

‘Dog Whistle Journalism’ of Racialising Myanmar Refugees

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ABSTRACT

The journalistic practice of representing refugees is commonly performed by erecting symbolic boundaries that depict their differences from the dominant group. The castigation of such symbolic marking enables how new racism is understood, formed, and naturalised. This expansive contemporary notion of racism locates minority groups as socially constructed categories and a racist discourse is one imbricated with social practices of language, culture, and traditions. Using a discourse analytical approach, this study will demystify the insidious form of racism found in three news reports in *The Star*, the most-read English daily in Malaysia, that framed the Myanmarese refugees within a negative exclusionary angle. Specifically, at the micro level, a discursive analysis of the properties of news discourse of racism is undertaken. At the macro level, the constitutive association between the discursive and social practice is shown. Through banal journalism, the study reveals how the politics of representing the Myanmar community here problematises the securitisation and the criminalisation of this group of people. Cumulatively, through systematic deconstruction of news discourse from these two levels, this paper displays how racism is intricately embedded and enmeshed in the socio-economic and socio-political structures that are pivotal in establishing certain power structures and group relations within a society. The analysis also reports on discursive means through the use of binary oppositions with the strategic manoeuvring of others brings about a tensile balance of power between the subordinated Myanmarese and the wider national society at large. The paper concludes that such dog-whistle journalism defies the basic tenet of the culture of globalisation i.e. the politics of recognition, where it fails to engage in creating awareness of the plurality of cultures and identities of the Myanmar minority.

Keywords: Racism, media discourse, securitisation, Myanmar refugees

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Symbolic Racism

The journalistic practice of representing refugees is commonly performed by erecting symbolic boundaries that depict their differences from the majority. The castigation of such symbolic marking enables how new racism is formed and understood. Today, racist discourse is no longer confined to the conventional biological reality such as colour or ethnic background. The contemporary notion of racism is expansive and places importance on minority groups as socially constructed categories. On such premises, a discourse qualifies to be racist when it is imbricated with social practices of language, culture and traditions.

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When ascribing these cultural differences, this hegemonic practice has come to assume terms such as ‘new racism’ (May, 2001), ‘everyday racism’ (Essed, 1991) ‘elite racism’ and ‘neo-racism’ (Wodak and Reisigl, 2003). In this reformulation of racism, Reisigl and Wodak (2000) look at how the cultural construction of groups is hierarchised based on their descent and ascribed invariable biological traits. The traits are “primarily related to biological features, appearance, cultural practices, customs, traditions, language or socially stigmatised ancestors. They are - explicitly or implicitly, directly or indirectly - evaluated negatively, and this judgement is more or less in accord with hegemonic views.” To van Dijk (1993), the central element in racism is group dominance as seen with self-interested groups dominating ‘socially valued resources’ which results in social inequality. While the West is established in their studies into media discourse on racism (van Dijk, 1984; Hartmann and Husband, 1974; Brookes, 1995; Jager and Link, 1993), research from the East, in particular from South East Asia, is still emerging (Teo, 2000; Kim, 2012).

News discourse, being ‘socially valued resources’ becomes a site of ideological struggle which hegemonises the dominant systems, values, and beliefs. The various genres emanating from the main domain of news discourse constitute the operational conduit to naturalise the politics of legitimacy.

1.2. Banal Journalism and the Politics of Representation

Media is a potent vehicle to define social relations and contexts through meanings constituted from media representation. Representations made in respect of racist discourse are crucial in that they are capable of directing racist views within a social context, thereby legitimising racist practices. Race can be represented in various ways but when a group is positioned in a manner that its existence is consistently associated with social ills, crime, and disorder, this symbolic representation becomes a particular cultural practice that typically characterises that group to be the source of these problems. For instance, the print media has been found to be highly influential in constructing moral panics yet research findings show how these did not reflect any form of actual panic behaviour or attitudes.

In shaping certain experience, journalists are said to be “among the pre-eminent storytellers of modern society” (Allan, 2004:77) where they attempt to render their reporting as faithful accounts of reality. Yet, Fiske’s clarion call for the need to demarcate events in the world from media events, especially when news stories report on ‘race’ matters, needs to be heeded. He cautions the following (Fiske, 1994:2):

“The term media event is an indication that in a postmodern world we can no longer rely on a stable relationship or clear distinction between a ‘real’ event and its mediated representation. Consequently, we can no longer work with the idea that the ‘real’ is more important, significant, or even ‘true’ than the representation. A media event, then, is not a mere representation of what happened, but it has its own reality, which gathers up into itself the reality of the event that may or may not have preceded it.”

The process of representation of racism can be further problematised when news reports function to negotiate reality through naturalising events. Naturalisation yields the

concomitant effect of common sense when “a hierarchical series of normative rules by which social life is to be understood” is set out (Allan, 2004). This politics of common sense rendered in news discourse will see the boundaries of societal consensus set and the moral order “being affirmed, recreated and contested in ideological terms” (Allan, 2004: 78). As part of this negotiation in the naturalisation process, the social life of the minority will be aligned to the parameters of the common sense of the dominant society compromised by dominant values and norms.

Since construction of meaning is central to the role of journalism, news that feature minorities is often marked with binary oppositions that act to racialise the ‘other’. Sonwalker (2005:268) remarks on the prevalence of discursive nature of this opposition in most societies and hence “journalists, breathing the same socio-cultural air, can scarcely remain untouched by the prevailing sense of we-ness and they-ness.”

The journalistic style of weaving special ‘stories’ into its news report genre provides another means to reproduce racism. Given the analysis of stories, these news narratives are highly organised to structure certain kinds of representations. The use of narrative in news discourse functions as an ideological tool since they, being stories in themselves, are relayed in reference to other stories. Conboy (2007:141) explicates it by “narrative is political in the way that it maps onto pre-existing explanations of how the world operates or deliberately sets out to contest those versions.” On this, narrative in news discourse that work on a 3-stage trajectory – setting, event, and outcome and usually the absence of a final resolution (Richardson, 2007: 71) – will align this framework to the political consensus of the nation. The ideological role is further accomplished with narratives attempting to “establish closure around the expectations of the targeted audience” (Conboy, 2007: 141). Thus narratives in news discourse act as a cohesive device to solidify institutional values of the nation with the audience. In short, the power of this genre – narratives in news discourse – rests with its symbolic representation that frames the ideology, values, and systems of the nation.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses the critical discourse analysis paradigm to unearth the ideological structures embedded in the news discourse. A qualitative study via a critical discourse analytic approach provides a better means to account for the role media plays in representing minorities (van Dijk, 2008). Earlier studies on racist discourse that took a quantitative approach, that is, content-analytical study (Hartmann and Husband, 1974; and Deepe Keever *et al.*, 1977 as cited in van Dijk, 2000) could only afford quantifiable features to be represented from the corpus studied but crucially lacked the accounting for the association between the various aspects of social practice.

As news discourse is a social practice, the dialectics of the media mediating between various social agents such as the larger political institutions and the public at large need to be addressed. Furthermore, the dialectical relationship needs to extend to the orders of discourse established in these institutions that include various networks of social practices operating in the language domain (Fairclough, 2003). Thus, Fairclough’s (2001) three-dimensional procedure which consists of description, interpretation, and explanation is

used. The descriptive stage analyses the formal texture features found in the legal prose where textual properties draw upon various aspects of semantics and syntax. The interpretation stage examines the interactive link between text and the social structure. The explanation stage provides the justification for the discursive processes and the social processes.

This study aims to show how journalistic practice racialises the Myanmar community through framing a systematic ideology of dominance. More specifically, this form of dominance over this community is legitimised and naturalised through two mode of analysis. First, at the micro level, the discursive reproduction of racism is realised through the structures and strategies of news reports. On this footing, critical linguistics provides a useful paradigm to reveal the covert hegemonic practice of news reports. Simultaneously, through the analysis of properties in the narrative structure (a core portion of the present corpus), the genre of narrative in news discourse under the practice of investigative journalism is depicted as strategic in positioning the Myanmar within a negative exclusionary angle. One strategy of legitimisation is the use of semantic polarisation that van Dijk (2008:187) states to be “global semantic strategies of positive self-presentation of Us and negative other-presentation of Them.” Second, at the macro level, because language is a socially conditioned process and thus constitutive of a dialectical relationship (Fairclough, 2001), the analysis contextualises the news article. For this purpose, the issues on securitisation and criminalisation of the Myanmar community in the Malaysian context are scrutinised, in particular, how their identity is negotiated and understood.

This two-pronged approach provides a robust means of investigating how the structures and strategies of news discourse are integrated into the properties of the social context where the news is produced. Cumulatively, this method of research will systemically describe the modus within which the news discourse acts in the (re)production of racism of the Myanmar community.

The corpus of this paper is drawn from three news articles published on 6 April 2010 in the Malaysian daily, *The Star*. The first article (referred to as A1) appears on the front page with the headline “Gen 3 beggars” and with the caption “Myanmar refugees forced to make a living by seeking alms”. The second article “Begging runs in the family” (referred to as A2) and the third “Using children to do it” (referred to as A3) are published on page 4. The coverage of these articles is derived from investigative journalism that *The Star* has implemented where specific topics are given extended coverage and scoop. News reports featured from such form of journalism are specifically categorised in *The Star* as “Starprobe: Your right to know”. The three articles provide exclusive coverage of the Myanmar refugees living in the district Klang as reported by Elan Perumal.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 *Narratives in News Discourse*

In this section, the genre of narrative in news discourse (Article 3) will be subject to analysis. The basic form will first be analysed, that is, the micro level that investigates the properties of narrative structures. This will be made meaningful when it is deliberated in relation to the structural “orders of discourse” and “high level of socially shared social

cognitions” (van Dijk, 1993:122) which include discussions of social and cultural systems of the text and the social formations of values and norms.

The lead in Article 3 provides most of the main elements in the news story as seen in Table 1 with the exception of Why (Why did the Myanmar refugees resort to begging?), which will be explicated in Section 5.

The setting is gradually introduced in the first three paragraphs which are couched in ambiguity. Citing the place as ‘their territory’ instantaneously raises doubt on the favourability of the location since it is marked by the pronoun ‘their’ and accentuated by ‘territory’. The lexis ‘territory’ denotes spatial division and the journalist’s insertion of quotation marks on this word compounds the effect that this space of his investigation is one not openly accessed by the public and it is shrouded by some form of risk, threat, or danger. This mysterious setting is augmented in paragraph 2 with “They were in the thick of action” but the form of activities undertaken is not delineated with any explicit antecedent description. Adding to the intensity by calling it ‘thick’ provides double suspense. This style of noticeable absence of concrete description is again deployed in the subsequent paragraph “Things were so intense...” Though paragraphs 1-3 intend for the introduction of setting, the stylistic choice of the journalist with “they were” (twice cited in paragraph 2) and “things were” (paragraph 3) displays gross irresponsible journalism treading on categorical assertions with no justification through descriptive information. Given that the schema of narratives demands an ordering of meaning, it appears that the ostentatious ambiguity in paragraphs 1-3, as set out in Table 2, is intentional to manipulate the readers’ construction of meaning.

Among the various stages of the narrative schema, the evaluation stage “contains the most explicit political information” (Labov, 1972 as cited in Riggins, 1997: 15). This stage renders the temporal cessation of all actions and events in the story. This leads the narrator

Table 1. The lead: 4 Ws

Elan Perumal	Who
provides a first-hand account	What
of his close encounters with vagabonds	Where
over a two-month observation period	When

Table 2. Paragraphs 1-3

Paragraph 1	I was surprised to find beggars and their children all over the place when I first entered their “territory”.
Paragraph 2	They were in the thick of action and I realised that they were well known among the petty traders and shopkeepers in the area.
Paragraph 3	Things were so intense that I was almost immediately approached by the young beggars.

Table 3. Paragraphs 6-7

Paragraph 6	From my observations, I learnt that the beggars operated under various <i>modus operandi</i> , depending on the age of their children.
Paragraph 7	The ones with babies would normally use a more ‘direct approach’ by moving around in crowded areas to attract sympathy.

to take the role of an arbiter who pronounces the worthiness of the value of the story. In paragraph 6, the journalist-narrator’s foray into this evaluative stage is noticeable. Preceding paragraph 6, that is, from paragraphs 1-5, the journalist’s accounts are mainly to set the background to the story. However, this move from the setting takes a drastic shift to one where he primarily appraises the form of begging in this locality. The negativity associated with ‘*modus operandi*’ has a high likelihood of producing a range of adverse denotations from covertness, stealth, slyness, deceit, and craftiness. The lexical choice of ‘direct approach’ (paragraph 7) is intentionally selected to juxtapose with ‘*modus operandi*’ (paragraph 6) and this comparison confirms and accentuates the negative denotation of ‘*modus operandi*’.

Under normal situations, one can be justified in evaluating a particular phenomenon when facts have first been sufficiently presented. At this juncture, as illustrated in paragraphs 6 and 7 in Table 3, using the phrase “from my observations” makes the entire appraisal of the journalist questionable. Firstly, he has thus only presented the setting with the mere preceding 5 paragraphs. Considering this entire news story is made up of 20 paragraphs but judgment enters at this early stage which is one-third of the news story, the authenticity of his appraisal is doubtful. Suffice to say that this premature judgment, premised on insufficient and ill-formed observations, raises the provocative question, “Could we ever narrativise without moralizing?” (White 1984 as cited in Conboy, 2007: 144). One possible explanation implies that this process of selectivity, preferencing, and relativising is an attempt to fit into the moral norms of the society consuming the news story. Conboy (2007:144) observes that if at all, there is the element of intrinsic value in news stories themselves and he concedes that this value is contingent on the “moral expectations of contemporary society”. Thus, the journalist’s break from the traditional narrative pattern and substituting it with a premature evaluation is in line with the way this section of news is consumed. As this piece of news narrative together with the other two articles are specially categorised under Starprobe, which features investigative journalism pieces, the readers will not be content with the mere presentation of facts and want more. Since there is a need to whet the readers’ appetites, the lack of sufficient facts to ground the journalist’s evaluation in paragraphs 6-7 may well be overlooked. Conversely, such omission is easily pardoned by the readers since the cultural patterns of narrative news consumption entail suspense, thrill, and sensation, which is now clearly offered by the journalist’s appraisal here.

3.2 Modality

The act of moralising continues with the use of modality. Modality provides the apparatus to capture the extent of the journalist’s commitment and confidence towards the claims he

sets out. As “modality refers broadly to a speaker’s attitude towards, or opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence” (Simpson, 1993: 47), the hybridity of this news genre necessitates a study of modality. With such genre, the risk lies with attributing the locus of voice as a representation of the account of the journalist-writer or of the journalist-narrator. The case of obscuring the two without a clear demarcation is not too difficult an occurrence for the voice of the latter can risk shading off into the former resulting in objectivising the speaking subject.

One clear use of modality in this article is the word ‘would’ which appears 10 times and the propositions with ‘would’ are set out in Table 4. The modal auxiliary ‘would’ is analysed using Simpson’s modal systems of English (Simpson, 1993: 47). To eliminate the possibility of presumptuous interpretation into the journalist’s choice of ‘would’, it seems that the usage - as may be argued by some - cannot simply be one to lend spontaneity to the actions and events narrated, as often is the style preferred for narratives. Had the journalist intended to merely extemporise his account, his consistent use of the past tense in the article is counter-productive. Thus, on this basis, the inclusion of the modalised ‘would’ perform distinct functions.

The journalist’s choice of the modalised ‘would’ being a deontic modality signifies the extent of his attitude about the extent of obligation in the performance of the actions relating to begging. The range of commitment is exhibited in the propositions in paragraphs 14 and 15. ‘Would wait’ (paragraph 14a) and ‘would make’ (paragraph 14b) both encode the journalist’s commitment to the actions of ‘waiting’ and ‘making’ through the continuum of obligation and requirement. ‘Would make’ indexes the obligatory performance by the beggars towards their children elsewhere ‘would wait’ operates as a requirement for begging to come to fruition.

Table 4. Modal auxiliary ‘would’

Paragraph 5a b	They were worried that the beggars’ “livelihood” <u>would</u> be affected and that enforcement action <u>would</u> follow.
Paragraph 7	The ones with babies <u>would</u> normally use a more “direct approach” by moving around in crowded areas to attract sympathy.
Paragraph 13	After several hours, Salim <u>would</u> go and enjoy <i>teh tarik</i> at a nearby restaurant while his wife continued to beg.
Paragraph 14a b	Other beggars with very small children <u>would</u> wait at strategic spots such as the back lane near Plaza MPK. They <u>would</u> make their children sit in front of them, holding a bowl.
Paragraph 15a b	On weekends and public holidays when human traffic was heavy, the mothers <u>would</u> leave their children at a strategic point before moving to another location to beg. But they <u>would</u> often return to watch over the young ones.
Paragraph 19a b	I witnessed how the children <u>would</u> run to their mothers with their collection. The mothers <u>would</u> quickly insert the coins into a pouch which they kept in a sling bag.

The epistemic function of ‘would’ is used in paragraphs 15a and b. The epistemic modality in this paragraph indicates the extent of the journalist’s confidence of the likelihood of the events he witnessed. In paragraph 15a, the truth modality operationalised by “would” strengthens the stake that the event (“leaving their children at a strategic point”) did take place. The conjunction ‘but’ in paragraph 15b functions to qualify the apparent wanton neglect of the mothers, an interpretation possibly reached upon processing paragraph 15a. Together with ‘would often’ they double up to reinforce the journalist’s belief in the mothers’ act of returning to watch their children. Attaching the modalised adverb ‘often’ to ‘would’ lends a greater confidence about the act claimed to be witnessed by him.

Another form of modality, which Fowler (1991: 87) terms ‘desirability’, pertains to the degree of (dis)approval of the state of affairs expressed by the statement. The reading of the two sentences in paragraph 19 yields the inference of the journalist’s disdain over the day’s collection of alms. While paragraph 19a is neutral on its own, it is the choice of the modalised adverb ‘would quickly’ (paragraph 19b) that expresses this negatively and reduces the act of the collection to one tainted with impropriety. Thus, ‘would quickly’ then becomes a logical linguistic choice as a move to cover up. Besides, the epistemic modality through the modal lexical verb ‘I witnessed’ in paragraph 19a affords firm confidence to validate this account of events.

Another instance of inference of the journalist’s approval is found in paragraph 13. Had the independent clause “Salim would go and enjoy *teh tarik* at a nearby restaurant” ceased here, the idea can be dismissed as a mere form of reportage. Nevertheless, the immediate juxtaposition derived from the subsequent clause “while his wife continued to beg” renders an added dimension to the interpretive process. Perceptibly, albeit subtlety, the effect of this is the contemptible derision ascribed to the asymmetrical division of tasks in spousal roles.

The analysis of modality above raises several pertinent issues with ideological effects being at its very core. Firstly, the deployment of modality is a strategic tool to manoeuvre the timeline of events. On this point, it begs the reason for the avoidance of using the simple past tense for those propositions in Table 4 since the journalist has consistently presented his narrative in the latter. The opening sentence after the lead firmly displays this conspicuously with “I was surprised to find beggars....when I first entered...” It can be convincingly argued that an action framed in the simple past tense presents a straightforward account of a past action with it being a complete fulfilled act. Conversely, with the modal auxiliary form of ‘would’ + verb, different effects emerge. To illustrate this, consider the effects from the modifications set out in Table 5 (in bold) made to some of the paragraphs from Table 4.

Table 5. Past tense verbs

Paragraph 13	After several hours, Salim WENT and ENJOYED <i>teh tarik</i> at a nearby restaurant while his wife continued to beg.
Paragraph 14a	Other beggars with very small children WAITED at strategic spots such as the back lane near Plaza MPK.
b.	They MADE their children sit in front of them, holding a bowl.

As opposed to the simple past tense, the construction of 'would' + verb cannot come near to suggest a completed act. The danger from such a construction is its manoeuvring ability of time; instead of a closure, such construction suggests an extension or recurrence of the act from time past into future, to the extent of equating it to be a habitualised mode of conduct.

Secondly, the delayed use of modality mitigates journalistic responsibility. Conboy (2007:64) observes that this delay produces a significant effect on the news. More importantly, he adds this is one strategy where "preferred opinion can be subtly woven within the columns of hard news." In this article, two-thirds of the modality underscored above begins to appear only after 65% of the story is presented. Alongside the much criticised preferment of opinion, as discussed in this section, this use of delayed modality creates a distance between the journalist and the events narrated resulting in the obscure experiencer-theme dichotomy. Simple past tense creates categorical assertion in respect to the state of actions, sometimes to the extent of invoking perlocutionary force in the speech act whereas modalisation results in epistemically weaker construction. The lack of illocutionary force from the latter diminishes the immediacy of the story that otherwise could have emanated directly from the journalist. In this case of detachment, such tenuous link therefore absolves him from journalistic culpability especially a breach of ethical standards, where racist assumptions underlie the coverage in question.

3.3 Lexicalisation

The choice of lexis selected by the journalist plays a significant role in reporting the latter's experience and observations of the Myanmarese's acts of begging to the news readers. This ideational function within the framework of Halliday's linguistics framework functions as a map (Fowler, 1991: 82) to both the news structure and the larger ideological work. In this section the analysis from semantics, in particular over-lexicalisation, denotations, and connotations, provides the lens to appreciate the manner in which the Myanmar refugees are marginalised.

As set out in Table 6, the lexical cohesion achieved through the repetitive use of 'trade' and the collocated verb 'plying' alleviates the act of begging to the level of trade. Conventional understanding of the begging denotes the presence of poverty or destitution. It presupposes the person to have exhausted all means of provision and begging is done in a dire situation, very often, the last resort. A decomposition of this lexis usually includes a moral dent to one's pride as the need to stoop so low as to beg because of economical or moral inability.

Table 6. The lexis 'trade'

Article 1	...they are on the very same streets themselves <u>plying</u> the <u>trade</u>the <u>trade</u> will continue...
Article 2	...successive generations have taken over the 'trade'; ...are now <u>plying</u> the streets ...who had inherited the ' <u>trade</u> ' from her mother.

The referential strategy employed by the journalist is to name the main social actors in this news. The explicit label selected is ‘beggar(s)’ with its corresponding verb forms ‘beg’ and ‘begging’. The form beggars attributed to this group of refugees is not inappropriate since their actions highly correspond to the semantic field of begging where this group is seen appearing in the public area of the district of Klang and appealing for monetary charity. Nevertheless, the profusion of this label appearing so repetitiously in the two articles (A1 and A2) may render the form of over lexicalisation to create a sense of ‘over-completeness’ (van Dijk, 1991) for the social actor. This has the effect of preempting the need to probe into the legitimacy of the scope of their begging, dismissing the significant enquiry – Why are they begging? The over-lexicalisation becomes a useful tool to gloss over reasons and issues that would otherwise expose unfair political reality in respect to this group. This is further explored in the next section.

A word count was performed for the two articles, A1 and A2; these two were chosen for this lexical examination since A2 is a continuation from A1 which was featured prominently on the front page. In total, the nouns ‘beggar’ and ‘beggars’ appear 11 times and the verbs ‘beg’ and ‘begging’ ten times. Given the overt duplication of the term so coherently found in the two articles, such referential strategy is indeed what Fowler *et al.* (1979) call “a pragmatic strategy of encoding ideology in news discourse”. The ideational metafunction is seen served discursively here because such over lexicalised terms can trigger the readers’ social cognition in that it invokes the mental models that readers have stored in their memory systems. The proliferation of this term can be argued to create the stigma associated with begging especially the local cultural experience in this nation slants towards scorn and to some level of skepticism of the sincerity of begging. This is especially reinforced since the exclusive coverage by *Starprobe* on tactics used by bogus beggars just four months before (December 2009) could still be fresh in the mental models of readers.

Begging is now perceived to be a dodgy commercial venture to the extent the unscrupulous, who capitalise on the benevolence of the public, are in states not so dire and can access alternative means of subsistence. Thus lexicalisation in this form of repetition will readily transpose a cultural stigma to the Myanmar refugees creating unjustifiable ramifications by according them undignified identity. This further castigates them into a lower status as they are already so with a chastised unrecognised refugee status.

The appellation for the current group of Myanmar beggars also needs to be analysed semantically. The referent ‘generation’ with its concurring collocation appears in Table 7.

Inherent in the concept of generation is the continuity of two entities and indexes a relationship of a predecessor and successor. Marking the current refugees as ‘successive’

Table 7. The lexis of ‘generation’

Article 1	<u>Gen</u> 3 beggars (<i>headlines</i>) ... <u>three generations</u> are now living here ...
Article 2	New <u>generation</u> takes over in Klang (<i>lead</i>) ... successive <u>generations</u> have taken over the trade. ... subsequent <u>generations</u> were taking over from their parents...

and 'subsequent' generations gives rise to the implicit quality that some planned training is part of the implementation and that it incorporates skill building in this 'begging' scheme. This is achieved by the direct mimicry of the 'trade' as reported that "she used to beg with her mother as a young girl. Now her children are following in her footsteps." Alternatively, the younger generation may well have been trained vicariously when they were playing in the vicinity where their mothers were begging ("While the children move freely around these areas, their mothers often place themselves on the pavement...").

The prepositional phrases from 'take over', 'taken over', and 'taking over' presuppose the cessation of the predecessor's involvement with begging and marks the new chapter for dominion and control now vested in the hands of the younger family members. Combining this with the description 'new generation takes over' (lead) and 'Gen 3 beggars' (headlines) a different mode of operation is invoked. Ordinarily the usage of the collocation 'new generation' exudes some quality of novelty that signifies marked forms of departure from the predecessor. The clipped form of 'generation' to 'Gen 3' is interesting. Since it is featured in the headlines, this diminutive can be validly inserted for want of space. Yet one cannot disregard its concomitant potential to double up to augment the novelty. The compound noun phrase from 'gen' with a numeral is also a common trade designation that tags new product arrival marking modernity, sophistication, and innovation as compared to its predecessor(s). The reading of 'Gen 3' then renders that this current group of successors, imbued with their sophistication and innovation, shall prompt responses to the question "How are they different from their parents?"

The answer to this question necessitates the juxtaposition of the old and new generation. The first seven paragraphs provide a snapshot of the exodus of these thousands of Myanmar refugees and two brief accounts (paragraphs 4-5 of Article 2) of begging. The latter was only followed by salient accompanying descriptions: the beggars were females, they had babies in their arms, older children begged by roaming. Conversely, this new generation creates a different image with due attention leverage on their babies. The babies, who were featured with the old generation, were not perceived to be of an issue unlike in the present generation. From Article 2, the report that pertains to the role of babies is set out in Table 8.

Table 8. Role of babies

Paragraph 19	<i>Starprobe</i> discovered that some of the women deliberately got pregnant so that they could have babies to cuddle in their arms, an effective strategy to get the public to donate.
Paragraph 20	"I'm sure you will feel pity for the baby and offer me some cash. Otherwise, you may chase me away," said one of them when casually asked why many of these beggars had babies.
Paragraph 21	She added that they were the real mothers and the babies were not hired as some people suspected.
Paragraph 22	What is not established is who the fathers of the children are. It is learnt that most of the mothers were without husbands.

Paragraph 19 raises and addresses the motivation behind the babies' existence and seemingly formulates the summary for the information presented from paragraphs 20-22. A careful reading of the relative clause in paragraph 19 with the use of the determiner 'an' is mainly to display the causal relationship between the strategy and intentional pregnancy. Nevertheless this conclusion seems to be made from the apparent premises set out in paragraphs 21-22. These two paragraphs deal with the availability of identities of the babies' mothers and fathers. Citing the mothers without husbands in paragraph 22 is a very strong charge casting aspersions on the moral behaviour of the mothers. The inclusion of verbatim reportage on the use of babies in paragraph 20 answers only in part on the use of babies yet such honest confession is judiciously exploited by the journalist for corroborating his assumption of intentional pregnancy. From paragraphs 19-21, this analysis exposes the various predication strategies used. Predication according to Reisigl and Wodak (2001: 54) results in "persons [etc...] [being] specified and characterised with respect to quality, quantity, space, time and so on...". Thus, the mothers, being the main social actor, have been accorded descriptors that work to solidify the quality of their character. "Deliberately got pregnant" is a blatant explicit denotation of the attribute of these mothers as schemers.

Therefore the discussion on the lexis 'new generation' is a conscious journalistic choice that seeks to underscore its unique *modus operandi* for the 'trade' working at two levels: from conception to actual operation.

3.5 Criminalisation and Securitisation

This section moves beyond the micro level of discursive analysis into the macro dimension i.e. the social practice that contextualises the former. In particular, the issue on the criminalisation and securitisation of the Myanmar refugees will be looked into.

When considering the criminalisation of this group of refugees, it is pertinent to examine the various strategies used to affect what van Dijk (2008:103) calls the ideological square found in the dichotomy of positive self-presentation and negative other presentation. The Us-Them gulf created is integral in the process of 'othering' the refugees through representing them in a marked manner (Sonwalker, 2005). On the three texts used for this study, the racist ideology is produced through the parallel reading of the extracts Table 9.

By allowing the refugees to enter the country, the point is being made that this entry was due to the hospitality and receptiveness of Malaysia as a kind host. The extent of this generosity is further augmented with the inclusion of 'thousands' to achieve the effect of equating them as an influx yet at the same time statistical data is a helpful tool to objectify the phenomenon. Historical knowledge of this volatile era in South East Asia informs how the Myanmar civilians were subject to many forms of adversity in their country including

Table 9. The process of 'othering'

Article 1	The beggars are from a community of Myanmar refugees who first came here in the 1970s.
Article 2	Their grandparents were among thousands who entered the country as refugees from Myanmar in the 1970s.

the potential loss of one's life. In such a destitute state, they had resorted to escaping the ruthless military junta into the neighbouring countries of South East Asia with Malaysia being one. Against this historical backdrop, Malaysia's openness in accommodating these refugees positively presents itself as being humanitarian with its related admirable benevolent traits of empathy, sympathy, and compassion.

Another positive self-presentation is derived from the Klang Consumer Association. The journalist's inclusion of the account from Devadass, the president of this association, is representative of the association's attitude in respect to these refugees. Devadass, who says, "... I used to talk to her those days" reveals social affability towards this group of people. The journalist continues by providing a descriptive trait by calling Devadass one who helps the refugees. This continues to show that a local agent such as this association moves beyond the local concerns of the district into charitable aid extended to this group of people.

The ideological role in these two instances of positive self-presentation is pivotal in setting the psychological ground for the process of 'othering' the refugees through the strategy of negative other presentation. This negative other presentation is principally derived from the representative power that emerges from the social construction of this group of refugees. From the news article, they are presented as conspirators or schemers (deliberately got pregnant...an effective strategy to get the public to donate'). By actively engaging their children to beg in certain locations independently of their parents, ("they would leave their children at a strategic point") another category constructed against them is their apparent wanton disregard for their children's safety. Furthermore, these children are of school-going age and these parents are seen denying them the basic right to an education. The male refugees are not spared: they are negatively cast as lazy ("Salim...enjoy *teh tarik*...while his wife continued to beg"); exploitative ("They felt they did not need to do the hard and dirty work of begging"); irresponsible ("Men supposedly leave their "wives"); and morally decadent ("and get engaged with new partners frequently").

Thus, this Us-Them dichotomy performs the crucial representation work by creating the marked difference of the 'other'. This racist discourse through the genre of news report produces a form of symbolic marking of 'their differences'. The direct impact of this effectively criminalises this group of refugees, albeit not in the strict sense of imputing legal punity. This attribution of 'illegality' marks the first step of securitisation. Securitisation of this Myanmar group presents them as a threat to issues pertaining to welfare, security, and identity.

One stark instance of this securitisation is the citing of chronological time line and generational continuity as in: 'Forty years have passed and Starprobe has discovered that successive generations have taken over the 'trade' and "three generations are now living here, all of whom have had to resort to begging to make a living." The combined effect of these foregrounds how the refugees abuse the system of asylum. From the initial entry point till today (40 years), their occupational-survival means have not ceased nor reduced, in fact have boomed as discussed through various discursive analyses above. This produces the concomitant repercussion implicating them as conniving manipulators who possess the skill to work around the system ("deliberately got pregnant...effective strategy to get

the public to donate”). These 40 years of unceasing charity of the locals has the effect of victimising the latter through the agency of these refugees as “they can take home a substantial amount during the weekends and public holidays”.

This securitisation that is economically embedded is also loaded with a social dimension. The ubiquitous presence of the refugees in this vicinity cannot be denied - “have become part and parcel of the hustle and bustle of life in this part of the town”. The account of their meandering children is also visible - “the children move freely around these areas” and “their older children would be roaming around”. Such accounts represent a socially shared mental model of the close nexus between foreigners (with the exception of skilled expatriates) and social ills, especially crime. Capitalising on this psychology of prejudice by this cognitive representation, the journalist is producing a racist discourse that stigmatises the refugees. Such representation of social menace very often leads to social tensions where the chastisement of the out-group is intensified as the in-group feels the former perforating their dominant social world.

The two securitisation issues, very much tied to economic and social factors, are argued in this practice of ‘dog whistle journalism’. Ward (2002:28) defines this brand of journalism as the “discussion of policy issues in an outwardly reasonable language, but one using words and phrases that are calculated to carry a different message to the target audience”. How the journalistic discourse is exploited to construct a hyperbolic representation of the Myanmar refugees through the generalised act of begging raises a policy issue – one that is sociological in nature and pertains to the ramifications of this ‘social menace’ that is, what actions can be taken to eradicate this ‘social menace’. The cumulative effect of the three articles does not end there; readers are attitudinally provoked. Sentiments of disgust toward this ‘social menace’ may well be formed and further reinforce the urgency of the policy issue above.

The journalistic representation of the Myanmar refugees by ‘dog whistling’ them to be the racialised ‘other’ - the them (immoral, manipulators, threat to social stability) - dismisses crucial issues that should have been raised in the articles. Rather than provoking with the reports, the causality should have been adequately addressed and it would have supplied a more balanced view of the reality of Myanmar beggars. This stark neglect is the media’s failure and perhaps a cowardly inability to address the shameful political reality of Malaysia’s willful refusal to accord recognition to refugees. Even though Malaysia endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948, it never was a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees nor the 1967 Protocol. Not ratifying the UNHCR and the Protocol dispenses Malaysia of the need to grant the refugees, official refugees status. This has had the effect of criminalising the unrecognised refugees since the Immigration Act 1959/63 terms them as ‘illegal migrants’ and thus are susceptible to arrest, punishment, and deportation. The suffering of these unrecognised refugees continues as they labour for pittance with employees exploiting their illegal status. Other forms of suffering include the risk of being trafficked and sold into various forms of slavery.

With this political and social landscape in mind, how accurate and true then is the media’s account of the Myanmar beggars who have come to be victimised through a highly racialised discourse?

4. CONCLUSION

A predominant feature in new racism is its categorical denial of racist practice. The present study attempts to reveal that racism is surreptitiously performed under the guise of 'tame' investigative journalism which when subject to scrutiny exposes the media's social practice of simultaneous exclusion and oppression of minorities. The discursive practice from the micro analysis clearly shows how the choice of morpho-syntax and lexis can be instrumental in the production of racism. When this is conflated with the macro analysis, the study underscores how global discourse meanings and topics are tacit forms of discriminatory practices which are skewed to the underlying prejudices in the ideological square. The mere selection of certain frames to represent the Myanmar refugees contradicts the media's position to "transcend the rhetoric of nationalism" (Bailey and Harindranath, 2005:284). Only and if patterns of representation include frames of reference from spheres of reality – political, legal, social - this form of journalism is at best doing lip-service to national interest at the expense of criminalising the other.

It is hoped that this research will heighten social cognition of the discriminatory practices of contemporary journalism. In this manner, critical discourse analysis into racist media becomes socially pertinent in deconstructing ethnic prejudices and ideologies. Contributing to the cognitive interface, this study is socially relevant in providing a discursive structure to mitigate or resist the formation of unfair social representations in one's mental model.

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