

## The Orang Asli in Malaysian Media: An Approach from Transitivity Perspective

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**Abstract:** The *Orang Asli* are recognised as the country's indigenous peoples that are often perceived as a marginalised community in the country. The present study aims to conduct a comparative study by comparing the ways the *Orang Asli* are being represented by the mainstream (*The Star*) and alternative media (*Malaysiakini*) from a CDA perspective. In this study, a total of six news reports were selected from *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* respectively and were analysed under Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework (1995) serving as the foundational framework. The framework demonstrates the integration of Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) transitivity analysis and van Dijk's (1998) Theory of Ideology in analysing the transitivity structures as well as the ideological construction of the *Orang Asli* in the news reports. The findings revealed that *Malaysiakini* represented the *Orang Asli* more frequently than *The Star*. However, the overall findings indicate that the *Orang Asli* are still portrayed in a stereotypical and pejorative manner. In essence, the study reveals the ideological representation of the *Orang Asli* by both mainstream and alternative media as illustrated by the transitivity patterns that surfaced from the analysis.

**Keywords:** *Orang Asli*; representation; media discourse; CDA; transitivity analysis; ideology

### 1. Introduction

The representation of ethnic minorities from a discriminatory or stereotypical perspective in the contemporary media world continues to remain a persisting issue. This is because the media serves as an influential powerhouse that disseminates information and knowledge to its readers since the media is concerned with the language of public affairs which is media discourse [1,2]. Not only that, being a dominant and accessible source of information, the media possesses an endless potential to structure and influence the minds of its readers. Hence, the concept of representation is crucial in understanding the ways individuals, groups, events, and topics are depicted through the lens of their readers. In the context of media discourse, representation is primarily concerned with the linguistic construction of social actors, happenings, and

situations [3]. Therefore, when it comes to the representation of ethnic minorities, the media tends to paint these communities in a negative yet stereotypical narrative against the dominant race given the media's unprecedented capability in influencing the minds of the masses [4]. As such, [5] explains this binary pattern between a dominant race and a minority race reflects the ideological polarisation of "Us versus Them".

The news in particular, which currently exists in both print and online iterations [6] is a common form of media discourse that is typically a credible and trusted source of information, provides them with the leverage to reinforce and perpetuate stereotypical and pejorative perceptions among the minds of their readers in reporting topics that are concerned with ethnic minorities. This is because the media has the upper hand to decide which topic or event needs to be foregrounded and backgrounded [7] as the news is perceived to be a socially manufactured product [8].

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Additionally, [5,9] points out that readers learn about other ethnic minorities better via the news which has remained as the immediate source of information for the so-called symbolic elites. Both [10] and [11] state that the news is a construction of social reality that is ideologically mediated resulting in the conveyance of a misguided image and perception of indigenous peoples which eventually weakens their efforts toward attaining self-determination.

The representation of indigenous communities by the media has received much scholarly attention in the global context whereby different Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approaches have been used to explicate the ideologies and discursive practices in representing these communities. Several existing studies have consistently revealed the discursive practices of the media in constructing the indigenous communities as stereotypical and troublesome [12], primitive [13], emotional and aggressive [14], and paternalistically [15]. Likewise, in the Malaysian context, the *Orang Asli* as the indigenous peoples of the country have received similar treatment by the local mainstream media which portrays them in a prejudiced and inferior manner [4, 16, 17, 18, 19]. Hence, these past literature reveals that the media tends to position and emphasise the negative attributes and qualities of these communities as the significant “Other” or outcasts of society. Furthermore, the existing studies that are concerned with the representation of the *Orang Asli* are relatively scarce, especially from a CDA approach. Hence, the present study aims to conduct a comparative study from a CDA approach by comparing how the *Orang Asli* are represented in both mainstream and alternative media since the existing studies have only focused on examining the mainstream media e.g. [4, 16, 17, 18, 19]. Therefore, the objectives of the study are as presented as follows:

1. To analyse the transitivity structures that are used to represent the *Orang Asli* by both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*.
2. To examine how the transitivity structures ideologically construct the *Orang Asli* in both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The *Orang Asli* as the Indigenous Peoples of the Country

The *Orang Asli* forms less than one percent of the country’s population with a total population of 210,611 as of 2019 [20] and is recognised as the country’s indigenous peoples [21]. The *Orang Asli* community comprises three main ethnic groups namely the Senoi, the Aboriginal Malay or Proto-Malay, and the Negrito [21]. Each of these three main ethnic groups is then further subdivided into six sub-ethnic groups [21,22]. It is also crucial to note that the term *Orang Asli* does not encompass the indigenous communities of Sabah and Sarawak and it exclusively refers to those residing in Peninsular Malaysia [23].

In the past, the *Orang Asli* had helmed esteemed

authoritative positions within their respective political structures and customary laws [21,24]. Moreover, the *Orang Asli* were also assigned political roles within the Parameswara administration whereby their presence was known to have thrived the sultanate to prosperity [21]. On the other hand, the *Orang Asli* were also regarded as Sakais, a derogatory term that negatively describes them as slaves or savages that were subjected to numerous slave raids by the Malays that occurred between the 18th and 19th centuries [21,25,26]. The *Orang Asli*’s socioeconomic and sociopolitical position began to diminish caused by the various developments and policies that were introduced during the British’s colonisation especially during the Emergency by preventing the communists from relying on the *Orang Asli* [27] followed by the present post-independent administration which gradually facilitated their current state of abject and marginalisation. It was also during the Emergency which observed the *Orang Asli*’s continuous diminishing autonomy with the introduction of the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 (Revised 1974) and the Department of Aborigines (now known as the Department of *Orang Asli* Development, JAKOA) [27,28]. Despite the Act was being designed to safeguard the well-being of the *Orang Asli*, it has instead appropriated the community’s right to self-determination which situates them in a vague position in terms of their development [29].

As a result, these events had led to several repercussions towards the community which is exemplified by their substantially high poverty rate of 89.4% [20], high drop-out rates [23,30], high vulnerability to various diseases [31] as well as issues concerning their loss of customary lands [23]. Although the government had conducted various initiatives and programmes that were designed and catered to improve the livelihood of the *Orang Asli*, however, several scholars have consistently argued that the community continue to live in a marginalised and helpless state of living in contrast to the mainstream population [21, 26, 33, 34, 35]. In fact, even the *Orang Asli* themselves admit their impoverished state of living [36]. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has also adversely affected the *Orang Asli*’s livelihood due to the recurring restrictions that were imposed by the government [20].

### 2.2 Past Studies

In the local context, the number of studies that are conducted based on the representation of the *Orang Asli* is still relatively limited in number. Much of the literature has revolved around the historical background, sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and more recently the contemporary issues surrounding the *Orang Asli* such as social issues concerning their land rights, health, and education. Thus far, studies which have examined the representation of the *Orang Asli* in the media have revealed that the community does not enjoy a fair and balanced portrayal by the mainstream media and is consistently represented in a stereotypical and

demeaning manner [4, 16, 17, 18, 19, 36, 37]. Despite the findings, both journalists and JAKOA themselves have strongly refuted the claim that the *Orang Asli* are represented in such a manner [36]. Moreover, the analysis of the thematic structures of the news reports has also revealed that social issues, corporate social responsibility, economy, and more recently politics, are one of the top issues that are commonly reported when it comes to the *Orang Asli* [4, 16, 18].

Different methodological approaches have been utilised to examine the representation of the *Orang Asli* whereby earlier studies opted for a content analysis approach [16, 34(37)] whereas newer studies utilised different discourse analytical approaches [4, 17, 18, 19, 32]. [18]'s study was the first study to adopt a CDA approach by using a combination of van Dijk's (1980) Theory of Semantic Macrostructures and van Dijk's (1998) Theory of Ideology in examining the macro and microstructures of the news reports from *The Star* in deconstructing the ideological representation of the *Orang Asli*. Subsequently, [19]'s study integrated both Halliday's (1994) system of transitivity and van Dijk's (1998) Theory of Ideology which revealed that the *Orang Asli* are constructed in a polarised construction of "Us versus Them" in which the government entities are projected positively as saviours of the community which simultaneously positioning the *Orang Asli* on the receiving end of things. Additionally, the most recent study by [32] which examined a corpus of 1700 news reports from *The Star* from a corpus-assisted CDA approach revealed that verbs were used to represent the government as assisting the *Orang Asli* whereas the *Orang Asli* were positioned as the receivers of the former's aid." Besides, the pronoun "their" presented the *Orang Asli* as a group of powerless people who lacked control over their possessions notably their customary lands.

### 2.3 Transitivity Analysis

In [38]'s Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the system of transitivity is classified under the ideational metafunction which serves to represent one's experience at the clausal level. Transitivity is understood as a means of representation that represents the ways participants and processes interact amongst one another [3,39]. In relation to CDA, transitivity is an important and beneficial tool in the analysis of representation [11,40]. Additionally, within a clause, it comprises three interrelated semantic functions namely the process, participant(s), and circumstance(s) [38,40]. It is through the processes whereby one would conceptualise and represent their experiences through the use of different types of verbs [38]. The processes can be divided into four major categories namely the material, mental, relational, and verbal processes [38].

Firstly, the material process is generally described as the process of "doing" and "happening" [38]. This process involves two main participants, the Actor, which is the entity that initiates an action, and the Goal, which is the

entity that is affected. Besides, the process may involve a third participant, which can be either the Recipient or Beneficiary [38].

Secondly, the mental process represents one's experience that is construed in terms of their consciousness and is encoded by verbs that denote cognition, emotion, perception, and desideration [38]. The process comprises two participants, the Sayer which is usually a human entity followed by the Phenomenon which encodes the thing that is thought, felt, perceived or desired [38].

Next, the relational process generally represents the notion of "being" that is realised by the verb "be" [38]. Generally, the relational process serves to characterise or identify between two participants and can be represented via three patterns which can be intensive, possessive, or circumstantial [38].

Lastly, the verbal process represents the act of "saying" that is performed by a speaker which is the "Sayer" followed by the "Verbiage" which denotes what has been said [38]. In certain situations, the act of saying can be addressed to a third participant known as the Receiver [38].

In general, the use of transitivity as an analytical tool in CDA is crucial in identifying the types of processes that are used to represent social actors [3] as SFL understands language as a source of choices among the available alternatives in meaning-making practices [38,42]. Moreover, the choices that are made and used represent one's ideological stance when producing the text [43,44]. Hence, transitivity is a useful tool in systematically revealing hidden ideologies [7], especially in the representation of the *Orang Asli* in the media.

### 2.4 van Dijk's Theory of Ideology

According to [45], ideology is a belief system that comprises a shared social cognition among members of a social group in which their cognition and discourse structures are organised in a polarised manner which is normally reproduced through discourse [46]. In this context, racist ideology is an example of an ideology that consists of a set of negative attitudes that are held towards ethnic minorities by the dominant group [9]. Furthermore, since racist ideology is a form of an ideological mental model that is typically biased, this serves as the basis for the construction of an ideologically motivated discourse structure that is structurally organised in a polarised manner known as the ideological square of "Us versus Them" [46,47]. [48] explains that the ideological square is a discursive strategy whereby the dominant in-group "Us" emphasises their positive actions or traits while demeaning "Them" as the weak out-group. Hence, these polarised structures are oftentimes reproduced via discourse by the media "to problematise, marginalise, exclude, or otherwise limit the human rights of ethnic out-groups" [49]. [49] points out that the media continues to be a significant source of racist ideologies. Therefore, the analysis of transitivity structures will be complemented by an ideology

analysis in revealing the discursive construction representation of the *Orang Asli* from an “Us versus Them” perspective.

### 3. Method

In this study, a total of six news reports obtained from both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* will be manually analysed according to [1]’s Three-Dimensional CDA Framework by integrating [38]’s transitivity analysis (micro level) and [48]’s Theory of Ideology (macro level) which is aimed at explicating the underlying ideologies that are embedded in the selected news reports. News reports that were published from 1st January 2022 – 30th June 2022 were purposively sampled from both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* respectively.

These news outlets were selected as they are ranked as one of the top five online news reports that possess a high brand trust score [50,51]. Moreover, *The Star* was selected as the choice of mainstream media due to its political affiliations with the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) which is one of the component parties of the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition [40,52]. Next, *Malaysiakini* was selected due to its reputation as an esteemed alternative news outlet that consistently advocates for its independent and unbiased reporting practices [53,54] which is free from any political affiliations [55,56]. Upon the completion of the analysis, the frequencies of transitivity processes obtained from the analysis will be tabulated and compared between both news outlets to determine which process is favoured in representing the *Orang Asli*. An ideology analysis will then be undertaken to illustrate the ideological construction of the *Orang Asli*.

Table 1. Analytical Procedure of the News Reports

Steps	Method of Analysis	Structures of Analysis
1	Transitivity Analysis (Micro Level)	Material Process
		Mental Process
		Relational Process
		Verbal Process
2	Ideology Analysis (Macro Level)	Polarised construction of “Us versus Them”.

Table 2. News Report Codes and Headlines

<i>The Star</i>		<i>Malaysiakini</i>	
Code	Headline	Code	Headline
TS1	Flood-affected <i>Orang Asli</i> included in aid distribution	MK1	Over 1,000 <i>Orang Asli</i> stranded by floods in Mersing since Sunday
TS2	Floods: Group raises RM20,000 for <i>Orang Asli</i>	MK2	Low vaccine uptake spurs group to raise awareness among <i>Orang Asli</i>
TS3	Jako: Over 1,000 <i>Orang Asli</i> stranded by floods in Mersing since Sunday (Jan 2)	MK3	Education Blueprint to transform <i>Orang Asli</i> schooling
TS4	Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 to ensure <i>Orang Asli</i> education transformation	MK4	Armed forces veterans, <i>Orang Asli</i> among 800 new wildlife rangers
TS5	<i>Orang Asli</i> woman gives birth to twins on board water ambulance	MK5	Johor <i>Orang Asli</i> reminds politicians to not forget them after winning polls
TS6	PM: Govt aims to tackle <i>Orang Asli</i> school dropout rate	MK6	100 <i>Orang Asli</i> gather at PM’s office, TNB to address dam fears

### 4.0 Findings

The results of the analysis show that *Malaysiakini* recorded a higher total frequency in representing the *Orang Asli* as compared to *The Star*. It is also revealed that *Malaysiakini* holds the highest frequency for all four transitivity

processes. Next, the results also show that *The Star* recorded a higher total frequency in representing the authorities as compared to *Malaysiakini*. The study found that the authoritative entities comprised political figures, government agencies, and entrepreneurs. The frequency of each transitivity process and the total frequency for both

*Orang Asli* and the authorities are presented in Tables 3 and 4 respectively.

Table 3. Frequency of Transitivity Processes (*Orang Asli*)

News Outlet Processes	<i>The Star</i>		<i>Malaysiakini</i>	
	Material Process	2	13.3 %	13
Mental Process	0	0 %	9	100 %
Relational Process	15	50 %	15	50 %
Verbal Process	0	0 %	17	100 %
Total	17	23.9 %	54	76.1 %

Table 4. Frequency of Transitivity Processes (Authorities)

News Outlet Processes	<i>The Star</i>		<i>Malaysiakini</i>	
	Material Process	38	53.5 %	33
Mental Process	7	63.6 %	4	36.4 %
Relational Process	17	58.6 %	12	41.4 %
Verbal Process	59	59 %	41	41 %
Total	121	57.3 %	90	42.7 %

#### 4.1 Material Process

Table 3 and 4 shows that the Material Process is primarily used by both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* to depict the authoritative entities as Actors whereas *Malaysiakini* was

more inclined to position the *Orang Asli* as Actors. The analysis of Material Process is crucial to determine who is positioned as the Actor in performing an action.

##### 4.1.1 Positioning the *Orang Asli* as Actors

Table 5. Material Process representing the *Orang Asli*

Extract	Actor	Material Process	Goal
1 (MK2)	The first two tribal leaders	came and accepted	(the gifts).
2 (MK6)	One hundred <i>Orang Asli</i> villagers from Kelantan, [...]	gathered	in Putrajaya to protest the construction of an RM5 billion hydroelectric power plant [...].
3 (MK4)	<i>Orang Asli</i> expertise made	detecting	cases more effective in intrusion, poaching, illegal logging, and snare clearance operations.

Based on the extracts presented in Table 5, the *Orang Asli* are positioned as Actors that are responsible for their actions. Extract 1 shows that the *Orang Asli* are placed in the Actor position as the receivers of aid which emphasises the notion that the community are still reliant on external assistance. Next, Extract 2 constructs the *Orang Asli* as a group of people who have gathered to protest the construction of the Nenggiri hydroelectric power plant which shows that the people need to safeguard their customary lands. This implies their vulnerability towards

the risks of losing their customary lands that necessitate the *Orang Asli* to bring forth their issues to the authorities attention. In contrast, Extract 3 positively presents the *Orang Asli* by acknowledging their capability as wildlife rangers due to their knowledge and familiarity with the natural environment. In general, it can be inferred that the Material Process constructs the *Orang Asli* as a group of people who are still in need of assistance in protecting their livelihood.

#### 4.1.2 Positioning the Authorities as Actors

Table 6. Material Processes representing the Authorities

Extract 1 (TS1)	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Recipient
	We [The state government]	are presently providing	aid	to about 200 <i>Orang Asli</i> .
Extract 2 (TS2)	Actor	Material Process	Goal	Beneficiary
	A group of good Samaritans	raised	over RM 20,000 in aid	for an <i>Orang Asli</i> village.
Extract 3 (MK2)	Actor	Material Process	Goal	
	The Malaysian Health Diplomacy Society is seeking to	raise	awareness on Covid-19 vaccination.	

Table 6 illustrates that the authoritative entities from all three extracts namely the government, the general public, and non-governmental organisations (NGO) are constructed as Actors with authoritative roles which encodes them as entities that possess the power and capability to provide aid to the *Orang Asli* as well as reinforcing their roles as caretakers who are responsible in developing and ensuring the *Orang Asli*'s well-being. This can be observed in both Extract 1 and 2 whereby the *Orang Asli* are positioned as Recipients and Beneficiaries which highlights their

powerless role as a community that is dependent on various forms of aid.

#### 4.2 Mental Process

Based on Table 3, only *Malaysiakini* represented the Mental Processes of the *Orang Asli* which was notably absent from *The Star*. As for the authorities, *The Star* represented the Mental Processes of the authorities more frequently as compared to *Malaysiakini*. The Mental Processes of the *Orang Asli* are presented in Table 7.

##### 4.2.1 Positioning the Orang Asli as Sensers

Table 7. Mental Processes representing the *Orang Asli*

Extract 1 (MK2)	Senser	Mental Process - Cognition	Phenomenon
	They [the <i>Orang Asli</i> ] have more	trust	in their <i>Tok Batin</i> – compared to healthcare workers.
Extract 2 (MK5)	Senser	Mental Process - Desiderative	Phenomenon
	His [Ayu, 52, the <i>Tok Batin</i> ] community merely	wanted	their rights, especially customary land rights, to be preserved.
Extract 3 (MK6)	Senser	Mental Process - Emotion	Phenomenon
	One hundred <i>Orang Asli</i> villagers from Kelantan, who	fear	losing their ancestral land.

Table 7 shows the three different types of Mental Processes that are used to represent the *Orang Asli* as Sensers who can think, desire, and feel. Extract 1 shows that the *Orang Asli* community places full trust in the *Tok Batin* as their figurative leader in deciding what is best for the people. Next, Extract 2 illustrates the *Orang Asli*'s desires who wish to have their requests fulfilled by the authorities to

ensure that their access to their rights as indigenous peoples are protected. The *Orang Asli*'s emotions were also reflected in Extract 3 whereby the people are in fear and doubt about being displaced from their customary lands. Hence, it can be observed that the Mental Processes of the *Orang Asli* convey their inner thoughts, experiences, and desires instead of exerting any forms of imperative action.

##### 4.2.2 Positioning the Authorities as Sensers

Table 8. Mental Processes representing the Authorities

Extract 1 (MK1)	Senser	Mental Process - Emotion	Phenomenon
	We [Endau assemblyman Alwiyah Talib] are	thankful	that we managed to dispatch basic necessities to them (villagers) before the flood disaster struck.
Extract 2 (TS6)	Senser	Mental Process - Desiderative	Phenomenon

	The government	does not want	anyone’s children, neither the <i>Orang Asli</i> nor other ethnicities, to be left behind in terms of education.
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Table 8 illustrates the mental processes of thinking and desire that are used to represent the authoritative entities. Extract 1 shows that Alwiyah Talib as a political figure expresses her gratitude that both she and her team were able to aid the *Orang Asli* during the floods whereas Extract 2 expresses the government’s strong commitment to ensuring that every *Orang Asli* child has proper access to education. In general, the authorities are depicted as being caring and

mindful of the needs of the *Orang Asli* which is highlighted by the Phenomenon of the authorities as Sensors.

### 4.3 Relational Process

Referring to Table 9, both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* have provided a balanced representation of the *Orang Asli* under the Relational Process.

#### 4.3.1 Positioning the Orang Asli as Carriers, Tokens or Possessors

Table 9. Relational Processes representing the *Orang Asli*

<b>Extract 1</b> (MK2)	<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Relational Process</b>	<b>Attribute</b>
	Getting them to come out for the booster dose would	be	quite a challenge.
<b>Extract 2</b> (TS6)	<b>Token</b>	<b>Relational Process</b>	<b>Value</b>
	Going to secondary school	is	a big problem.
<b>Extract 3</b> (MK5)	<b>Possessor</b>	<b>Relational Process</b>	<b>Possessed</b>
	We	don’t have	the means to buy.

According to Table 9, the Relational Process serves to either attribute or identify the *Orang Asli* by either positioning them as the Carrier, Token, or Possessor in relation to their attributes, qualities or possession. Extract 1 portrays the *Orang Asli* in an attributive relationship which constructs the *Orang Asli* as a group of people who are reluctant to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Next, Extract 2 portrays the issue of *Orang Asli* students attending

secondary school by equating it as a major issue that is affecting the community. Subsequently, Extract 3 shows that the *Orang Asli* lacks the ability to purchase sewing and craft-making equipment which is hindered by their financial constraints. These three extracts show that *Orang Asli* is categorised as a group of people by accentuating the notion that they constantly require the guidance and assistance of the authorities.

#### 4.3.2 Positioning the Authorities as Carriers, Tokens or Possessors

Table 10. Relational Processes representing the Authorities

<b>Extract 1</b> (TS4)	<b>Carrier</b>	<b>Relational Process</b>	<b>Attribute</b>
	The Education Ministry	is	committed.
<b>Extract 2</b> (TS6)	<b>Token</b>	<b>Relational Process</b>	<b>Value</b>
	Education for the <i>Orang Asli</i> community	is	one of the government’s main focuses.
<b>Extract 3</b> (MK2)	<b>Possessor</b>	<b>Relational Process</b>	<b>Possessed</b>
	We	had	essentials such as rice, milk powder, sugar, oil, and toys for the kids.

In Table 10, the same Relational Process patterns are used to attribute and identify the authorities. Extract 1 shows that the Ministry of Education is attributed as being devoted to resolving the issues that are faced by the *Orang Asli* towards receiving a proper education. Extract 2 also shows that the government equates the *Orang Asli*’s education issues as one of their main agendas. Extract 3 then illustrates that the Malaysian Health Diplomacy Society have the resources in providing essential items to the *Orang Asli*. Similarly to that of the *Orang Asli*, the Relational

Process is instead used to emphasise the positive attributes and qualities of the authorities.

### 4.4 Verbal Process

It can be observed from Table 11 that the voices of the *Orang Asli* were not reported whereas *Malaysiakini* did provide an opportunity for the community to voice out their opinions and concerns. Moreover, a stark contrast is revealed whereby the authorities were quoted more frequently by *The Star* as compared to *Malaysiakini*.

#### 4.4.1 Positioning the Orang Asli as Sayers

Table 11. Verbal Processes representing the *Orang Asli*

Extract 1 (MK5)	Verbiage	Sayer	Verbal Process	Receiver
	“Whoever is elected, don’t forget us <i>Orang Asli</i> here.”	This is what Ayu Enn, an <i>Orang Asli</i> village chief, wanted to	convey	to the new Johor state administration.
Extract 2 (MK5)	Sayer	Verbal Process	Verbiage	
	Ayu, 52, the <i>Tok Batin</i> of the <i>Orang Asli</i> village of Kampung Sentosa, Lenga, Pagoh,	said	his community merely wanted their rights, especially customary land rights, to be preserved.	

Table 11 presents examples of the Verbal Process that was used to report the Verbiages of the *Orang Asli* as Sayers in conveying their viewpoints. In Extract 1, the *Tok Batin* who serves as the figurative leader of the *Orang Asli* is positioned as the Sayer by conveying a reminder to the upcoming new state government to ensure that the *Orang Asli* will not be sidelined in any development policies or programmes that will be catered for the people of Johor. Next, Extract 2 also shows that the *Tok Batin* also voiced

out his community’s requests in obtaining their land rights to secure their customary lands. Despite being granted the opportunity to speak, the Verbiages from both extracts suggest that the *Tok Batin*’s role is merely confined as an authoritative figure within his or her *Orang Asli* community that serves to convey their people’s concerns to the authorities. Subsequently, the Verbal Processes of the *Orang Asli* once again reinforce the idea that they are ever dependent on the authorities to tackle their issues.

#### 4.4.2 Positioning the Authorities as Sayers

Table 12. Verbal Processes representing the Authorities

Extract 1 (TS4)	Sayer	Verbal Process	Verbiage	
	Deputy Education Minister 1, Senator Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon	said	among the initiatives included K9 to K11 Comprehensive Special Model Schools.	
Extract 2 (MK2)	Verbiage	Sayer	Verbal Process	Receiver
	“While they were participating, we taught them about the importance of vaccinations, and provided some essentials that are important to them – such as rice, sugar, oil – and that actually kind of encouraged them to take the vaccines,”	He (Medical officer Dr Jeshua Nevaraj)	told	<i>Malaysiakini</i> .

Table 12 shows the examples of Verbal Process that was used to report the Verbiages of the authorities as Sayers. In Extract 1, Senator Datuk Dr Mah Hang Soon was quoted as the Deputy Education Minister I in providing details about the ministry’s plans to improve the *Orang Asli*’s education issues as stipulated under the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025). Next, in Extract 2, Dr Jeshua Nevaraj was quoted as a medical officer who highlighted the various initiatives that were successful in encouraging the community to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Hence, both extract signifies the powerful role of the authorities as Sayers who are quoted for their credibility as political figures and experts as well as the Verbiages that stresses the positive acts of these entities.

frequency as compared to the latter. The transitivity patterns of the authorities affirm the findings conducted in previous studies which concluded that the actions and voices of entities with authoritarian roles such as the government and political figures were much more prominent, especially for *The Star* [17, 18, 19].

### 5. Discussion

Based on the findings from the analysis of the transitivity structures, a stark contrast can be observed in the representation of the *Orang Asli* between both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini*. The analysis also revealed that the authorities were represented much more frequently by both *The Star* and *Malaysiakini* despite the former recording a higher total

In terms of representing the *Orang Asli*, the Material Process shows that *Malaysiakini* does position the *Orang Asli* as Actors however, the Goal indicates that the community consistently requires the assistance of the authorities in fulfilling their needs instead of being described as a group of people that are capable of governing themselves which negatively presents them. Besides, the prominent representation of the authorities as Actors by both news outlets while positioning the *Orang Asli* as Recipients or Beneficiaries is consistent with the findings of [16] and [17] whereby they highlight that the community are always on the receiving end of various aids and initiatives. [57] states that entities that are positioned as Actors are considered the most powerful participants that are capable of bringing change to its Recipients or Beneficiaries who are deemed as passive participants,



especially in the case of the *Orang Asli*.

Next, it is also interesting to note that the *Orang Asli*'s sheer absence from the Verbal Process shows that *The Star* does not provide any opportunity for the community to voice out their opinions and concerns on matters that involve the community is consistent with [18] study on *The Star* which found that the voices of the *Orang Asli* were largely ignored. Instead, the floor is given to the authoritarian entities such as the Prime Minister, the Deputy Education Minister 1, and JAKOA officers to speak on behalf of the *Orang Asli* such as reporting the community's state of affairs which correlates with [8] statement whereby the aim of examining the Verbal Process is to identify which Sayer holds the floor while having their Verbiages being reported. Furthermore, their Verbiages are also important in describing and explicating their programmes and policies that are undertaken to improve the *Orang Asli*'s livelihood. In certain instances, these entities are also quoted since they are perceived to be credible and trustable sources of information. However, it is commendable that *Malaysiakini* did offer an opportunity for the *Orang Asli* to be Sayers but their Verbiages revealed that the people were merely expressing their predicaments while requesting the authorities to resolve their issues, especially those concerning their customary land rights which have been a longstanding issue that has been affecting the *Orang Asli* [4,58] due to lack of proper legislation which especially acknowledges the recognition of their customary lands [59].

On a lighter note, the attributive and identifying patterns of the Relational Process served to describe and classify the *Orang Asli* in terms of their attitudes and state of living since [8] mentioned that the purpose of the Relational Process is to identify what Attributes are assigned to its Carriers. Hence, the *Orang Asli* are depicted as a group of traditional-minded and underprivileged communities which indicates their incompetence in fending for themselves. Similarly, the identifying pattern equates the *Orang Asli* with their obstacles in obtaining proper education which suggests their subpar academic performance to the mainstream population [60]. On the contrary, the Relational Processes characterise the authorities as being caring and responsible thus presenting them in the positive limelight which corresponds with [15]'s study which found that the authorities were constructed as entities that care for the indigenous communities.

Lastly, similar to the Verbal Process, the Mental Processes of the *Orang Asli* were not represented in *The Star* whereas *Malaysiakini* did provide the space for the community to express their inner thoughts in terms of their emotions, wants, and opinions. As for the authorities, they expressed their concerns and wishes held towards the community which emphasises their commitment towards the *Orang Asli*'s welfare. Nevertheless, [57] explains that Sensors are relatively powerless participants due to their limited ability in responding to external stimuli.

From an ideological perspective, the transitivity patterns reveal the significant ideological polarisation of "Us versus Them" whereby the positive actions and qualities of the authorities are emphasised while stressing the negative actions and qualities of the *Orang Asli* which correlates with [19]. Therefore, the biased ideological structure as presented by the media further accentuates the public's perception of the government as being tolerant and caring towards the *Orang Asli* which concomitantly highlights the community's weaknesses and deprivation. Not only that,

the polarised construction also suggests the paternalistic attitude of the government in which [15] state that discourse reflecting care by the government implies paternalism. The positive self-representation of the authorities also signifies the numerous opportunities provided to them that result in the domination of their voices [61] leaving limited to no room for the *Orang Asli* to speak. In essence, the ideological construction of the *Orang Asli* as the significant "Other" is reinforced by the media in the minds of its readers.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

A comparison between the representational patterns between both mainstream (*The Star*) and alternative (*Malaysiakini*) media shows that *The Star*'s representational patterns remains unchanged whereas this study was able to elucidate on how the *Orang Asli* were represented by *Malaysiakini*. Being the country's top and most trusted choice of alternative media, *Malaysiakini* has indeed upheld to its goals of being an all-encompassing news outlet as illustrated by the frequency of transitivity processes. While this is the case, an in-depth analysis of the transitivity structures, however, does reveal that the *Orang Asli* are still projected in a marginalised and powerless manner although there were instances which portrayed the community neutrally and positively. Nevertheless, this still positions them in an inferior position against the authorities. Since both news outlets reaches out to a large audience it serves as a primary platform for Malaysians to learn more about the *Orang Asli* [19,36]. Likewise, this also allows the media to continuously perpetuate the stereotypical characteristics of the *Orang Asli* to the masses while simultaneously reinforcing the existing ideologies that are held towards the community. Henceforth, the integration of both transitivity and ideology analysis are crucial in revealing the journalistic practices of both news outlets as well as their underlying ideologies when representing the *Orang Asli*.

Thus, the stereotypical perception of the *Orang Asli* can be mitigated by increasing their participation in the news reports by allowing them to speak for themselves on pressing issues that are of utmost concern to the community whereas the transcendental capability of the media should be utilised to empower the positive aspects of the community. To conclude, the paucity of studies concerning the *Orang Asli*'s representation in the media from a linguistic perspective needs to be expanded by examining news reports from emerging or other news outlets by adopting other discourse analysis, CDA or multimodal approaches which can provide a more detailed and diversified understanding on how they are being represented by different news outlets.

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