Speech Acts of Concern: Choice of Utterances by Mahathir Mohamad

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Abstract

This study explores the language use of a former prime minister of Malaysia from a discourse perspective on the notion of concern. Tun Dr. Mahathir's (TDM) speech during the second annual general meeting of *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (PPBM) and his interview with the New Straits Times (NST) are selected data for analysis. In both texts, his language mediates concern towards Malays on socio-economic progress. Analysis of Mahathir's speech and interview using a lexico-grammatical approach toward Malay reveals how the former prime minister uses language to mediate with various stages of concern in a multi-ethnic country. Findings show the discourse on concern through patterns of his language choice reflects mono-ethnic concern towards the Malay economic and financial status apart from his inclusion

and role as a political leader of a newfound Malay party. Interestingly, Mahathir's continuous struggle for the Malays is acclaimed through his utterances as the ideal leader for Malay progress in the past, present, and future without fear or favour.

Keywords: concern, lexical-grammatical patterns, speech act classifications, Mahathir

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Concern refers to one's "representation of feelings, preoccupation, thought and consideration given to a particular issue" (Hall & Hord, 1987, p. 61). It includes "the mental activity composed of questioning, analyzing, re-analyzing, considering alternative actions and reactions and anticipating consequences" (Hall, George, & Rutherford, 1979, p. 5). A concern could be conveyed verbally via empathic statements that represent the speaker's feeling, non-verbally through the tone of voice and facial expression (Saha & Beach, 2011). The efficiency and success of leaders are measured by their ability to communicate a vision, goal, strategy, and set of attitudes that will gain support and power (How & Jariah Mohd Jan, 2019). Thus, politicians through their speeches or interviews may take the opportunity to convey messages either directly or indirectly with intended discourse through language use.

As a result, when analyzed, even the most minor language structure with meaningful grammatical implications could transmit messages to the listeners depending on the meaning politicians intend to deliver to whom, the purpose of their selective lexical choices, and the issues in question. Hence, language plays a vital role in transmitting discourses relevant to the deliverance of a speech or interview.

This study explores the speech act of concern by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Mohammad mediated in his speech and interview through grammatical implications. Besides, we also investigate the degree of concern towards Malay progress in economic and financial situation. By doing so, we can identify the discourse on concern conveyed by Mahathir that opts for improvements besides equality in a multi-ethnic society between the two selected texts. Therefore, the linguistic implications through comparison of Mahathir's speech and interview on his concern are crucial to a multi-ethnic nation that constantly considers him to favour one ethnic group over another.

1.2 Language, Speech Act, and Discourse

Language and context are interconnected and cannot be separable because people act with words termed speech acts (Austin, 1962). Speech act consists of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Locutionary act is the literal meaning conveyed by speakers and comprehensible to a listener without having to read between the lines or infer any further. An illocutionary act is where speakers communicate with intention through words, phrases, or utterances to achieve their intention. The perlocutionary act is the effect of utterances on the hearer in response to the illocutionary act. Based on Austin's (1962) illocutionary act, Searle (1976) further developed five speech act classifications: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative, to analyze how speakers convey their intention.

In addition, discourse as a social construct is created and explicitly perpetuated by those with power and means of communication with a particular group of people within a specific community. Nevertheless, discourses constitute exclusions and inclusions stand antagonistic on what can or cannot be said. At times, exclusions and inclusions stand with other discourses, other possible meanings, claims, rights, and positions depending on the speech act produced.

Besides, speech act depends socially on what can be said and thought, apart from who can be spoken about with what authority, depending on the time uttered (Foucault, 1972). Therefore, the speech utterances systematically form objects where a speaker through the choice of language use conceals his or her invention (Foucault, 1972) on how and to whom the speech act is targeted with a purpose and the knowledge shared commonly among a group.

1.3 Mahathir and His Political Legacy

On 10th May 2018, after 22 years of supremacy (1981–2003) Mahathir returned to reign for the second time as the 7th Prime Minister of Malaysia (Jaes et al., 2020; Suhaimy, 2021). His successful return as prime minister in 2016 contributed to the forming of *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* (PPBM). PPBM represents the Malays mainly in opposition to the main component Malay party United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) under *Barisan Nasional* (BN). Under BN, UMNO represents the Malays, the largest ethnicity; the Chinese Malaysian Association (MCA), the second-largest; and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), the vast minority.

With the initiation of Mahathir in 2017, PPBM with other opposing parties such as Democratic Action Party (DAP) formed *Pakatan Harapan* (PH) to bring down BN. In the 14th general elections, Mahathir stood against BN and gained victory over the party he had represented in the past six decades. Yet, the collision of PPBM and DAP created dissatisfaction among the Malays. The Ilham Centre (Lim, 2019) an independent research firm, interviewed 2,614 Malay respondents from October to December 2019. In the survey, Lim revealed that 60% of Malays were not happy with PH as they believed the non-Muslims are now in control of the government and DAP is in charge.

As the president of UMNO, Mahathir's concern was very much to bring up the Malay social status and uphold their success in education and economy (Haque & Khan, 2004). According to Chin (2020), UMNO ruled Malaysia based on the concept of Malay supremacy which benefitted the community in terms of quotas in business licenses, offering discounts for new houses, and preference in securing government jobs. Mahathir is recognized for his skills in dealing with world leaders (Cheah, Yusof, & Ahmad, 2017), and his capability to communicate his ideologies to gain public support and execute his ideas successfully (Suppiah, Ahmad, & Gunasekaran, 2018). He is a charismatic, influential, and oldest leader globally (Temiz & Islam, 2019; Fatmawati et al., 2020). In addition, he is considered a smart and witty prime minister (Haque & Khan, 2004) for his language use and outspoken discourse on Malay or Bumiputera progress. Mahathir also continuously supports the New Economic Policy (NEP) specifically introduced to improve the Malays and indigenous people politically acknowledged as *bumiputeras* or sons of soil (Cheah, 2003). The *bumiputeras* are continuously and highly supported by the government under UMNO and PH regime to progress in economic, corporate ownership, and university admission (Mauzy & Milne, 2002). Moreover, way back in 1970, Mahathir published his arguments for a balance economic support for the Malays by the government and not be dominated by the Chinese in his book entitled *The Malay Dilemma*.

1.4 Studies on Mahathir's Speeches and Interviews

Mahathir's political speeches and interviews have also been researched in terms of ethnicity from a linguistic perspective. For instance, David and Dumanig (2011) did a critical discourse analysis of his political speeches where they found one of his aims was to create a sense of unity among the ethnic groups in Malaysia. In addition, Imani and Habil (2015) performed a discourse analysis on Mahathir's international political business speeches. A recent study by Fatmawati et al. (2020) has critically analysed the verbal rhetoric and leadership styles of two Malaysian Prime Ministers, Mahathir Mohamad, and Najib Razak. Similarly, Jaes et al. (2020) performed a content analysis of selected speech to observe Mahathir's paternalistic leadership in Malaysia's governmental value system. Nevertheless, none of these studies on Mahathir's speeches or interviews attempted to examine his language of concern from a discourse perspective.

Beyond that, concern has been researched in several fields of sociolinguistics (e.g., How & Jariah Mohd Jan, 2019), pragmatics (e.g., Carretero et al., 2015; Kampf, 2016), psychology (e.g., Rhee et al., 2013), education (e.g., Hall & Hord, 1987; Straub, 2009) and culture (Rashid et al., 2021; Shahzadi et al., 2021). Within Malaysia, Ahmad Kamil and Shamshul Bahrn (2020) studied the direct and indirect speech acts in the text of the Malaysian prime minister's speech on the first day of the Movement Control Order (MCO) in which the expressives and directives were found to be utilised the most. Henceforth, this study fills the gap with existing literature on language use on concerns from a local and global perspective. Studies involving speech acts on concern for Malay progress based on a politician's utterances are scarce.

2. Method

This qualitative content-based study uses an interpretive discursive strategy to identify the language use reflecting concern. The data derived from the policy speech delivered on 29th December 2018 during the PPBM second annual general meeting with a duration of 46 minutes and 23 seconds ([Speech text] Dr. Mahathir at 2nd Bersatu AGM 2018). The speech is given after Mahathir's victory in the 14th general elections and for the first time as chairman of PPBM comprising of Malay members to create awareness among the Malay ethnicity to safeguard their rights in this country. Since this speech is available online in the Malay language, only aspects of concern were transcribed in English for lexico-grammatical patterns of analysis. For the purpose of verification, the transcribed translations from Malay to English were verified by an academician fluent in Malay and English language.

The second data is the interview conducted on 8th April 2019 by New Strait Times (NST) (Lokman Mansor et al., 2019). The interview consists of Part 1 and Part 2. However, only Part 2 is carried out in English with a duration of 40 minutes, providing the necessary data for analysis. The full interview transcript is available on the NST online news website; therefore, no transcription was required. The transcribed speech is coded as Text 1 and the interview as Text 2. The contents within Texts 1 and 2 are coded as extracts based on the order of paragraphs in each text.

2.1 Lexico-Grammatical Approach

Lexico-grammatical approach contributes to verbal or spoken language use (Stubbs, 1995). This approach places importance on any form of grammatical signs of predictable productive sequence that gives way to discursive interpretation that specifies any semantic range within a speech utterance or between utterances. Therefore, the grammatical speech utterances composed of lexical, morphemes, or abstract signs share a stable coherent frame of pivotal signs. The signs can be productive paradigm reformulated, integrated with discourses through a continuous or discontinued stretch of utterance. From a theoretical aspect, the stratum of semantics using lexico-grammatical analysis is not of abstract or logical structure (Martin, 2001). Instead, it is related to how language interacts in a particular cultural context that functions within a genre or goal-oriented topic in question for a summary for arguments (Gledhill, 2011). The functions of meaningful grammatical interaction in question can be traced using Searle's (1976) speech act classifications.

2.2 Speech Act Classifications

Searle's (1976) five speech act classifications and the functions related to each classification can be seen as the following:

1) Representative act: to present speakers' thoughts or beliefs

2) Directive act: to direct hearers to perform an act through suggestion, advice, request

3) Commissive act: to use words that commit speakers' upcoming actions

4) Expressive act: to express speakers' feelings or attitudes

5) Declarative act: speakers who have certain authorities used to perform declaration

2.3 Stages of Concern

Figure 1 shows Hall and Hord's (1987) stages and the expression of concern from 0 to 6. These stages allow us to identify the degree of concern from a discursive perspective of its abstract notion.

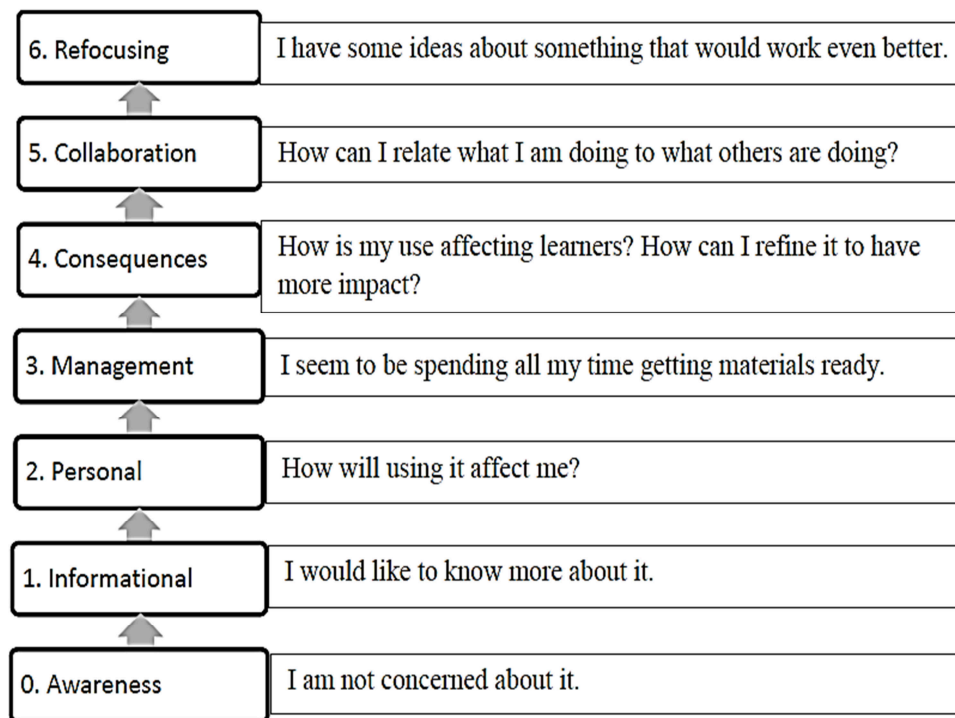| 6. Refocusing | I have some ideas about something that would work even better. |
5. Collaboration	How can I relate what I am doing to what others are doing?
4. Consequences	How is my use affecting learners? How can I refine it to have more impact?
3. Management	I seem to be spending all my time getting materials ready.
2. Personal	How will using it affect me?
1. Informational	I would like to know more about it.
0. Awareness	I am not concerned about it.

Figure 1. Hall and Hord's (1987) stages and expression of concern

At the starting stage (i.e., stage of awareness), zero (0) indicates little or no concern about an issue addressed. The vertical arrow shows the stages of concern organized from the lowest stage to the highest stage of concern.

The original expressions provided by Hall and Hord (1987) in Figure 1 are more towards exploring educators' concern on new changes or implementation in school and not on language use. Since we are exploring speech and interview responses, there was a need to adapt the stages of concern based on the expressions provided by Hall and Hord in Figure 1.

Such an adaptation was necessary to narrow the data and analyze Mahathir's degree of concern on Malay progress from his language use from a grammatical aspect. Figure 2 shows the expressions for each stage of concern specifically adapted for this study in comparison to Figure 1.
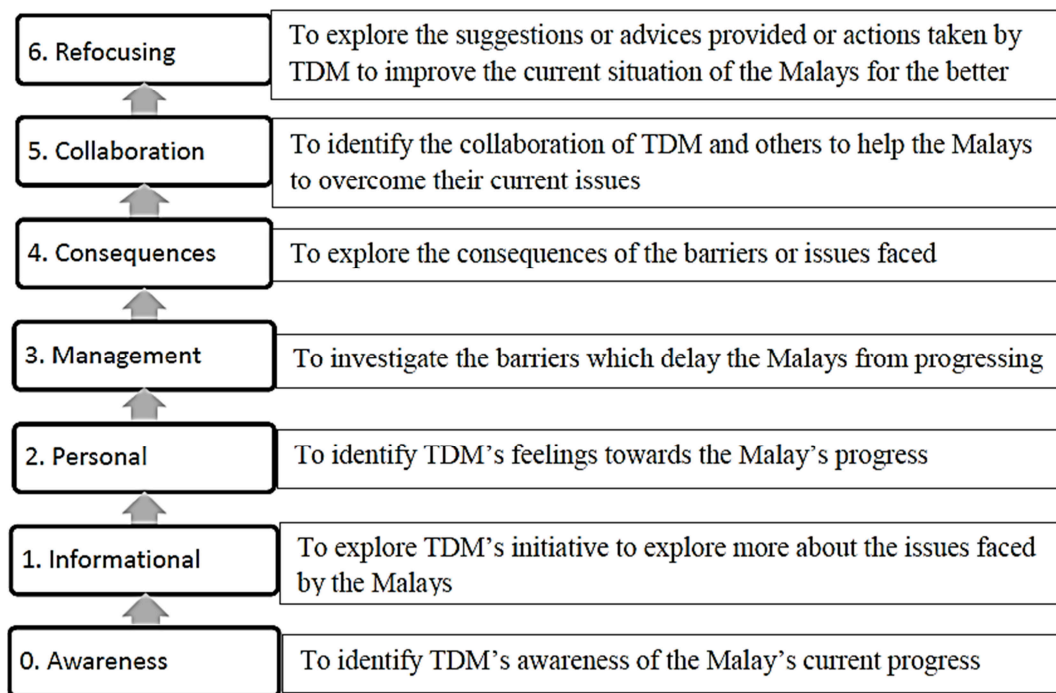
6. Refocusing	To explore the suggestions or advices provided or actions taken by TDM to improve the current situation of the Malays for the better
5. Collaboration	To identify the collaboration of TDM and others to help the Malays to overcome their current issues
4. Consequences	To explore the consequences of the barriers or issues faced
3. Management	To investigate the barriers which delay the Malays from progressing
2. Personal	To identify TDM's feelings towards the Malay's progress
1. Informational	To explore TDM's initiative to explore more about the issues faced by the Malays
0. Awareness	To identify TDM's awareness of the Malay's current progress

Figure 2. An adapted version of expression in stages of concern for this study

2.4 Analytical Phase

We first explored the data by identifying the lexico-grammatical implications using Searle's (1976) five speech act classifications and functions relating to Malay progress. Hence, Mahathir's choice of utterances with grammatical implications was coded in bold within the two texts before identifying with speech acts classifications in Figure 2. Next, we compared the patterns of concern in both data to identify similarities and differences to identify the overall agency given to various stages of concern using Figure 2.

For the purpose of analysis, the speech extract was coded as Text 1 and the interview as Text 2. The original speech extracts are numbered; therefore, the coding is referred to as Text 1 followed by the extracted number (e.g., Text 1 Extract 53). Text 2 the interview is made up of questions and responses. Hence, we coded 'Q' to denote the question and 'A' answer, followed by the number in order of questions and responses (e.g., Q3A4). The verification of coding was verified by two academicians fluent in Malay and English language. In the next section, I only provide one or two extracts as examples to illustrate Mahathir's language of concern.

2.5 Analysis of Mahathir's Language of Concern in 2ⁿᵈ AGM Speech: Text 1

2.5.1 Stage of Awareness

The stage of awareness is the first stage in the stages of concern and the very initial concern one shows towards a matter. In Text 1, Extracts 53 and 82, Mahathir states his awareness of Malay progress. Both texts show the difference between him and the Malays with authority as the then

prime minister for forming a united party for the Malays to be politically directed and stand united.

> Hari ini orang Melayu berada dalam keadaan yang tidak menentu dan kehilangan haluan. Parti mereka kalah dan berpecah sehingga secara berkesan tidak wujud lagi. Pemimpin mereka bertelagah dan ahli tidak tahu apa yang sudah jadi pada mereka (Text 1 Extract 53)

Translation: Today, the Malays are uncertain, and they are losing their direction. Their political party has been defeated and separated and is no longer effective. Their leaders are in dispute, and the party members do not know what has happened to them.

In Text 1, Extract 53, the plural pronoun *mereka* (they / their / them) appears three times in the extract, and the phrase *orang Melayu* (the Malays) emphasize the Malay people. Mahathir's statement in Text 1, Extract 53 shows his awareness of the problems encountered by the Malay ethnics when he states the Malays are in an uncertain situation and lost. In other words, he was concerned about the Malays being lost or left without any support system. Besides, the plural pronoun *mereka* in his speech differentiates him and the Malays with authority as the then prime minister.

Beyond that, Mahathir states his awareness of his 70 years as a witness to the political instability within a party he belongs as a Malay. In the party, according to him, even the Malay members themselves are unaware of what is happening among the Malay leaders who argue with each other.

> Saya akan dituduh rasis kerana pendedahan nasib Melayu / Bumiputera ini. Tetapi selama lebih 70 tahun saya telah lihat kemerosotan yang berlaku pada kaum bangsa saya. (Text 1 Extract 82)

Translation: I will be accused of being racist for exposing the fate of the Malay or Bumiputera. However, for more than 70 years, I have seen the deterioration that happens to my race.

The use of the phrase *nasib Melayu* (the fate of the Malay) directly refers to the fate of Malays. He further identifies the Malays as *bumiputera*, referring to them as sons of the soil, native or indigene. Such verbal intention can remind Malays compared to all other ethnicities as the original people of the Malay land. Using of phrases *lihat kemerosotan* (seen the deterioration) and *kaum bangsa saya* (my race), he emphasizes his concern and awareness specifically on the Malays not being stable economically for more than seven decades.

Both extracts are categorized under the stage of awareness. There is no further indication of consequences, barriers, acts of collaboration, or suggestions on how to change or improve the situation in these extracts.

2.5.2 Stage of Personal

Stage of personal comes after stage of informational where one expresses feelings regarding an issue. Unlike Extracts 53 and 82, Mahathir expresses concern for the Malays via expressive act in Text 1 Extract 31.

> Semua yang berlaku ini menakutkan orang Melayu di luar bandar dan orang Melayu dalam

bandar yang lebih prihatin terhadap nasib masa depan mereka. Mereka mencari perlindungan dari nasib yang buruk yang akan menimpa mereka, bahkan sudah pun menimpa mereka. (Text 1 Extract 31)

Translation: All that has happened has terrified the Malays in the rural area and the urban area more concerned about their future. They seek protection from the bad fate that will befall them, even if it has already happened.

In Text 1, Extract 31, the tone of Mahathir's speech is quite emotional when he expresses his feelings about Malay progress in the country, particularly those from rural areas. His concern for the negative situation, particularly on Malays' economics, has been expressed with the emotive adjective menakutkan (terrifying).

In addition, he frequently employs the pronoun *mereka* (they) to focus his concern on the Malays with an emotional tone and a message of fear for them. From his point of view, the concern is that they are or will face bad times. Hence, he refers to the concern with negative implications for Malay progress in the country again. Moreover, he adds that the Malays living in urban areas are concerned (*prihatin*) or aware of the negative implications compared to those in rural areas. Therefore, according to him, those who were affected by bad fate or befallen upon them need protection.

In Text 1, Extract 63, Mahathir employs the word *keliru* (confused) and phrases *kehilangan pemimpin* (lost their leaders) and *kehilangan haluan* (lost their way) to express his feeling of concern about the Malay economic progress in the country, particularly those from rural areas.

> Melayu sekarang sudah keliru, kehilangan pemimpin, kehilangan haluan. UMNO sudah tidak ada lagi. Siapa, parti yang mana yang boleh mereka bergantung? (Text 1 Extract 63)

Translation: The Malays are now confused, have lost their leaders, and lost their way. There is no more UMNO. Who or which political party can they rely on?

In Text 1, Extract 63, Mahathir highlights his concern on the problems encountered by the Malays in the representation of their ethnic party that is politically unstable and lost because they are left without any support system and leadership. His concern for leadership points to the division of Malays into two political groups: UMNO and PPBM. In such a situation, his concern relates to the stability of the Malays in the country from a political perspective.

Thus, Text 1 Extracts 31 and 63 are categorized under the stage of personal because Mahathir expresses his personal feelings about the Malay's economic and financial condition with the emotive adjectives *keliru* (confused) and *menakutkan* (terrifying) via expressive act.

2.5.3 Stage of Management

In the management stage, one describes the challenges that hinder one from achieving a goal. The management stage is obvious in Mahathir's language use as he describes the reason that hinders the Malays from progressing well both economically and financially. Additionally, in Text 1 Extract 32, his concern is for Malays who are left behind to the extent it would be difficult for them to catch up with economic and financial progress.

… mereka sudah begitu jauh ketinggalan dibelakang sehingga sukar bagi mereka mengejar kaum yang kaya (Text 1 Extract 32)

Translation: … they are so far left behind that it is difficult for them to catch up with the wealthy race.

Apatah lagi jika perpisahan antara miskin dan kaya ditambah dengan perpisahan antara kaum, yang miskin dari satu kaum, yang kaya dari kaum lain. (Text 1 Extract 59)

Translation: What's more if the separation/division between the poor and the rich is added with the separation/division among races, the poor from one race, the rich from another race.

Moreover, in Text 1 Extract 59, he highlights the financial gaps between the races that might affect the Malays. Hence, the word *sukar* (difficult) and the utterance *perpisahan antara miskin dan kaya ditambah dengan perpisahan antara kaum* (separation/division between the poor and the rich is added with the separation/division among races) indicate his concern on the economic disparity and the barriers that befall upon the Malays to be successful as other ethnics.

2.5.4 Stage of Consequence

In the stage of consequence, one describes the impact or consequence of the challenges that one encounters. Mahathir employs the representative act to describe the effects of financial and economical gaps and the consequence of Malays being poor and living in undeveloped areas. This is evident in Text 1 Extracts 28 and 30.

As illustrated in Text 1 Extract 28, Mahathir states that the diversity in population in cities and farms generally has an impact on wealth and economic progress among the Malay and other ethnicities in Malaysia. His awareness of such consequences can be traced by using the phrase *perpisahan ini mempunyai kesan* (this division has an effect). To him, those in the city are more progressive and wealthier (lebih maju dan kaya) than those in rural areas. Furthermore, Mahathir indirectly refers to other races although he does not explicitly specify them. This is evident from the utterance *satu kaum ramai di bandar, satu kaum di desa dan satu lagi di ladang-ladang* (one race is largely placed in the city, one race in the village, and another in the fields of the estate).

Umpama satu kaum ramai di bandar, satu kaum di desa dan satu lagi di ladang-ladang. Perpisahan ini mempunyai kesan kepada kemajuan ekonomi dan agihan kekayaan antara mereka. Umumnya yang tinggal di bandar lebih maju dan kaya dari yang tinggal di desa. (Text 1 Extract 28)

Translation: For example, one race is largely placed in the city, one race in the village, and another in the fields or estate. This division affects the economic progress and the distribution of wealth between them. Mostly those who are situated in the city are more progressive and wealthier than those who live in the village.

Unlike in Text 1 Extract 28, where he addresses other races with a positive choice of words such as *lebih maju* (more progressive) and *kaya* (wealthy), in Text 1 Extract 30, Mahathir

relates Malay progress beginning with bumiputera's poverty.

> Kerana kemiskinan penduduk bumiputera dipinggir bandar sering menjual tanah mereka dan berpindah jauh dari bandar, iaitu ke kawasan yang kurang peluang untuk menjana kekayaan. Maka jarak perpisahan antara yang tinggal di bandar dan di luar bandar pun menjadi lebih jauh. (Text 1 Extract 30)

Translation: Due to poverty, the *bumiputeras* in the urban city often sell their land and move away from the city to places with less opportunity to develop their wealth. Hence the gap between those living in the city and those in the rural areas becomes even further.

Due to poverty (*kerana kemiskinan*), he explains the consequence of *bumiputeras* who move from urban to rural areas. Those in the rural areas are left behind with less opportunity to develop their wealth (*kurang peluang untuk menjana kekayaan*). The separation in the distance contributes to inequality economically and financially among the Malays living in the urban and rural areas.

Therefore, with the use of connector *kerana* (due to) and the phrase *mempunyai kesan* (has an effect) as the indicators of consequence in Text 1 Extracts 28, 30, 32, and 59, Mahathir's concern is on the impact of the financial and economic disparity between the Bumiputera and other ethnic groups in the country. He shows his concern, especially for Malays who are poor and living in undeveloped areas. His concern on the impact that occurs the Malays can be categorized under the stage of consequence.

2.5.5 Stage of Collaboration

The stage of collaboration shows the collaboration of one with another to improve a situation. Due to Mahatir's concern about these adverse effects on the Malay ethnic, Mahathir describes the cooperation of the political parties to overcome the economic issues of the Malays and *bumiputeras,* which is evident in Text 1 Extracts 57, 70, and 78.

> Apakah Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia yang ditubuh untuk menyelamatkan orang Melayu dan bumiputera lain harus berdiam diri dan membiar kehancuran Melayu / Bumiputera berterusan. Walaupun kita bukan pewaris UMNO tetapi kita bertanggungjawab kepada orang Melayu dan Bumiputera. (Text 1 Extract 57)

Translation: Whether *Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia* was established to save the Malays and the other *Bumiputeras* should remain silent and allow the ongoing destruction of the Malays or *Bumiputeras*. Although we are not the heirs of UMNO, we are responsible to the Malays and the *Bumiputeras*.

> Dengan itu kita akan jadi pelindung kepada orang Melayu – pelindung sementara – kerana pelindung yang sebenar ialah kita sendiri. (Text 1 Extract 70)

Translation: Thus, we will be the protector for the Malays – the temporary protector – because the real protector is ourselves.

> Kita bersidang kerana kita berhasrat memulihkan maruah bangsa kita. (Text 1 Extract 78)

Translation: We are assembling because we wish to restore the dignity of our race.

It is PPBMs responsibility to save the Malay ethnic (Text 1 Extract 57) and to be their temporary support (Text 1 Extract 70) to develop the Malays towards a better future until they are strong enough and no longer need any support system. Once again, his concern at single ethnicity is highlighted using *orang Melayu* (Malays) in Text 1 Extracts 57 and 70, the word *Bumiputera* in Text 1 Extract 57, and *bangsa kita* (our race) in Text 1 Extract 78. Also, the frequent use of the pronoun *kita* (we) in Text 1 Extracts 57, 70, and 78 shows the inclusiveness of Mahathir and the other political leaders collaborating toward helping the Malays through a political party represented by them as of Malay origin.

The notion of collaboration is also evident via the word *bersidang* (assembling), *berpolitik* (in politics), and *ditubuh* (established). Such words indicate his collaboration with others to help the Malays. However, the moment this speech is delivered, the act of collaborating might have yet to be effectuated as Mahathir uses the modal verb *akan* (will), the words *ingin* (want), and *berhasrat* (hope) in Text 1 Extracts 70 and 78. This clearly indicates his promises and desire in hoping to help on financial and economic issues of the Malays. Other than the representative act, the commissive act can also be found when he gives assurance of him as the protector for the Malays in Text 1 Extract 70 in the utterance *kita akan jadi pelindung kepada orang Melayu* (we will be the protector for the Malays).

2.5.6 Stage of Refocusing

In the stage of refocusing, one suggests an alternative to make the situation better. Using a directive act, Mahathir persuades and advises the Malays on the changes they need to improve their current economic situation.

> … mereka hendaklah kejar ilmu dan kecekapan dan sanggup bertekun dalam usaha menjayakan diri mereka. (Text 1 Extract 32)

Translation: … they must pursue knowledge and competence and be willing to work hard in their quest for success.

> Kita orang Melayu dan juga bumiputera lain mesti pegang kepada kebenaran. (Text 1 Extract 35)

Translation: We the Malays and also the other *Bumiputeras* must hold on to the truth.

> Diharap bangsaku akan tolak budaya lama dan cipta budaya baru, budaya yang tetap akan menyelamatkan kita. (Text 1 Extract 84)

Translation: I hope that my race will put away the old and create a new culture, the culture that will save us.

His persuasion and advice with the choice of words *hendaklah* (should), *mesti* (must), and *diharap* (hope) indicate his hope for the Malays to work hard to gain equal economic success as the other ethnics in this country. Hence, his persuasion and advice are evident in Text 1, extracts 32, 35, and 84 which fall under the category stage of refocusing.

2.6 Analysis of Mahathir's Interview with New Straits Times: Text 2

2.6.1 Stage of Management

During the interview, Mahathir's concern for the Malay economic and financial progress begins from the stage of management. This is evident in Q8A3.

Q8A3

So, while we want to have equal treatment of all races, that equal treatment not people who are commercially oriented must be accompanied by fair treatment. For example, before we invented this direct negotiation and limited tender, that was discrimination in favour of the *Bumiputeras.* But if you remove that, there is a likelihood that the *Bumiputeras* will get nothing as it is believed that they are not commercially oriented people. Because they are not commercially oriented people. They don't even understand the use of money. So, we must consider that.

In this instance, the choice of plural pronoun 'we' is used to putting a focus on his ruling party or it may also represent the answer to the issue in question with support from all Malaysians including him. The use of 'we' in the excerpt indicates Mahathir expresses his intention of practicing impartiality but immediately changes direction by adding a condition, not commercially oriented people. The pronoun 'we' may also refer to him and the interviewer, both Malays. Mahathir also switches the pronoun to "they" and excludes himself when he refers to *Bumiputeras* who are not commercially oriented.

Although Mahathir highlights the Malays through the word 'bumiputeras', he subtly employs the phrases 'equal treatment and 'fair treatment' with all races. He diverts the meaning of fair treatment towards discrimination to highlight Malays who according to him are not fairly treated; hence, it is the choice for direct tender in regard to economic progress. He is concerned the Malays might be left out due to such discrimination. He claims with the negative lexical indicators on the Malays they are not "commercially oriented" and "don't even understand the use of money". Thus, with these challenges or barriers the Malay encounter, Malay progress needs to be considered. He also generalizes the *Bumiputeras* using the pronoun 'they' to show Malays, in general, are less skilled in the use of money, which leads to his reason for economic status and support for the *bumiputeras.* Hence, Mahathir's concern about racial discrimination and the Malays being less skilled in the use of money can be categorized under the stage of management for voicing the barriers that hinder the Malays from progressing.

2.6.2 Stage of Consequence

In the stage of consequence, Mahathir states his concern about the disparity between the *Bumiputeras* and the non-*Bumiputeras* as there is a possibility *Bumiputeras* will be left out if their interests are neglected.

Q8A2

If we work based on equality and people are asked to make bids for the tender. Some people are capable, some are not capable. Unfortunately, I believe that if you don't look into the interests

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of the *Bumiputeras*, they will lose out. The disparity between *Bumiputeras* and non-Bu*miputeras* will grow much bigger and when that happens, there's bound to be tension and the opposition party will play it up.

Mahathir's concern is evident in the utterance "if you don't look into the interests of the Bumiputeras, they will lose out". Once again, his concern is reflected through the economic point of view indirectly with Malay progress and not any other ethnicities even when he is questioned on racial narrative.

2.6.3 Stage of Refocusing

In the stage of refocusing, Mahathir provides suggestions on how to improve the Malay progress economically and financially. To his answer regarding Q9 on the increasing disparity and the gap between the rich and poor, Mahathir's responses during the interview do not seem to be on all races. Instead, he appears to divert his concern to the Malays or *bumiputeras* who do not have the culture of doing business. This is obvious in Q9A4.

Q9A4

… there is a cultural part. They did not grow up absorbing a culture that is commensurate with the task of going into business. The Chinese are different. For thousands of years, they have been doing business. They understand the business very well, so they can manage better. That is why the competition is not between equals. We need to overcome inequality. We need to change the Malay culture. But that is very difficult.

The pronoun 'they' refers grammatically to those Malays with a lack of knowledge to understand or do business. As such, he diverts his response to Malays' inability to do business compared to Chinese due to their different culture or upbringing. In other words, he places his concern on the necessity to change the Malay culture towards economic success. Although he ends with a negative indication of his concern towards Malay economic progress by using the phrase "very difficult", he advised changing the Malay culture. He used the directive act, especially with the modal verb 'need to' twice to give advice and highlight the 'obligation and necessity' (Leech, 1983) to effectuate those acts. His advice is categorized under the stage of refocusing in hoping for a positive change among the Malays. Such advice shows Mahathir's concern on the need to overcome the issue in question towards Malay progress either by the Malays, his ruling party for the Malays, or by him as their then leader and as 7th Prime Minister for a country that Malays largely populate.

3. Results

Table 1 illustrates the findings which show similarities of Mahathir's concern in his speech and interview responses reflecting upon mono-ethnic discourse based on his language use. The similarities in Malay progress in both texts are reflected with concern for economic progress, financial progress, change of culture in doing business, to be wealthy and hardworking. Findings reveal in both texts, Mahathir voices his concern on the financial status and economic disparity between the *Bumiputeras* (Malays) and non-*Bumiputeras*. He puts his main priority and concern on Malays towards economic progress. His main aim of the speech and interview

comes with a message of concern for the Malays to improve and change their lives for a better future, financially and henceforth economically.

The repeated words articulated in the form of nouns and pronouns are found throughout Text 1 in Malay language and Text 2 in English. The prominent words for meaning-making for mono-ethnic concerns are *orang Melayu* (the Malays), *Melayu* (Malays), and *bumiputera(s)*. Table 1 and Table 2 illustrate the percentages of lexical items frequently used by Mahathir in his speech and interview, representing ethnicity. This quantitative result is only to show the pattern or trend of the frequent types of lexical items found in the data. The percentages were counted where the frequency of the words that represent ethnicity is divided by the total number of words in the full transcript of the speech. The total number of words in the speech is 3,190. Text 2, on the other hand, is different as the interview also covers a range of topics. Hence, only responses that are related to ethnicity topics are counted. The questions of the interviewer have also been omitted. Thus, the total number of words related to ethnicity topic in the interview transcript is 1,462.

The lexical items in Table 1 depict the ethnic categories that direct to the collective memory-making of Mahathir in the speech (Table 1, Text 1).

Table 1. Frequent use of lexical items on ethnic categories in Text 1 and Text 2

Lexical (noun)	Text 1		Text 2	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Melayu (Malay)	35	39.77%	7	33.34%
UMNO	24	27.27%	6	28.58%
Bumiputera	17	19.32%	4	19.04%
Pribumi	9	10.23%	-	-
Bangsaku/bangsa saya	3	3.41%	-	-
Muslim(s)	-	-	2	9.52%
Non-*bumiputeras*	-	-	1	4.76%
Chinese	-	-	1	4.76%

In Text 1, Mahathir used different forms of subject including UMNO, *Melayu* (Malay), *Bumiputera*, *Pribumi*, and *bangsaku* or *bangsa saya* (my race) to emphasise the representation of Malay ethnic and identity in Malaysia. These lexical items suggest his focus on the Malay and no other ethnicity has been acknowledged.

Like Text 1, the words 'Malay(s)', 'UMNO', and 'bumiputeras' are found in Text 2. Nonetheless, the interview shows some different patterns from the speech where he mentioned 'non-bumiputeras' and 'Chinese' though the percentage is the lowest, that is, 4.76%. This is evident in the following interview responses:

"The disparity between the *Bumiputeras* and non-*Bumiputeras* will grow much bigger and when that happens, there's bound to be tension and the opposition party will play it up. The

Chinese are different. For thousands of years, they have been doing business. They understand the business very well, so they can manage better.''

The use of lexical items in his response shows his concern towards this ethnicity as he claims the Chinese can manage their economy and finance. However, he seems more concerned about the economic disparity between ethnicities because he feels the Malays are being left behind. Thus, the Malays are in, a way, have become the center of his concern which is clear in his word choices portrayed in the speech and interview responses.

There is also a frequent occurrence of pronouns *saya* (I), *kita* (we), and *mereka* (they) in Mahathir's language of concern towards the Malay community's progress. The use of the pronoun 'we' is articulated with different meanings. In the speech, the pronoun 'we' is to show he is Malay; whereas in the interview, the pronoun 'we' identifies with his party or the ruling government. In the speech, he employs the pronoun *kita* (we) when he wants to include himself in the context; while he uses the pronoun *mereka* (they) when he wants to highlight the Malays' progress and cultural problems which in this regard, he was excluded. Moreover, Mahathir also employs the pronoun 'they' for the Chinese and non-*Bumiputeras* and 'we' for the Malays and *Bumiputeras* during the interview to in a way shows the differences between the two ethnics and at the same time features his origin as a Malay.

In terms of speech act classifications, representative, directive, expressive and commissive acts were found in Text 1. However, only representative and directive acts were found in Text 2. The representative act is prominent in both texts when he states, describes, explains, claims, and asserts his point on the Malay community and their progress. The use of representative acts can be found in the stages of awareness, management, and consequences in Text 1 and the stages of management and consequences in Text 2. Mahathir employs a representative act to state his awareness of the economic struggles of Malay people for 70 years and his concern about the disparity between the *bumiputeras* and the non-*bumiputeras*. He describes the reason that hinders the Malays to progress well both economically and financially and the consequence of Malays being poor and living in an undeveloped area. He also describes his concern for the Malay attitude and his collaboration with the political parties to help the Malays and *bumiputeras*. Moreover, he explains the consequence of *bumiputeras* who move from the urban areas to rural areas and the reason the Malays are not progressing well. He also claims the Malays are not "commercially oriented" and the diversity of the population in cities and farms has an impact on the country's economic progress among all ethnicities. Lastly, he asserts the need to teach Science and Mathematics in English. Other than the representative act, the directive act can be seen in both texts when Mahathir persuades and gives advice on how the Malay should change to improve their economic and financial progress. This act is obvious through the use of modal verbs such as *mesti* (must) and *hendaklah* (should) in Text 1, 'need to' and 'have to' in Text 2. However, expressive and commissive acts were only found in Text 1. He applies expressive acts to express concern about the Malay's economic and financial conditions via the emotive adjectives *keliru* (confused) and *menakutkan* (terrifying). The commissive act can be seen via the use of the modal verb *akan* (will) when he promises to be a protector of the Malay ethnic in this country.

The analysis of Text 1 shows that Mahathir's language of concern falls into six stages of concern, awareness, personal, management, consequences, collaboration, and refocusing. On the contrary, in Text 2, his language of concern only falls into three stages, which are the stages of management, consequence, and refocusing. Such findings indicate his concern about the barriers that hinder the Malay to progress economically and financially and the consequence of not progressing well as it may trigger racial gaps economically. Therefore, he persuades and advises on what the Malay should do in order not to be left behind by other ethnicities. Additionally, in both texts, his concern does not fall into the stage of informational. This stage involves identifying his initiative or willingness to find out about the Malay's progress and the problems they encountered. Mahathir knows the Malay progress and their economic struggles for 70 years as evident in Text 1 Extract 82. Hence, his concern does not fall in the stage of informational as he is already aware and does not need to explore the problem of Malay progress. The stages of concern in both texts are based on the words, phrases, and utterances used by Mahathir to voice concern. Words such as *sukar* (difficult) can be found in the stage of management showing his concern for the challenges the Malay encounter in their economic progress. In the stage of consequence, words such as *kerana* (due to) or *kesan* (impact) were used by him to indicate the consequences. The stage of refocusing is where he persuades and advises with modal verbs. Apart from that, Mahathir's concern at the previous stages is not influenced by the subsequent stages as stages of concern are 'not hierarchical' (Anderson, 1997; How & Jariah Mohd Jan 2019; Straub, 2009).

The following table summarises the findings based on similarities and differences between Text 1 and Text 2.

Table 2. Comparison of language use between Text 1 and Text 2

Text 1 (AGM speech)	Text 2 (NST interview)
Lexico-grammatical patterns:	**Lexico-grammatical patterns:**
UMNO	UMNO
Melayu (Malay)	*Melayu* (Malay)
Bumiputera	*Bumiputera*
Pribumi	Muslims
bangsaku or *bangsa saya* (my race)	Non-*bumiputera*
Uses pronoun *kita* (we): to show he is Malay or when he wants to include himself in the context	Chinese
Uses pronoun *mereka* (they): to highlight the Malays progress and cultural problems which in this regard, he was excluded	Uses pronoun 'we': to identify his party or the ruling government and for the Malays and *Bumiputeras*
	Uses pronoun 'they': for the Chinese and non-*Bumiputeras*
Speech act classifications:	**Speech act classifications:**
Representative act	Representative act
Directive act	Directive act
Expressive act	
Commissive act	
Stages of concern:	**Stages of concern:**
Stage of awareness	Stage of management
Stage of personal	Stage of consequence
Stage of management	Stage of refocusing
Stage of consequence	
Stage of collaboration	
Stage of refocusing	

Despite the similarities and differences in language use, various forms of concern are highlighted with agency towards Malay progress in this study. The agency by Mahathir as the political leader of a multi-ethnic country also reflects a hope to minimize the overall economic disparity between *bumiputeras* and non-*bumiputeras*. He also states his concern without fear or favour, be it for the Malays or in comparing them with another ethnic group or their success. Hence, his concern for Malays could also indirectly reflect on the overall success of the country as the Malays make up a total of 60% of Malaysia's population compared with any other ethnicity. Hence, his concern is not only as the leader of Malays but also for the country to develop into a successful financial and economic nation.

Beyond that, Mahathir also touches on *bangsa* Malaysia (Malaysians Race) which has been another of his concern as the then prime minister of Malaysia, a multi-ethnic country. Although studies exist on *bangsa* Malaysia (Sanusi & Ghazali, 2014; Ishak, 2020), no studies involve the analysis of the language of concern related to the formation of a race such as *bangsa* Malaysia. Therefore, this study contributes further than the existing kinds of literature on concern through the language use of a former prime minister distributed without fear or favour to a multi-ethnic nation. Moreover, with the use of a single component framework, this study also provides

valuable insight into the theoretical underpinning adopted and adapted towards a reliable and valid analysis of concern via speech act classifications of a political leader identified through lexical-grammatical implications.

4. Conclusion

Mahathir's speech and interview are symbolic as his language use of concern reflects the progress and success among different ethnicities. Through his language use, he reasons out his concern for Malay progress by sensibly comparing and highlighting other minority populations that have gained socioeconomic success through their hard work and diligence. Nonetheless, their progress is in a way a concern as their success stories alternatively reflect upon Malay progress. In other words, Mahathir encourages the Malays to work harder towards success and not to cry over another ethnic group who had flourished socio-economically in a country where they have set foot after the Malays. The personal pronouns used by Mahathir in his speech have certainly created a sense of supremacy and exercised his power over others. In other words, the personal pronouns allow one to control and create an image that he prefers to project (Imani & Habil, 2015). Additionally, Mahathir manipulated the personal pronoun "mereka" (they) when he tended to distance his identity from *Bumiputeras* who are not business-minded, and noted here that he used "we" to generate a common ground to create a positive image of himself to appear as a concerned political leader.

This study widely contributes to the language of concern that can provide knowledge and insight of a political leader who uses his language to maximize socio-economic or financial success in a country with concern not by hate politics but socio-political and economic geopolitical growth through awareness of progress. Such language of concern can be traced via scientific analysis on the concern of a politician who could either through his language create peace or hatred among different ethnic groups. As such, our study is significant as it provides a scientific linguistic analysis of a former prime minister's speech and interview for further research from political mono-ethnic or multi-ethnic society. This is crucial in a world where through globalization the population of a country is no more of one but of multi-ethnicity. Besides, Mahathir has been criticized for inequality through race politics however in this study it is evident he compares one ethnic group to another to justify his concern towards political and economic success for the nation. This study, therefore, expands the knowledge on the degree of concern through the prevalence of mono-ethnicism via a language perspective of a politician to a wider audience either locally or internationally.

Overall, this study provides insight for further studies and future researchers in the field of languages and linguistics, as well as from a discourse or critical perspective on how concern can be analyzed from a political aspect using speech and interview text. In conclusion, further studies are recommended to examine concern on any other issues concerning textual or beyond textual analysis on topics that are highly debated on race, ethnicity, or inequality through the language choice of a politician or among politicians. Besides, any other analytical framework on the concern of the selected speech and interview of this study may yield different results.

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