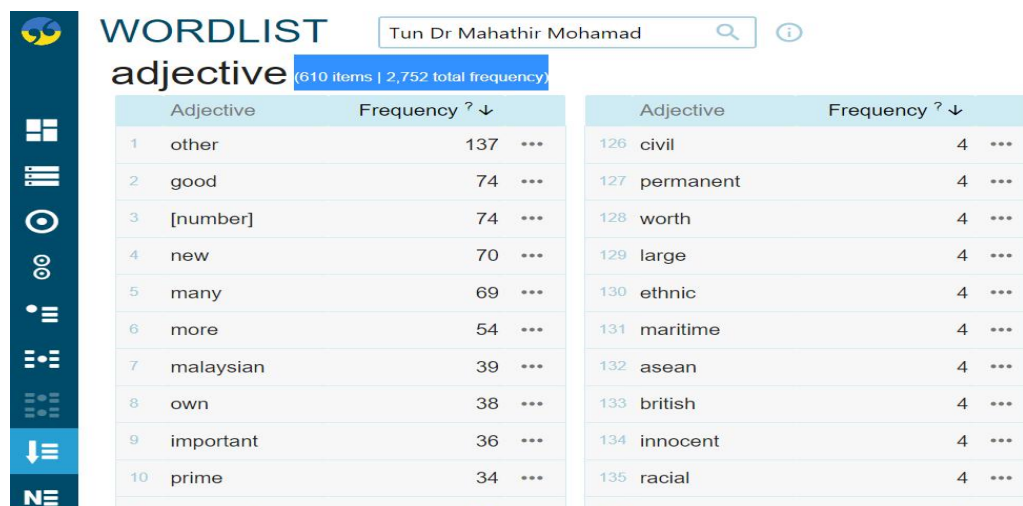
Mahathir constantly utilizes verbs to show whether one needs to act, quick or efficient, and the vision of the solution. Use of verbs such as take action and achieved motivate and encourage his audience to take any action. This lively language keeps the audience glued and on toes. For Instance "we also reviewed the situation in Southeast Asia where Malaysia is playing a vital role in maintaining the region's peace and stability". Mahathir used action verb in his speeches to transform a vibrant and

positive energy in his audience.

Mahathir employed adjectives 2,752 times in his speeches which denotes that he is descriptive to address the audience and enhance his message. This is an attribute of his wider artistic practices, which include many wording options to bring out more emotions and the effectiveness of communication.

Mahathir presents his opinions vividly with the help of adjectives demonstrating challenges and opportunities. Such words as innovative approach and bright future induce urgency and inspiration as they stimulate public activities. For instance, "I would want the United States to do with regard to economic policy my honest and simple responses for the US economy to get ahead and regain these things for the healthier and more vibrant the US economy becomes the better it will be not only for the United States and Malaysia but all the developing countries in the world the overall relations between Malaysia and the U.S" This descriptive type of phraseology also gives color to it and assists in making his message stick out and be more memorable.
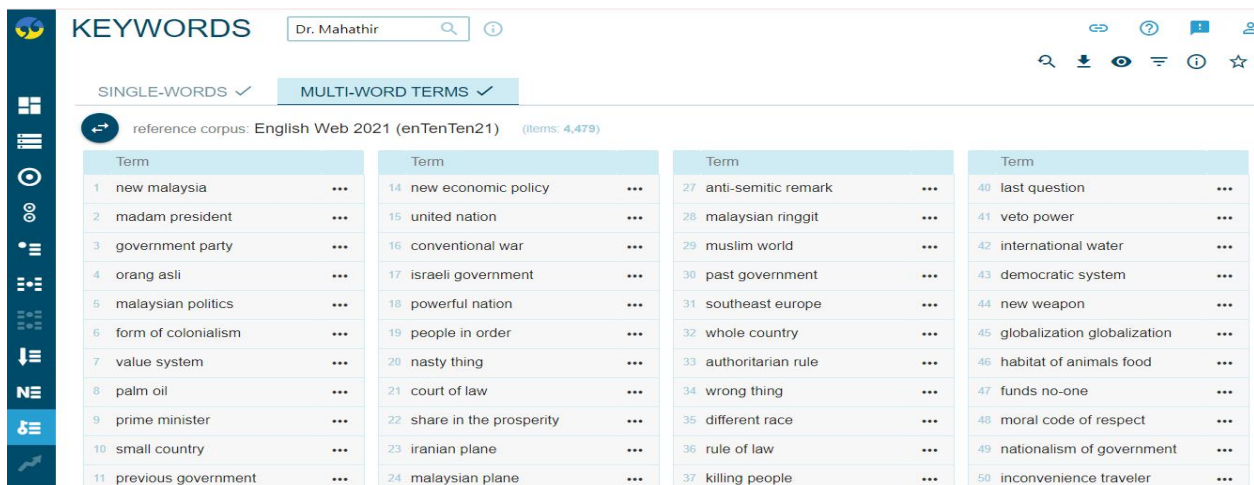
In this study, a statistics of key words analysis also analyzed through sketch engine which focuses on Dr. Mahathir's rhetorical and ideological emphasis in his political converse. These words are statistically significant in the discourse of Mahathir.

The findings showed high frequency words like; New Malaysia, New Economic policies, previous government, democratic system, form of colonialism, Muslim world, and these represent repetitive themes of discourse. These key words give a hint that the problem of national identity, of religious beliefs, of socio-economic development and postcolonial studies rejecting or opposing Western influences are very important. They perform repetitively, rhetorically, to build a rhetorical narrative of unity, culture autonomy, and visionary and reformist leadership in putting Mahathir at the helm of leadership. Pairing this lexical focus with his overall political agenda, one can see this lexical focus as a discourse constructing instances of power, authority and legitimacy. This approach helps to shed more light on the way the language is used strategically to create an image or physical impression in order to influence the masses and even the national identity by showing the lexical patterns that the political speech of Mahathir relies on.

Dr. Mahathir used collocates in his communication which he is consciously selecting it to make an impact and meaning. This study dwells into the rhetorical role of the vocabulary word education in the speeches made by the Mahathir Mohamad.
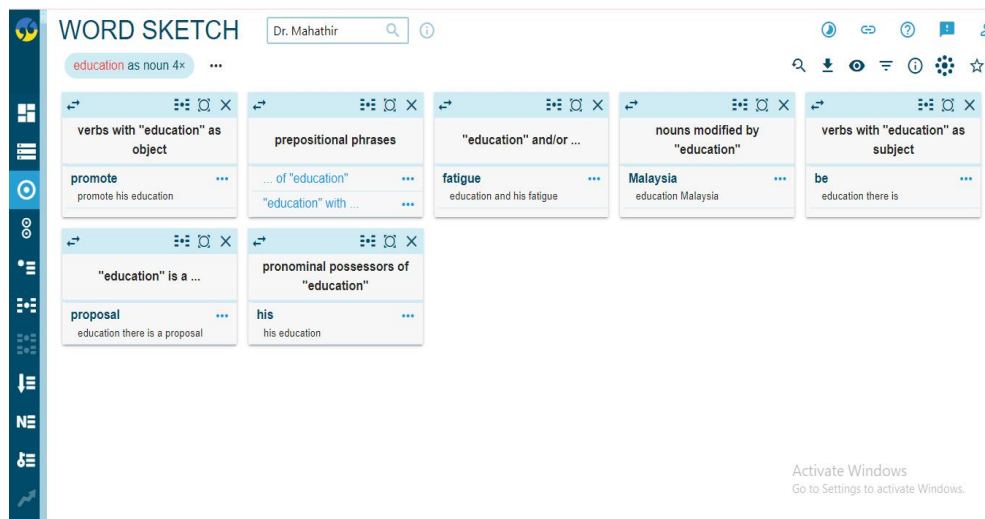
Action and advocacy are being proclaimed through such verbs as promote, and commitment is tendered by prepositional and conjoined phrases, which include of education or education and his fatigue to form logic appeal and emotional appeal. Such phrases as education Malaysia bring the education and the national identity together, strengthening ethos. The declaring (education is...) supports the authority, and such words as proposal refers to governance and planning. The presence of personal owners (his education) enhances the emotional appeal and personalizes it, which enhances the identification of audience membership.

Another example of collocation from his speeches is taken where he is focusing on the international crises of Palestine and Israel. For Instance, "If we too choose to be silent, the blood from the murders and killings of Palestinians by the Israel is on our hands as well". He is emphasizing on the brutal action which can be done by another country is also part of our concerns. We can't remain silence and ignore the issue as we will be consider also responsible for the brutality of this action.

When the Sketch Engine is used in the N-gram analysis of speeches by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, the word combinations of such nature that are found repeatedly include such bigrams and trigrams as The government, The country, and the people, In Malaysia, The world, and We have and reflect the same themes of development, identity, and nationalism.

The combinations of two and more words, supporting ideological ideas, advancing rhetorical appeal, and the explanation of factors behind consistency and persuasiveness of his political discourse, complement the understandings, gathered with the help of the analysis of keywords and collocations.

Education is positioned as the key to individual and national well-being through application of the framing functions as Robert Entman uses as the base to develop a persuasive developmental discourse. For instance, "The key to a prosperous life is education. We must invest in our schools and teachers, in order to make sure that our students have the skills they need to succeed". The metaphor of the key to a good life has put education as the door to opportunity, and the passage to invest on our schools and teachers illustrates the systemic under investment as the reason as to why we are not making as much progress. This message is made even stronger by the usage of the modal verb must, and a sense of strong moral duty, by the usage of the inclusive pronoun we. Having related investment in education directly to gaining the skills required to be a successful individual, Mahathir offers a straight answer to this question and it is institutional change and human resource development. The utterance aims to place the national identity in the context of progress and the country being cohesive with the use of futuristic and action language rhetorically. Such a framing strategy, referring to a general approach in the political rhetoric of Mahathir, makes education an attribute of the national development, and the policy making process a both ethical and tactical necessity. He also used action verbs that characterizes high frequency in his speeches. It shows a sense of urgency and boost energy in audience

to do similar actions. He is putting an emphasis on certain issue by using structure like "we must take action against these issues" to highlight it in better way. Tackling the solutions of many problem, he is putting vibrant energy among his audience by motivating his people for working together such as "together we achieved many things". He is transforming positive energy among his audience to be united while facing challenges and also take equal part in its solution.

The political speeches of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in 1981-2003 and then 2018-2020 contain a lot of logos, ethos, and pathos, depending upon the specific national or global situation and carefully regimented to the purposes. His appeal to logic and reason (logos) can be seen in the use of systematic and categorical presentation of challenges that should be achieved in order to turn Malaysia into a full-fledged country, as he gives and provides statistics on potential growth, production, and industrialization of this country in the speech Vision 2020 speech (1991). So, in the case of economically illiterate Asian Financial Crisis in 1997, he reasoned against IMF prescriptions, and told the world that Malaysia had the right to manage capital flows, and came up with his own local economic solutions, which was economically literate and a sound basis of economic policy. The study of Kamil, Chai, and Ting (2022) reflected the rhetorical strategies by identified Logos, Pathos and ethos in the 6 speeches of Dr. Mahathir delivered from 2018 to 2020. He builds his ethos or the appeal to ethos by constantly depicting himself as a custodian of national sovereignty and integrity. As an illustration, at his speech at the UMNO General Assembly in the year 2001, Mahathir stated, "We have dignity." We will never sell our country with its glorious destiny, where the nation comes first, says his image of a leader concerned about his country. Upon becoming Prime Minister again in 2018, he has improved his personal ethical standing as the corruption problem was tackled, promises have been given to fix the institution, and he accepted a much lower salary as Prime Minister as a symbol of humility and service. The appeal to his pathos, or emotional appeal can be felt in his addresses to national identification and struggle of history. In his 1999 National Day speech, he called on the memory of colonial oppression to unite and to be self-sufficient: We were once a conquered people… now it is time we show we can govern ourselves with honor. On the same token, his 2019 speech at the United

Nations is filled with emotional appeals as he criticized the situation of Palestinians, alerting the audience that the world rewards terrorism when committed by the strong, causing moral outrage. Mahathir in all of these speeches has managed to juggle rational policy agenda with emotional and ethical appeal confirming his reputation as a competent and morally upright yet emotionally close to the dreams of his people.

He is using emotive language to put himself a trust worthy leader of the muslim world by emphasizing on the collective efforts, duty and responsibility of the nation and state. An example is taken from his speech delivered on Feb 8, 2020 in which he is evoking an emotional response among his audience such as "We are duty bound and this responsibility is further amplified when powerful nations that had styled themselves as the defender of justice and freedom choose to be silent while the atrocities are being committed". It shows the commitment of his leadership to think and perform better for his country.

The ideology of the speeches exposed by Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (1990-2002) was more of nationalism, developmentalism with the theme of anti-Western hegemony assuaging his vision of a self-reliant, modern and uniquely Malaysian nation. During his speeches, there was always the projection of Vision 2020 which was an idea of the fully developed nation of Malaysia which was articulated in 1991 and which was projected on the basis of economic growth, technological improvement and cultural identity. He frequently advocated the principle of the Asian values, which he compared to the West, which was apparently morally decadent and economically powerful. As an example, during the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis, Mahathir delivered speeches criticizing and accusing western finance institutions and speculators such as George Soros as installing western domination over Malaysia, and when Malaysia protested against IMF prescriptions, this was put up as resistance to the national sovereignty of Malaysia. His call of searching his Malaysian solutions to his Malaysian problems was a manifestation of a practical nationalism and also a mix of modernity with values of indigeneities. Speaking out about affirmative action like when he talks about affirmative action on the New Economic Policy (NEP), Mahathir talked of the necessity to raise the Bumiputera majority out of poverty so as to maintain the national integrity of the country- an ideology that is based not on the

principles of individualist liberal, but on communitarian equity. His rhetoric commonly used vocabularies such as self-discipline, hard work, and mental revolution which indicated the modernist development ideology that valued progress independent of dependence. For instance, he used expressions in his speeches such as "There is a need of economic development in our country", "There is a need of economic development in our country", and "we have to be innovative in our theory and practice". In other words, he is focusing on national unity and integrity such as "Our govt. is working tirelessly for the betterment of our country" and "We can achieve many things if we get united". Simply put, the ideological position taken by Mahathir between the years 1990 and 2002 was marked by an aggressive national identity, intense suspicion of western intervention and a strong belief in the social-economic revolution on the basis of local cultural and political realities.

Dr. Mahathir often uses the metaphor of a vessel that has a bright future when he speaks about the country. In this analogy we have the Malaysian people as the crew and country as a ship. According to Mahathir, each one on board has a role to play by ensuring that he or she charts the direction that the ship should follow towards achievement of its objective. Players are more able to break through all difficulties and reach their goals together. In most instances, Mahathir refers to the economy as a fragile environment, which has to be nurtured. The economy - via this very analogy - is like the ecosystem that is composed of various parts that have to exist together in order to prosper. Mahathir also stresses on the importance of cooperation between the people and the Malaysian government to contribute to the economy of the country and develop a similar ecology of a book.

Mahathir is fond of making comparisons of improving of seeds planted now-the fruit of it will be seen tomorrow. In this analogy, the future rewards and advancement are represented by the fruit, whereas investments and efforts made now, are represented by the seeds. Mahathir recommends that people have to be patient and persistent in what they do as in the case of planting seeds and so forth in order to get long term success.

Conclusions

This paper has established how linguistic pattern, ideological structuring, and socio-

political power relations are used strategically to make up a national discourse through the words of Dr. Mahathir Mohamad in his political discourse in terms of development, unity, and resistance to outside dominance. The analysis of key lexical items and collocations through the aid of corpora enabled highlighting the presence of repetitive rhetoric decisions like the use of such lexical items and phrase combinations as national unity, economic growth, Malay rights, and Asian values showing the adherence to a cohesive ideological position. Framing analysis based on the analysis framework developed by Robert Entman also helped to see how Mahathir exemplified themes of self-reliance, modernization, Western critique, and backgrounded internal dissent, and structural inequality. These findings were enhanced by the CDA practiced by Fairclough which deconstructed the manner through which the discourse deployed by Mahathir at three levels namely the textual level, the practice in terms of discursive level and the practice in terms of social aspect worked to enforce the political legitimacy, stir the national feelings to act upon and generate the awareness that is essential in a society. These two approaches to methodology confirm the idea that the speeches of Mahathir, indeed, were both media and means of political communication, as well as the media of ideological construction, the purpose of which was to maintain the power base, form the national identity and pre-determine the focus of Malaysian socio-political development. Such an interdisciplinary study is therefore comprehensive enough to explore the relationship of the three terms language, power and ideology in political leadership. Besides, keyword analysis is not only a quantitative utilization of the linguistic methods but an addition to the qualitative interpretation of political discourse in case of its combination with such theoretical frameworks as the framing theory by Entman or the critical discourse analysis by Fairclough.

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