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Gratitude as a Moral Value: A Corpus-based Analysis of its Representation in the Lexis of Malay Primary School Textbooks

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Abstract: *This paper reports on a study of the representation of a moral value, gratitude, in the lexis of Bahasa Malaysia primary school textbooks, Years One to Six. The study was based on the assumption that repeated occurrences of these representations over the years of schooling could contribute to the social learning, among children, of patterns and contexts for the expression of this value. A corpus of Bahasa Malaysia subject textbooks was analysed to seek consistent portrayals of gratitude via frequencies of occurrence, sentential contexts as well as collocation. Patterns in representation are discussed at lexical level.* TERIMA KASIH *was the most frequently occurring lemma for the expression of this value. It was found that the child was more often represented as an expresser of thanks, but less as a receiver. There were limited occurrences of expressions of gratitude between child peers. Gratitude also tended to be represented in the form of formulaic expressions, and in the context of public announcements rather than personal gestures. Some limitations of the corpus-based approach used are discussed.*

INTRODUCTION

School literature is said to guide pupils "into acceptable social participation by providing models of appropriate communication skills, attitudinal evaluation and behaviour in groups" (Hellsten, 1994, pp.193-194). Schoolbooks, therefore, can provide insights into cultural values inculcated by the educational institution. While exposure to textbook language is arguably small compared with other types of language encounters, Cincotta (1982) suggests that its impact on the enculturation process cannot be ignored —textbooks can influence social learning and the formation of beliefs if certain behaviours are consistently portrayed in language over the lengthy period of formal schooling.

Cameron (1990) argues that the long-standing idea that language passively reflects society is fallacious as it implies that social categories exist before language, which in turn passively reflects them. She emphasises the need for language to be seen as actively interacting with other modes of behaviour, as part of the social. In this perspective, social categories are not seen as expressed in language use per se; nor are speakers seen to use language to express social reality. Language is perceived to be a "regulated social institution" (p.88) in itself, and the study of the reproduction of linguistic norms by or within social institutions would provide insights into how language is used to "resist, subvert" as well as "propagate" certain ideas in the construction of a social reality for the reader. In other words, the social world is re-constructed and re-presented by the writer.

A similar theoretical assumption is articulated by Stubbs (1996; 1997). Stubbs (1997, p.358) criticises the Whorfian idea of language as a determiner of thought. Instead he suggests that language provides resources for the expression of thought, and argues that because language allows for different formulations of ideas, texts are never neutral. Its production always involves "select(ing) some features of the world" (through words), and simultaneously "play(ing) down others". This selection is consciously or unconsciously ideological in nature, and repeated representations of the world in a certain way can lead to "semantic habits" which can influence thinking (Stubbs, 1997, p.373).

Stubbs' assumptions are reflected in his 1996 corpus work on language-culture connections, in which he defines discourse as "recurrent and conventional ways of talking, which circulate in the social world, and which form a constellation of repeated meanings" (p.158) that re-present and transmit cultural information.

> (I)f particular lexical and grammatical choices are regularly made, and if people and things are repeatedly talked about in certain ways, then it is possible that this will affect how they are thought about... . It is the continuous reinforcement through massive repetition and consistency in discourse which is required to construct and maintain social reality.
>
> (Stubbs, 1996, p.92)

This perspective is not new. Within the educational sphere, a similar argument was earlier forwarded by Freebody and Baker (1985) in their seminal work on school literature. Freebody and Baker argued that fre-

quencies and distribution patterns of words in texts conveyed interpretations about the social world, and that if a child perceived repeated associations between certain words, presented to them naturally as a constant feature of the world they lived in, then it was likely to be seen as a salient feature of their world.

Thus the language of school literature in general, and textbooks in particular, can be seen as a means through which culture is reproduced through generations (Stubbs, 1996). That re-production or re-presentation is not seen to be merely a reflection of reality, but a direct or indirect ideological choice made by the textbook writer as well as the educational institution that adopts the text.

Related studies on enculturation via textbook language have mostly researched portrayals of gender (Joshi & Anderson, 1994; Poulou, 1997) and role behaviour (Hellsten, 1994; Freebody & Baker, 1985). In general, these studies have suggested that repeated allocations of emotional descriptions and behaviour to textbooks characters, for example, through the repeated use of certain adjectives or verbs, play a role in fostering a child's own sense of social identity by demonstrating to the child various possible personality traits (Hellsten, 1994). Empirical findings of these studies show numerous cross-cultural differences and similarities in the social world of children's textbooks, providing evidence to support the earlier argument that textbook writers present particular images of society to children by selecting certain linguistic expressions and contexts of use.

In relation to this, it is assumed that in nationally-adopted schoolbooks, written texts that contextualise learning are even more carefully selected to re-present socially desirable realities. Furthermore, in situations where textbooks adopted by the school system are written to national curriculum specifications, values and norms that are represented in what textbook characters do or say can be seen to portray 'institutionally approved' versions of appropriate social norms (Stubbs, 1996).

The belief in values teaching as a socialisation process is embodied in the Malaysian National Philosophy of Education. The idea is that there should be a conscious effort to instill positive values through the school curriculum, with the ultimate aim of character building, i.e., to develop positive attitudes and behaviour based on values that are accepted and appreciated by society (Ministry of Education, Malaysia, 1992). One of the reasons for the integration of values into the curriculum is to develop individuals of "high moral standards" who are "well mannered and practice moral values" (Curriculum Development Centre, 2001). This desire to de-

velop "good persons...good members of society...good citizens" (Wan Mohd Zahid, 1989, p.6) implies a major role of the education system in the transmission of social values. Sixteen moral values have been defined by the Malaysian Ministry of Education for integration in all school subjects, namely: kindness, self-reliance, integrity, respect, love, justice, freedom, courage, cleanliness of body and soul, honesty, diligence, cooperation, moderation, gratitude, rationality and public spiritedness. These values are seen as encompassing spiritual, humanistic as well as citizenship elements, cutting across religious lines (Curriculum Development Centre, 2001).

This paper reports part of the findings of a larger research that studied various cultural values represented in Malaysian Primary School textbooks (Azlina Murad Sani, 2001). The paper will focus particularly on the representation of gratitude (*kesyukuran),* one of the moral values to be instilled in the Malaysian child. The aim is to provide a descriptive analysis of :

a) the extent to which gratitude was expressed directly through lexical meaning in primary school textbooks,
b) textbook characters and contexts associated with gratitude,
c) recurrent patterns of use of related lexis, as identified in collocations and sentential contexts.

In this study, representation is taken to mean re-presentation of reality by the textbook writer.

METHODOLOGY

The premise of the analytical framework of the study is that repeatedly occurring lexis provide information about cultural assumptions. Meanings can be conveyed by individual words, grammatical forms, frequency of collocations and distributions of forms across texts; habitual or repeated use being the key element (Stubbs, 1996).

A corpus-based approach was chosen to explore its practicality in eliciting descriptive cultural data. A primary school Malay language corpus was built, comprising running text from reading passages (including *pantun* and *syair*) found in six Ministry-approved prescribed Bahasa Malaysia subject textbooks (Year One to Year Six). Text lengths ranged from an average of 50 words in Year One to 500 words in Year Six. The entire corpus totaled 44500 words. Texts that made up exercises and activities were excluded. Language textbooks were chosen as the themes around which the text content was written tended not to be subject-specific, as they would be in mathematics, science or other subjects.

A concordance package (MonoConc Pro Version 2.0, 2000) was used to generate data. Basic corpus analytic methods were employed to access repeated occurrences of words, and to generate concordance lines for the study of collocations and sentential contexts.

Synonyms for the value 'gratitude' were drawn from a Malay language dictionary, based on the lemma SYUKUR, which also formed the dictionary headword. A total of five synonyms associated with gratitude were extracted: SYUKUR, TERIMA KASIH, MUJUR, UNTUNG and TUAH. Antonyms of these words, which carried a negative prosody, were excluded. All synonyms were run through the concordancer to search for matches in the corpus. Descriptive statistics were obtained. Each lemma that yielded a total of 10 or more concordance lines was further analysed qualitatively.

RESULTS

All the synonyms identified in relation to gratitude were found in the corpus. However, frequencies of occurrence varied widely. The frequency counts for the lemmas associated with this value were: TERIMA KASIH (64), SYUKUR (7), TUAH (3). UNTUNG (1) and MUJUR (1). The counts showed that this value was expressed in single word meanings 76 times in total or at a normed count of 1.71 per 1000 words. TERIMA KASIH (thank) was the most common lemma for the expression of gratitude (84.21%) in the textbooks. This was not unexpected as *terima kasih* can be said to be the most widely used expression of thanks in Malay, and the finding would serve as an indicator of textbooks perpetuating social reality. However, as indicated earlier, it is not only the lemmas, but their consistent representations in particular contexts of occurrence, that would signal socially desired expressions of gratitude enculturated by these textbooks.

Characters and Contexts

As seen in Table 1, the expresser of gratitude was most often the child (i.e., a child character of the child-reader's age group) (57.89%), followed by adults or older children (36.84%). Conversely, gratitude tended to be expressed towards adults (44.73%) on more occasions than towards children. Textbook writers have chosen the school and community as the most appropriate contexts for the expression of gratitude (92.11%). Interestingly, it was very seldom represented in the context of home and family (7.89%). Although TERIMA KASIH was the most common lemma associated with gratitude in the corpus, SYUKUR stood out as being different from the other lem-

mas in usage. While *syukur* is customarily associated with giving thanks to god, on no occasion was it found to collocate with any receiver in this corpus.

Table 1
Textbook Characters and Contexts Associated with Gratitude

	SYUKUR	TERIMA KASIH	TUAH	MUJUR	UNTUNG	TOTAL
Expresser:						
Community	2	-	-	-	-	2
Author	-	-	2	-	-	2
Adult/Older child	2	25	-	-	1	28
Child	3	39	1	1	-	44
Receiver:						
Unstated/n.a	7	1	1	1	-	10
Adult/older child	-	32	1	3	1	34
Child	-	22	1	-	-	23
Mixed group	-	9	-	-	-	9
Context:						
Home/family	-	5	-	-	1	6
School/peer	4	31	1	-	-	36
Other/community	3	28	2	1	-	34

Collocation Patterns for TERIMA KASIH

As indicated earlier, TERIMA KASIH was the only lemma that generated more than 10 concordance lines, i.e., a total of 64. These lines were further re-categorised into two main contexts of occurrences—formal/semiformal vs. informal. Speeches and interviews were considered formal/semi-formal contexts. Buy-sell transactions were placed in the informal category, together with other social interactions involving family, friends and strangers in various informal situations. The classification yielded some patterns in terms of the social situations in which this particular value is represented, as shown in Tables 2 and 3. The numbers on the right in the tables show the level of the textbook, i.e., Year One, Two, and so on, in which the lines appeared.

Table 2

Concordance Lines for the Lemma TERIMA KASIH *in Formal/Semi Formal Contexts*

1. ... akan menjadi kuat jika bersatu. Ahmad: [[Terima kasih]] Encik Zain kerana sudi ditemu ramah. E ..	Y5
2. ... encapai kejayaan yang cemerlang. Amir: [[Terima kasih]], Abang Hairil. Hairil: Sama-sama, Amir ...	Y2
3. ... eka cipta sambil membuat kajian. Arif: [[Terima kasih]] Abang Zul. Abang Zul: Sama-sama. ...	Y4
4. ...ingin mengucapkan berbanyak-banyak [[terima kasih]] kepada Cikgu Rosminah. Beliaulah yang ...	Y3
5. ... sar memberi ucapan. Guru besar [[berterima kasih]] kepada ibu bapa yang datang. Selepas b ...	Y3
6. ... s di sini. Sekian, selamat melawat dan [[terima kasih]]. Jangan lepaskan peluang memilik ...	Y4
7. ... Guru Besar mengucapkan syabas dan [[terima kasih]] kepada Encik Ibrahim dan semua yang ber ...	Y4
8. ... haimi mengucapkan salam sejahtera dan [[terima kasih]] kepada hadirin sekalian. Seterusnya Suh ..	Y6
9. ... gai melepaskan batuk di tangga. Faiz: [[Terima kasih]], Encik Mansor kerana menerima lawatan	Y4
10. ...Jemputlah rakan-rakan yang lain. Faiz: [[Terima kasih]].	Y4
11. ...mengatakan abang otak cair. Hairil: [[Terima kasih]]. Amir: Siapakah yang menggalakkan aban...	Y2
12. ... Perempuan bagi tahun ini? Hasyimah: [[Terima kasih]]. Saya bersyukur dan berasa gembira atas .	Y6
13. ... sains lebih banyak membawa kebaikan. [[Terima kasih]]. Petroleum menjadi sumber tenaga ...	Y5
14. ... jlis jamuan tersebut. "Saya mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] kepada tuan-tuan dan puan-puan kerana...	Y3
15. ... rakan sekelas. Najwa mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] kepada mereka. Cikgu Rosminah meminta ..	Y3
16. ... Terlebih dahulu saya mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] kepada Persatuan Keselamatan Jalan Raya ...	Y5
17. ... terlebih dahulu saya mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] kerana diberi peluang menyampaikan ucap ...	Y5
18. ... elamat pagi. Daud: Saya mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] kerana saudara dan saudari telah berset ...	Y6
19. ... berehat sebentar dan mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] sebelum balik. Minggu depan mereka aka ...	Y6
20. ... terbang ke negara-negara lain. Nazri: [[Terima kasih]] kapten. Kapten Haris.: Sama-sama Nazri. ...	Y2
21. ... m saku, Daun sirih berserta pinang, [[Terima kasih]] wahai guru, Budi dan jasamu tetap diken...	Y5
22. ... lebih dahulu saya mengucapkan ribuan [[terima kasih]] kerana sudi menulis surat kepada saya. ...	Y4
23. ... n amat kami hargai dan diucapkan ribuan [[terima kasih]]. Sekian. Yang menjalankan tugas, Saif...	Y5
24. ... tuan kami dahului dengan ucapan ribuan [[terima kasih]]. Yang menjalankan tugas, Sallehuddin ..	Y5
25. ...bapa dan masyarakat. Sekian sahaja. [[Terima kasih]]." Selepas itu murid-murid pun masuklah...	Y6
26. ... in dan usaha tangga kejayaan'. Sekian, [[terima kasih]].	Y3
27. ... 'Rakyat bersatu, negara teguh'. Sekian [[terima kasih]].	Y6
28. ... dahan tersebut sebaik-baiknya. Sekian, [[terima kasih]].	Y5
29. ... boleh memusnahkan hidup kita. Sekian [[terima kasih]].	Y4
30. ... udi dan jasamu tetap dikenang. Sekian, [[terima kasih]]. Wassalam. ...	Y5
31. ... engguna berhemat jiwa selamat. Sekian, [[terima kasih]]. Wassalam. Pada jam 8.00 pagi ba ...	Y5
32. ... saya ingin mengucapkan setinggi-tinggi [[terima kasih]] kepada mereka yang telah bermurah hati...	Y6
33. ... irat. Kami ingin menyampaikan ucapan [[terima kasih]] juga atas jasa baik Tuan Guru Besar yan..	Y5
34 ... kesempatan ini merakamkan ucapan [[terima kasih]] kepada guru-guru yang telah berpenat le ...	Y5
35. ... a pihak tuan kami dahului dengan ucapan [[terima kasih]]. Sekian. Yang benar, Musliyati Abu Ba ...	Y4
36. ... sangat kami hargai dan didahului ucapan [[terima kasih]]. Sekian. "Berkhidmat Untuk Negara" "Ci ...	Y4
37. ... nak-kanak ini. Sekali lagi saya ucapkan [[terima kasih]] dan selamat berjaya! Selepas temu r ...	Y6
38. ... r kilat itu. Akhir sekali, saya ucapkan [[terima kasih]] kepada dermawan-dermawan dan hadirin ya ...	Y6

Direct expressions of thanks using TERIMA KASIH occurred in formal/ semi-formal (38/64; 59.37%) as well as informal contexts (26/64; 40.63%). The situations in which gratitude is represented by this lemma fell into several categories:

a. beginning and ending speeches, interviews, letters
b. receiving favours/invitations/information/support/time
c. receiving gifts; objects/ compliments
d. buying-selling transactions

The concordance lines in Table 2 show that the beginning and ending of speeches and interviews appeared rather prominently in this corpus as situations that required expressions of gratitude, even as early as Year Two and Year Three. Speeches were also represented as a platform for expressing gratitude and indebtedness for favours, invitations, etc., as in situations (b) and (c) mentioned earlier.

Although the family is extremely well-represented in the corpus—as found in the main study—there were few instances of TERIMA KASIH co-occurring with family members. Direct expressions of gratitude by children to people close to them appear to be uncommon, at least as indicated in the social world of the school textbook. The concordance lines showed only 5 instances out of 64 (7.81%) where gratitude was directly expressed via the lemma TERIMA KASIH to family members compared to non-family members (Table 3, lines 3, 4, 8, 9, 23).

Also downplayed in the textbooks were portrayals of thanks for compliments and felicitations. Instead, the data showed that textbooks more often represented the expression of thanks in the form of public announcements rather than personal gestures. There were repeated occurrences of concordance lines that carried this sense, with *saya/kami...mengucapkan...*(I/ We would like to express...) as well as *Sekian...* (that is all) appearing as collocates. These rather formulaic expressions made up the majority of the concordance lines (81.57%) in the formal/semi formal category.

In informal contexts, TERIMA KASIH was observed to co-occur with receivers' names as the immediate left collocate in direct speech (see Table 3), indicating a preference for addressing the receiver directly by name in expressions of gratitude.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the assumption that repeated representations transmit cultural information, the study described in this paper examined the representation

Table 3

Concordance Lines for the Lemma TERIMA KASIH *in Informal Contexts*

1. ...suara Abang Razi memberi arahan. "[[Terima kasih]]," jawab Abang Sudir. Perasaan Abang Su...	Y3
2. ...sebuah pulau tercantik di dunia. Ayah: [[Terima kasih]] Encik Sahlan kerana telah memberi kami ...	Y4
3. ...ini jus tembikai. Cubalah rasa. Azimah: [[Terima kasih]] Man. Jus ini manis sangat. Eloklah Ma ...	Y3
4. ...agi. Lain kali rasalah dahulu. Azman: [[Terima kasih]] kak, atas nasihat itu. Maklumlah...Bua ...	Y3
5. ...pertanyaan dengan jelas." "Oh begitu! [[Terima kasih]], encik."...	Y1
6. ... olong nenek membawa bakul ini?" "Boleh, [[terima kasih]]." "Kasihan, arnab ini lapar." "Mari ...	Y2
7. ... Kok Beng. Sila masuk." "Sila duduk." "[[Terima kasih]], tuk. Datuk masih terbatuk-batuk? Sud ...	Y1
8. ... basuh pinggan-pinggan ini, emak." "[[Terima kasih]], Amri. Beruntung emak ada anak yang seb ...	Y2
9. ... ejap lagi emak sampai." "Baiklah emak. [[Terima kasih]]." ...	Y2
10. ...k. Lain kali datang lagi. Kak Esah: [[Terima kasih]], Yazid. Pada kira-kira pukul lapan ...	Y6
11. ...Jemputlah rakan-rakan yang lain. Faiz: [[Terima kasih]]. ...	Y4
12. ... 7.00 Encik Tan. Ini wangnya Pak Haji. [[Terima kasih]]. Datanglah lagi, Encik Tan....	Y2
13. ... berkelah di sini. Marilah ikut kami. [[Terima kasih]]. Boleh juga. Yusri ada adik kecil? Ya ...	Y1
14....Ini sedikit buah tangan daripada kami. [[Terima kasih]]. Kami berharap kamu cepat pulih, Amin. ...	Y2
15.... " "Mari saya temani tuk ke klinik." "[[Terima kasih]], marilah kita pergi sekarang." Ada u ...	Y1
16.... kit buah tangan. Budak itu mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] kepada Farid dan abang saudaranya..	Y2
17.... apatannya. Akhirnya mereka mengucapkan [[terima kasih]] lalu beredar dari tempat itu. ...	Y6
18.... sempat Azman hendak mengucapkan [[terima kasih]], makhluk itu sudah ghaib. Apa yang keli...	Y6
19.... erjaya Tuan Haji" kata Pak cik Munir. "[[Terima kasih]], Munir" jawab Haji Johari. Haji Johari ...	Y1
20..... i buah tembikainya encik. Encik Ong: [[Terima kasih]]. Yazid: Eh, Kak Esah! Hendak beli ap ...	Y6
21.... ang manis. Anak cubalah rasa. Ravi: [[Terima kasih]] pak cik. Ya, rasanya sungguh sedap dan ...	Y1
22.... membuat mata, hulu dan sarung. Razlan: [[Terima kasih]], tuk. Semua keterangan tuk tadi telah ..	Y4
23.... minggu hadapan. Nazmi: Oh seronoknya! [[Terima kasih]] ayah. Kini, kawasan yang dahulunya ...	Y4
24.... erikannya kepada Mak Yah). Mak Yah: [[Terima kasih]]. Ha, nampaknya ada kereta datang ke sin ..	Y6
25.... dak mengapa, simpan sajalah. Yazid: [[Terima kasih]], encik. Biar saya tolong bawakan buah-b ...	Y6
26.... dan dipasarkan," kata Mak Cik Zaharah. "[[Terima kasih]] mak cik," ucap Azmir sambil tersenyum. ..	Y3

gratitude in Malay school literature. The child was more often represented as the expresser rather than receiver of thanks. There also appeared to be a lack of representation of expressions of gratitude between child peers.

Despite the family being an integral part of the world of the primary school textbook, family members were rarely associated with direct expressions of gratitude in this corpus. Instead, the rather substantial recurrence of formulaic expressions of thanks in formal situations would indicate that the textbook places special importance in socialising the child into the conventions of expressing gratitude in these settings. By creating few situations and contexts where textbook characters offer thanks to family

and friends, textbooks may also suggest to the child that the conventional and perhaps 'valued' expressions of thanks are those that are directed to strangers, in rather public statements. The study has highlighted one aspect of cultural representation in the discourse of primary school textbooks, which is expected to contribute to the social learning of the child. It is beyond the scope of this descriptive analysis to speculate on whether the contextualisation of this moral value in the texts are consciously intended or desired by the educational system. However, curriculum designers and textbook writers may want to reflect upon the extent to which these representations accurately reflect the tenor of the expression of gratitude in Malaysian society, as it may well be what children are being indirectly schooled into in their formative years.

The research has utilized the entire corpus of Bahasa Malaysia subject textbooks. However, the total number of words in the corpus was comparatively small, and the specific nature of the word search yielded even smaller numbers of concordance lines for analysis. The tendencies observed are thus subject to further affirmation, perhaps through investigations of a bigger corpus comprising all primary textbooks across school subjects. The larger numbers would also allow statistical significance testing. Another constraint is that the use of a concordancer limited data elicitation to word level, and thus largely confined the analysis to single word representations and their immediate contexts, making interpretations of meaning rather limited. Despite the constraints, the concordancer is able to provide an efficient and convenient approach for exploratory studies of this nature. More extensive studies involving both in–depth discourse and corpus analysis techniques may be able to take into account discourse level meanings as well.

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