# METAPHOR ANALYSIS OF DR. MAHATHIR'S BUSINESS SPEECHES

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To my beloved mother and father

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# ABSTRACT

Dr. Mahathir is one of the most prominent characters in Malaysia. He transformed Malaysia's economy into an industrialized and modernized economy during his 22 years as its Prime Minister. Considering the country's economic achievements, very few studies have been conducted on the role of discourse in his achievements. To bridge the gap in the literature, this study focused on metaphor as one of the recent discourse features missing in the literature on Dr. Mahathir's discourse. Metaphors are one of the common discourse tools used by orators to persuade, communicate with, and convey ideologies to their audience via creating a picture of a concept in the audience's mind. The objectives of the study were to identify the types, functions, and purposes of metaphors as well as how differently metaphors were used across national and international audience. The theoretical frameworks behind this study were Cognitive Theory of Metaphor; Class Inclusion Theory; and Dialectical-relational Approach. The applied methodological approach was Critical Metaphor Analysis of 25 business speeches delivered by Dr. Mahathir in the year 2000. The findings revealed that the main conceptual metaphor in Dr. Mahathir's speeches is *economic challenges are diseases*. The main purposes of his metaphors are persuading national unity and international solidarity with the main functions of image-making (national audience) and creating a sense of alarm (international audience). In addition, there is a close relationship between types and functions of metaphors based on ideologies and power relations across the audience. The findings of the study also revealed that there are different aspects of metaphors used as a communication strategy by Dr. Mahathir, a successful political leader, who created impressive speeches to address his audience without losing meaning.

# ABSTRAK

Dr. Mahathir ialah salah seorang pemimpin yang paling menonjol di Malaysia. Beliau telah mentransformasikan ekonomi Malaysia kepada ekonomi perindustrian dan moden sepanjang 22 tahun sebagai Perdana Menteri. Melihatkan kepada pencapaian ekonomi negara, sangat sedikit kajian yang telah dijalankan ke atas dalam pencapaian wacana beliau. Untuk mengisi jurang literatur, kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada metafora sebagai salah satu daripada ciri baharu wacana yang tidak ditemukan dalam penerbitan wacana Dr. Mahathir. Metafora merupakan salah satu daripada alat wacana yang digunakan oleh penutur untuk menyakinkan, berkomunikasi dan menyampaikan ideologi kepada khalayak dengan mencipta gambaran sesebuah konsep dalam minda mereka. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti jenis-jenis, fungsi-fungsi dan tujuan-tujuan metafora dan juga perbezaan antara metafora-metafora yang digunakan untuk kalangan khalayak nasional dengan antarabangsa. Rangka teori kajian ini ialah Teori Kognitif Metafora; Teori Kelas Rangkuman; dan Pendekatan Hubungan Dialektik. Pendekatan metodologi yang digunakan ialah analisis metafora kritis ke atas 25 buah ucapan berkaitan perniagaan yang disampaikan oleh Dr. Mahathir sepanjang tahun 2000. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa ciri-ciri utama metafora dalam ucapan-ucapan beliau adalah *cabaran-cabaran ekonomik sebagai penyakit*. Tujuan utama penggunaan metafora dalam ucapan-ucapan Dr. Mahathir adalah bagai meyakinkan perpaduan nasional dan solidariti antarabangsa dengan fungsi utama membentuk imej (khalayak nasional) dan menzahirkan amaran (khalayak antarabangsa). Disamping itu, terdapat perhubungan yang rapat antara jenis-jenis metafora dengah fungsi-fungsi metafora berdasarkan ideologi dan perhubungan kuasa antara penonton. Dapatan kajian memperlihatkan aspek-aspek metafora berbeza yang digunakan oleh Dr. Mahathir sebagai strategi komunikasi oleh seorang pemimpin politik yang berjaya menzahirkan ucapan-ucapan yang menarik tanpa menghilangkan maksudnya.

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.0 Introduction

History has proved that among all factors that may influence the fall or rise of a nation or a country, the role of leadership has always been the most outstanding one. Leaders are supposed to show their people the right path towards success and guide them through difficulties, thus their wisdom and guidance can definitely play an important role in the success of their societies. Based on the distribution of power, the two most influential types of leadership are political and religious leaderships. While in the past religious leaders had a much more powerful position, in today's world political leadership seems to be the most powerful type of leadership directly or indirectly influencing other types of leadership (Perry, 1997; Nyarota, 2013).

Language as the main medium of communication in human societies is the most important tool in the hands of those in power as well as those who strive for power not only to express and convey their ideologies to others, but also to challenge the opposite ideologies. Hence, influential leaders require special discourse skills. They have to confront many oppositions, objections, and difficulties. They also have to be able to argue, discuss, and justify their plans as well as to persuade and communicate with their audience. They need to be able to defend their ideologies against their opponents and convey their ideologies to others in a clear way. It is only through the witty use of language that all of these objectives are achievable. Hence one of the reasons of the popularity of political discourse among researchers is to understand the communication strategies of successful leaders as well as revealing their ideologies behind their discourse (Gibbs, 1994; Hahn, 2003; Wodak

and Meyer, 2009). Besides revealing the communication strategies and latent ideologies, political discourse also reflects cultural differences across nations as language is a manifestation of culture and the leaders are representatives of their nations and hence their culture.

Metaphors are one of the popular topics in political discourse studies (Lu and Ahrens, 2008; Santibáñez, 2010; McEntee-Atalianis, 2011). Not only metaphors root in culture but they are also one of the most effective communicative tools in political discourse to move the audience's feelings as well as to convey ideologies in a clear and transparent manner as the speakers wish their audience to see them. Hence the focus of this study was the usage of metaphors in the speeches of one of the influential political leaders. Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad (known as Dr. Mahathir) the prime minister of Malaysia from 1981 until 2003 is well-known for his strong rhetoric, and even his success in political and diplomatic arenas has been assigned to his outspoken and direct yet influential and witty discourse type.

## 1.1 Background of the Study

A discourse analysis study can be of different modes (e.g. oral, written), different genres (e.g. political discourse, academic discourse), and different subgenres (e.g. speeches, interviews). From among various types of discourses to be studied, the study of political discourse, especially the speeches of political leaders, seems to be on top of the list in today's research (Ghazali, 2004; Haque and Hasan Khan, 2004; Hobbs, 2008; Lu and Ahrens, 2008; Oddo, 2011; David and Dumanig, 2011). The reason for the popularity of presidential and prime ministerial speeches is respectively due to the important role of political leadership as the representatives of their countries' ideologies and values, and the significant role of speeches – as compared with other types of discourse such as letters – as a rich source of ideologies, communication strategies and cultural differences among nations (Dedaić, 2006). Besides reflecting cultural differences and dominant ideologies across nations, political discourse is viewed as a source to reveal communication strategies used by political leaders to achieve the objectives they are looking for, which are mainly gaining power over the oppositions; justifying and conveying their

ideologies to others; persuading the audience into accepting their proposals; and providing a positive self-image (Fairclough, 1992; Wodak et al., 1999, Van Dijk, 2006).

Some of the common linguistic and discourse elements used in political discourse analysis are pronominal choices (Oddo, 2011; David and Dumanig, 2011), vocabulary choices (Oddo, 2011; David and Dumanig, 2011), modality elements (Fetzer, 2008), and metaphors (Hobbs, 2008; Lu and Ahrens, 2008). Metaphor is one of the discourse features which have been the focus of many CDA/DA studies on political discourse over the last few years especially after the introduction of the contemporary theory of metaphor by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). Metaphor is a rich source of knowledge to identify how politicians try to create political positive self-images (McEntee-Atalianis, 2011); how they try to attack their opponents or attract their audience (Santibáñez, 2010); how a concept is realized by politicians and people in different cultures (Charteris-Black, 2004; Lu and Ahrens, 2008); or how the audience may challenge a metaphor (Hobbs, 2008), which are all bounded and rooted in the culture of a nation.

## 1.2 Statement of Problem

Discourse analysis (DA) is an interdisciplinary field of study with the main objectives of identifying the latent and hidden meanings behind discourse as well as the rhetoric and communication strategies to express ideas in an influential and effective way. Since the introduction of DA approaches, many books and articles have been published about the topics of interest to DA, among which political leaders' discourse seem to be on top of the list. A glance at the literature reveals a large body of research dedicated to successful and revolutionary political leaders' discourse in order to understand the ideological stances and power relations behind their discourse as well as the way they managed to convey their ideological stances and power relations to their audience in the most effective manner (Van Dijk, 2002; Duranti, 2006).

Tun Dr. Mahathir, the prime minister of Malaysia (1981-2003), was one of the revolutionary and controversial political leaders of the modern world known not only for his ideologies and policies but also for his specific discourse type (Khoo, 1995; Jomo, 2003; Ghazali, 2004; Haque and Hasan Khan, 2004; Don et al., 2010; Wain, 2012). Dr. Mahathir was a revolutionary leader in terms of the economic developments he brought to Malaysia. He managed to transform Malaysia's traditional economy into a modern industrial economy. During his time many infrastructure projects were launched. He managed to control and curb Malaysia's 1997 financial crisis that hit many other Southeast Asian countries. While many other Southeast Asian countries had to bear huge debts and loans as a result of the financial crisis of 1997, Dr. Mahathir's policies saved Malaysia with the least damages (Jomo, 2003). Soon after the financial crisis was passed behind, he started launching huge national and international projects as the first step towards achieving the Vision 2020 as the main economic goal set by his government. Since then, Malaysia has followed the fundamentals of Dr. Mahathir's policies, and today Malaysia's economic rank has noticeably increased among its neighboring countries and in the world. This considerable progress can be partly due to Dr. Mahathir's policies during his prime ministerial services, some of which have been continued until today such as MSC (Multimedia Super Corridor) Malaysia Plan. While many other factors could have influenced Dr. Mahathir's success, one of the factors that can be assigned to his success in obtaining the audience's support both at the national and international contexts is his strong, direct, and outspoken discourse (Haque and Hasan Khan, 2004; Ghazali, 2004; Don et al., 2010)

Although in the first glance at the literature on Dr. Mahathir there seems to be a rather large number of books and articles published about this great political character, a second glance reveals a gap in the literature. Firstly, some of these published works may not be considered as a scientific work as Somun (2003: xiii) in his book 'Mahathir: the Secret of the Malaysian Success' states: "This is not a scientific work, because it would require much more time and experience…." Secondly, each discourse study can only reveal limited aspects of ideological stances and/or power relations embedded in discourse by referring to a limited discourse sample. For instance, Ghazali (2004) analyzed Dr. Mahathir's annual speeches at UMNO general assembly (the United Malays National Organization) from 1982 to

1996 with a focus on vocabulary choice to identify how Dr. Mahathir's strategies to communicate with his audience at UMNO general assembly changed as his political position became more stabilized. As another instance, David and Dumanig (2011) studied only those speeches or part of speeches that were related to national identity with a focus on pronominal choices to reveal how Dr. Mahathir tried to create unity among different ethnic groups in Malaysia. Hence, understanding various aspects of ideological stances and power relations behind a political leader's discourse requires much more research in different contexts and with different audience. Thirdly, to the researcher's best knowledge, considering the significant role of metaphors in conveying ideologies and power relations to the audience (Mio et al., 2005; Hobbs, 2008; Santibáñez, 2010), no studies have been conducted on Dr. Mahathir's use of metaphors. While the use of metaphors has been subject to investigation in many of the famous presidents and prime ministers' discourse (Mio et al., 2005; Biria and Mohammadi, 2012), lack of research on the use of metaphors in a political leader's discourse (e.g. Dr. Mahathir's discourse) is a serious gap in the literature on political discourse.

Hence, this study was motivated by a desire to contribute to the body of research on Dr. Mahathir's discourse focusing on 'metaphor' as a missing feature in the literature in order to reveal (a) new aspects of Dr. Mahathir's discourse to the world and particularly the way he managed to convey to those politicians who wish to have as influential and impressive discourse as Dr. Mahathir's; (b) some of his ideologies regarding Malaysia's economic development; and (c) the way he tried to convey these ideologies to his audience at different national and internal contexts.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research aimed to analyze the feature of metaphors in Dr. Mahathir's discourse during his political career as the prime minister of Malaysia (1981-2003). Since investigating different types of discourse is beyond the scope of one study – due to different elements and features that need to be taken into account – this study focused on Dr. Mahathir's political speeches in English at international/national summits and conferences during the year 2000. Besides providing a general view of

various types of metaphor, this study aimed to identify the purposes and functions of metaphors in Dr. Mahathir's national and international speeches. This study aimed to:

i. Identify the types of metaphors in Dr. Mahathir's business speeches such as metaphor density, metaphor domains, and metaphorical keywords variety;

ii. Interpret the purposes and functions of metaphors in Dr. Mahathir's business speeches such as persuading cooperation with the government by highlighting mutual benefits, and the ideological stances and power relations these metaphors try to convey as part of their purposes and functions; and

iii. Explain how different metaphors' types, purposes, and functions are used across national and international business speeches.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions according to the objectives of the study were addressed in this study:

1. What are the types of metaphors in Dr. Mahathir's business speeches?

2. What are the purposes and functions of metaphors in Dr. Mahathir's business speeches?

3. How different are metaphors' types, purposes, and functions used across national and international business speeches?

## 1.5 Scope of the Study

In order to provide a more in-depth and focused analysis, a discourse study needs to be narrowed down in its scope such as narrowing down the scope of the study to particular 'ideologies' (David and Dumanig, 2011; Haque and Hasan Khan, 2004); or 'audience' (Ghazali, 2004); or to a special metaphor domain (Chiang and

Duann, 2007; Lu and Ahrens, 2008). Thus, similarly in order to provide a more in-depth and focused analysis, the scope of this study was narrowed down to the two features of 'historical context of the study that was the year 2000, and the selected genre for the study that was business speeches' as will be explained below.

In terms of the context, the scope of this study was narrowed down to Dr. Mahathir's speeches at various national as well as international *business* summits and conferences delivered in *the year 2000*. Thus, this study was not limited to any particular 'ideologies', 'audience', or 'social and political contexts'. For instance, ASEAN summits are held in either 'formal or informal contexts' among 'ASEAN Heads of Governments' with the main objective of 'protecting South East Asian Nations' independence, economic, social and cultural growth', and ideologies such as 'unity in the region', which are different from World Trade Organization (WTO) conferences and summits in terms of formalities, audience, objectives, and/or ideologies. While formality of the studied speeches, the addressed audience, and the objectives of the conferences were not narrowing features in this study, the scope of this study was narrowed down to '*business speeches*' in '*the year 2000*'.

The selection of *business* speeches was due to Dr. Mahathir's policies. Dr. Mahathir was one of the economic revolutionists in Malaysia, who transformed Malaysia's economy into a modern economy, and his main objectives and achievements were in the field of economy (Jomo, 2003). Thus considering the importance of economic development from Dr. Mahathir's point of view and his achievements in the field of economy, the selected speeches were in the field of economy, business or the other related fields.

The selection of the *year 2000* was due to Dr. Mahathir's long prime ministerial service as well as the importance of the year 2000 in the history of Malaysia. Analyzing speeches from the 22 years of Dr. Mahathir's service as the prime minister of Malaysia was rather impossible in a single study due to the large variety of contextual factors. Hence, only one year was selected as the historical context in this study. The selection of the *year 2000* was due to the importance of this year in the history of economic development in Malaysia – under Dr. Mahathir's leadership – as a turning point between the economic challenges of the 1990s and the economic development of the 2000s (Jomo, 2003).

**1.6 Significance of the Study**

The first significance of this study was its contribution to the literature on Dr. Mahathir's discourse. The main mission of a discourse study is to provide clear insights into discourse use such as identifying, interpreting, and explaining ideologies and power relations embedded in text. Hence, discourse studies need to be far from prejudice and personal judgments, which is achievable only through a large and broad body of research. Considering Dr. Mahathir's high status as one of the most respected political figures and the longest serving prime minister in Malaysia who had a revolutionary role in transforming Malaysia's traditional economy into a modern industrial one (Khoo, 1995; Jomo, 2003; Don et al., 2010; Wain, 2012), research on Dr. Mahathir's discourse is quite scarce. Hence a larger body of knowledge is required to unveil and support various aspects of his discourse such as the purposes, functions, ideological stances, power relations, and communication strategies embedded in his speeches. To this end, this study aimed to reveal more hidden aspects of his discourse such as his use of metaphors that has never been subject to any other discourse studies. For instance, the findings of this study revealed that Dr. Mahathir's discourse was quite metaphorical in nature and comparable to the world's high charismatic political leaders in this regard (Mio et al. 2005). Furthermore, selectivity of metaphors across the national and the international audience was another salient feature of his speeches missing in the literature on Dr. Mahathir's discourse. Hence, the findings of this study shed lights on some aspects of his discourse, which seem to have been left out in the respective studies. It is hoped that this study provides new ideas of research towards understanding more aspects of the complicated nature of Dr. Mahathir's unique discourse (Ghazali, 2004; Haque and Hasan Khan, 2004; Don et al., 2010).

The second significance of this study was its contribution to the research on metaphors as a rather new research trend in discourse studies by proposing (a) a step-by-step analytical framework; and (b) a pre metaphor level of analysis. A glance at the literature reveals lack of a step-by-step guideline as well as a clearly defined pre metaphor analysis in most of the discourse studies on metaphors. In this regard, this study firstly managed to propose a step-by-step model of Charteris-Black's (2004) Critical Metaphor Analysis so that the study can be more precisely replicated by

other researchers. This way the findings of this study and other similar studies using the same methodology can be comparable with each other at different levels of analysis. This is an important achievement as the findings of a study gain more meaning if they are interpreted in relation with and in comparison with other similar studies. In addition, this study proposed a pre metaphor level of analysis which seems to have been used in the literature yet without any specific rules and guidelines available in the literature. The advantage of the pre metaphor analysis lies in its capability to decide on the sampling as well as providing information regarding the purpose of text that can be used in the interpretation and explanation levels. Hence, this study contributed to the literature on metaphor analysis especially by providing a detailed and step-by-step data analysis guideline as well as a pre metaphor analysis level to be discussed in detail in the Methodology Chapter.

## 1.7 Theoretical Perspectives of the Study

This section presents the three theories behind this study. Firstly, 'Dialectical-relational Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis' (Fairclough, 1989; 1995; 2009) – as the *overarching* theory behind this study – is presented. Then two theories of metaphors: 'Conceptual Theory of Metaphor' (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980); and 'Class Inclusion Theory' (Glucksberg and Keysar, 1990) are presented and discussed. Finally, the way these three theories were related and conceptualized in this study is explained.

## 1.7.1 Dialectical-relational Approach (Fairclough, 1989; 1995; 2009)

From among various critical discourse analysis approaches, 'Dialectical-relational Approach' proposed by Fairclough (1989; 1995; 2009) was selected as the *overarching* theoretical framework behind this study due to (i) its clear structure; (ii) its originality (since it was one of the earliest CDA approaches inspiring most others); and (iii) in order of consistency and reliability in data analysis (since the methodological approach in this study, i.e. Critical Metaphor Analysis introduced by Charteris-Balck, was inspired by and drew upon this theory).

Faiclough believes that language is both socially constitutive and socially determined. Language is socially constitutive means that language is always simultaneously constitutive of (i) social identity, (ii) social relation, and (iii) system of knowledge and beliefs. Then, he bases this idea on Halliday's (1985) functional-systemic linguistics, which states that there are three simultaneous functions for a text: (a) every text represents an experience in the world (ideational function); (b) every text produces social interaction between participants (interpersonal function); (c) and finally every text unites separate components into a whole (textual function). Thus, the interpersonal function of language creates *social identity* and *social relations*; and the ideational function constitutes *system of knowledge*. Thus, every text contributes to the constitution of these three aspects.

Language is socially determined refers to the concept of 'orders of discourse', which was introduced by Foucault. The order of discourse in a social domain (e.g. school) refers to different discourse types found in that domain (e.g. discourse type of classroom, school playground, and the staffroom). The relationship between these discourse types; and whether these discourse types (within one order of discourse) or different orders of discourse are separate or overlap each other may provide a key to power struggle or cultural and social changes. Thus, discourse analysis means the analysis of relationship between concrete language use and the wider social and cultural structures.

As can be seen in Figure 1.1, Fairclough (1995) developed a three-staged approach to 'examine how the ways in which we communicate are constrained by the structures and forces of social institutions within which we live and function'. These three stages are as follows:

- *Description* is concerned with the formal properties of the text.

- *Interpretation* is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction seeing the text as a product of a process of production.

- *Explanation* is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects (Fairclough, 1989:26).

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