

# **Literariness and Ideology in Malaysian Newspaper Advertisements in English: Some Case Studies**

*Devan Vengadasalam Rajaram*

## **Abstract**

This study identifies elements of literariness and ideology that are used in advertisements found in two Malaysian newspapers – *The New Straits Times* and *The Star*. It examines how ideologies are transmitted in the messages of the advertisers. To achieve this purpose, this study focuses on how elements of literariness are used as the medium of transfer of ideology in the process of transmitting the advertiser's message. Criteria that are analyzed include an interaction of different levels leading to semantic density, polysemy, re-registration, discourse patterning, displaced interaction and medium dependence. The framework used in this study is Ronald Carter's criteria of literariness (1997).

The findings indicate that advertisers deploy elements of literariness to encode ideologies within the messages that they transmit in the advertisements. A meticulous critical analysis reveals that among the criteria of literariness, semantic density, polysemy, re-registration and discourse patterning are found to be active agents while displaced interaction and medium dependence are more subdued in the encoding of ideology. ESL learners should be exposed to such advertisements to increase their critical language awareness of literary language and ideology. It would make them more discerning in approaching texts and appreciative of literature. Curriculum planners could also include advertisements as a resource for investigating the practical contexts of literary language and ideology.

## **Background To The Study**

Globalization has increased the influx of information, ideologies and lifestyles into societies, one avenue being advertising. "Advertising is the most widespread form of public communication in late modern societies" (Richards, MacRury and Botterill 2000:14). Newspapers have become one of the tools of communication for advertisers not only to announce their products, services or facilities, but to influence the reader to buy into the ideas, values and innovative lifestyles that

the advertiser's message promotes, often via elements of literary language. "The newspaper is an adult medium dealing with reality and should be used to bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world" (Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat, D-G of Education, NST, June 19, 2003). ESL learners are susceptible to the influence of advertisers and they must be informed of such practices. The connection between language and ideology is explored from an angle of literariness to show how such influences may prevail.

The language in an advertisement is able to propagate ideologies that exert some form of control over the reader of the message. It is an important component of the advertisement and it is the medium of communication. Danuta Reah says that "everything written in a newspaper has to be transmitted through the medium of language" (1998: 55), while Asmah bt. Hj. Omar states that "language is the most basic element in advertising" (1984: 3). Fowler finds that language crystallizes and stabilizes ideas (1986: 18) and along with Kress, states that "form signifies content" (1979: 185). These statements, along with that of McCarthy and Carter that "language is a site in which beliefs, values and points of view are produced, encoded and contested" (1994: 155), encourage investigation into how advertisers depend on creative use of language to transmit their message with underlying beliefs and worldviews. Form and content in advertisements become equally important to influence the reader. Much of the form of this creative use of language in advertisements consists of literary devices, while the message and ideology that is decipherable make up the content. This form and content can be measured in terms of their literariness.

To illustrate, we can refer to Carter's analysis of a text where he claims that literariness is linked to ideology, and he argues that "a text can be read as displaying dense semantic patterning at the intersection of language, society and ideology" (1997: 136). Carter uses a Malaysian newspaper article entitled "Malacca belles greet Dr.M" to show different linguistic levels that interact to produce a semantic density. Semantic density is one salient criterion of literariness and to cite an example in the article, Carter shows how the use of "belles" and "lasses" for feminine representations, instead of the conventional "girls" or "women" is attributed to the ideology of colonization that may be deciphered from the text. This text reports former Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir's visit to a Portuguese cultural center. Carter's illustration supports Fairclough's view of discourse where "language is invested by ideology" (1995:73), because there is an attempt to elicit ideology from the given text. So, learners must be aware of the operation of ideology in texts in order to come to a text critically and to question its claims before reaching an agreement as critical reading involves "challenging the ideological assumptions and the propositional knowledge of texts" (Wallace in Fairclough 1992: 61). Learners must also be able to construct informed opinions about a message before passing judgement. As Fowler says,



though language creates knowledge, aids thought and simplifies perception, this gift has two drawbacks : the categories encoded in language may become fossilized and unconscious; and they may be the products and the tools of a repressive and inequitable society. The task of linguistic criticism is to make as many users as possible aware of, and resistant to, these conditions. (1986: 34)

The linguistic criticism Fowler mentions above includes this present study that intends to sensitize language learners to be “aware of” and “resistant to” ideologically infested language. This study is pertinent to the sensitization as it takes off from the point where Carter attempts to show the link between literariness and ideology. Although McCarthy and Carter state that the “relationship between language and ideology is not a transparent one” (1994: 156), this study has attempted to uncover this link through analysis and show that ideology can be deciphered from advertising texts, based on a framework of literariness.

## **Definition of Terms**

Some pertinent terms are defined.

### ***Literariness***

Carter defines literariness as literary language use (1997:139). In this context, literary language or literature can be defined as “creative use of language” (Fowler 1986:13). Paul Sawyer defines literariness as “what decides whether a text is literary or not” (in Birch 1989:111). Literariness, according to the Russian Formalists, “inheres in the degrees to which language use departs or deviates from expected configurations and normal patterns of language and thus defamiliarizes the reader” (Carter 1997:124). By using the term “defamiliarize” they mean that language is used to achieve literariness when it gets the reader to look at things in a new way that at times upsets accepted conventions of understanding and outlook. In the same vein, David S. Miall and Don Kuiken contend that “literariness is constituted when stylistic or narrative variations strikingly defamiliarize conventionally understood referents and prompt reinterpretive transformations of a conventional concept or feeling” (1999). They basically reiterate what the Formalists have said about rejuvenated ways of perception and interpretation of known entities. The above definitions will be based upon throughout the paper.

### ***Advertising text***

This refers to “any media artifact designed to persuade consumers, and generated, composed, recorded and analyzed by sponsored agents and /or researchers” (Stern 1996, cited in Suharti 2000: 4). This would be adequate for this study.

### ***Ideology***

Ideology is “simply the system of beliefs, values, and categories by reference to which a person or a society comprehends the world” (Fowler 1986:130). This personal outlook or understanding of the world is important in shaping one’s language. We can see such systems in the advertising texts analyzed. Simpson defines ideologies as “the value systems and sets of beliefs which reside in texts” (1993:5). Fowler and Kress put it plainly that “ideologies are systems of ideas” (1979). An ideology follows certain patterns and language is the medium that conveys this ideology.

### ***Text***

A text is “any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole” (Halliday and Hasan 1976:1). There must be unity in its construction. It must be cohesive and remain united in its meaning. It must also be coherent and clear for the reader to understand. Leech and Short say that a text is also “linguistic communication (either spoken or written) seen simply as a message coded in its auditory or visual medium” (cited in Mills 1997:4). They emphasize the message aspect and it also implies that this message must be cohesive and coherent.

### **Objectives Of This Study**

This study uncovers how elements of literariness are used to decipher hidden ideological positions of advertisers in advertising texts that influence the reader and to make buyers out of them. This research chooses to focus on *The New Straits Times* and *The Star* because these newspapers are accessible to a broad-based section of Malaysian society.

## Scope Of This Study

The scope of research in this study is advertising language used in newspapers. The advertisements featured exhibit language that has a preponderance of literary elements. Only advertisements with written texts will be considered. The analysis of these advertisements will be used to show why it is important for readers to be discerning and analytical in their approach towards texts. The domain of this research is within advertisements in *The New Straits Times* and *The Star*, as these newspapers are the oldest and the most established English language newspapers in the country. They also enjoy circulation as the leading English language media (AC Nielsen Media Index Q2/03).

## General Statement Of The Problem

Studies conducted on advertising language have given inadequate attention to the aspect of literary language in advertising language texts that carries messages embedded with ideology. Semiotic analyses by Williamson (1978) and Hodge and Kress (1988) have established relationships between pictorial and written messages in advertisements, and the underlying ideology, but they have not focused on the aspect of literariness of the language used. Tanaka (1999) analyses the language aspect and the ideology in advertisements but she does not delve into the literariness of the advertisements analyzed. It is pertinent to focus on the use of creative language that is the text's literariness, because there is a whole range of references to ideology that are available within it. Even though critical discourse analyses (CDA) of texts by Fairclough (1992) have focused on ideology, their main thrust is on political elements, not the literariness of the texts. The relationship between form and content as expounded by Fowler (1986) and the multifunctionality of texts as being ideational, interpersonal and textual by Halliday (1971) can be adequately accounted for in advertising texts by deploying Carter's framework for literariness, to study not only the quality of the language used but also the underlying ideologies that are used to manipulate the reader. The reader must be informed of the various ideologies that are being imposed upon him. This study intended to find out

- i) which criteria of literariness appear most frequently in the language of advertising texts,
- ii) what some of the more pertinent ideologies conveyed by these advertising texts are, and
- iii) to what extent the criteria of literariness are used as a medium to encode such ideologies in newspaper advertising texts. These were the research questions (RQs) for this study.



## Rationale of Study

Ronald Carter in *Investigating English Discourse* (1997) proposes criteria of literariness that may be used to analyze texts to see if they are more or less literary and if they have underlying ideologies. This study shows that advertisements in *The New Straits Times* and *The Star* can be used in ESL contexts as resources of language to impart literary terminology. In this regard, Malaysian curriculum planners have not shifted from their traditional mindsets in the context of the teaching of literature. To a large extent, they do not incorporate the view of literature as social discourse. This is because although the syllabus model, KPM 2000, emphasizes the interpersonal, as much as it does the aesthetic and informational learning outcomes, planners have constructed the literature component structurally. The inter-personal learning outcome is basically communicative in nature. Since advertising texts play an important part in communicating ideas, it is proposed that they can also be used to impart knowledge of literary terminology and hidden messages not only to make students more aware of literary terminology in advertising texts, but to also empower them with knowledge of ideology and to make them more critical and discerning in their readings of texts.

## Theoretical Framework and Methodology of Study

Ronald Carter's framework for literariness (1997) is appropriate for this study due to a number of reasons. First, it allows an analysis of literary language in non-literary texts. Second, this approach has been used on advertising texts from travel brochures and newspaper articles in a Malaysian context (Carter 1997:130-132). Third, this approach will be able to focus on the language and ideology of the texts closely as the pictorial and graphic elements are not considered. Fourth, this approach allows a diverse base of ideologies to be made known to ESL learners. It will enable learners to appreciate the creativity of the advertisers and examine how they sell more than just products in the way they use language: they sell values, ideas and lifestyles. The conceptual framework is outlined in Figure 1 to illustrate the procedures involved for this study. The theoretical framework is then presented in Figure 2. The theoretical framework sets out to relate the connections between the criteria and the levels of analysis. It shows how the criteria are used at different levels to investigate literariness and the encoded ideology within the chosen advertising texts. These levels are analyzed simultaneously due to the unique nature of the advertisements chosen, where not all levels appear in all advertisements. In the framework, all the levels are separated to classify the processes involved. However, during the analysis, all the levels work together, so they are analyzed simultaneously. There is an intertwining of levels that is

problematic to demarcate, so the analysis becomes discursive and total in nature. The data collection procedures include text selection, text labeling, identification and explanation of the criteria of literariness and ideology, and data analysis. Samples of these analyses are given in the next section. The qualitative method of textual analysis is used with the framework for literariness and ideology proposed by Carter (1997). Elements of literariness and ideological positioning are analyzed accordingly with ensuing explanation and elaboration.

### Conceptual Framework

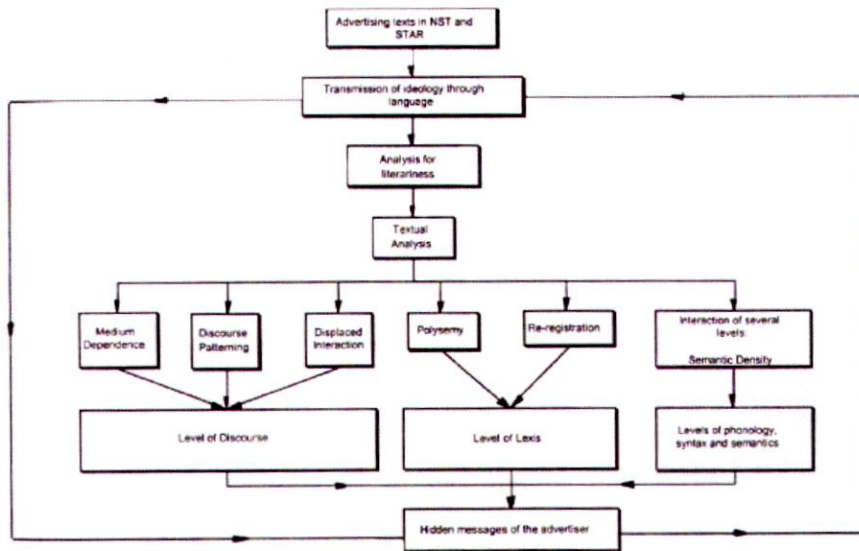


Figure 1

## Theoretical Framework

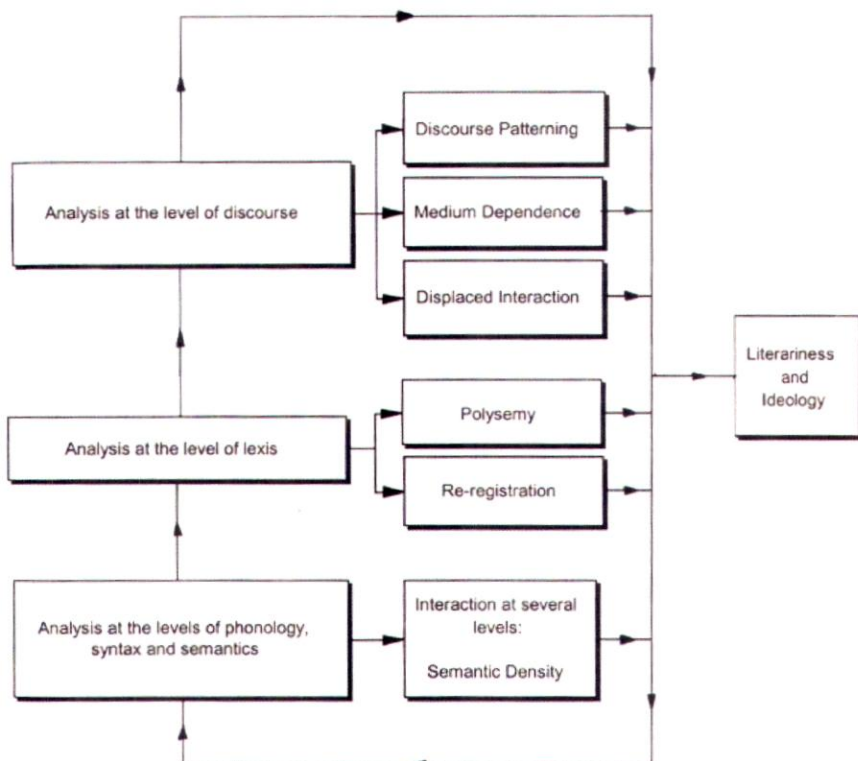


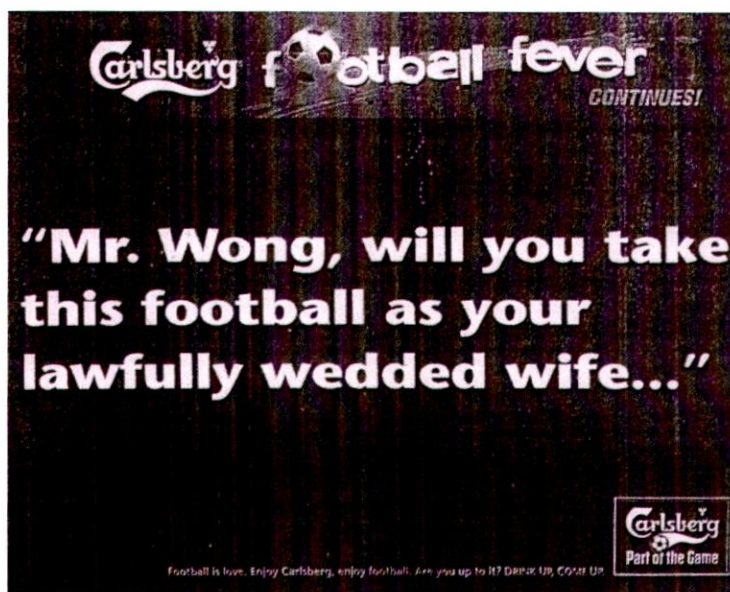
Figure 2



## Samples Of Analyses

The following texts are analyzed according to Carter's framework for literariness and ideology. We see how elements of literariness and ideology intertwine in advertising texts to put forward their messages to the reader. The analyses also discuss the advertisers' intentions in presenting their advertisements. The advertisements are given in Texts A, B, C and D.

### *Text A (Carlsberg)*



This is an interesting advertisement that intends to inject new meaning to a sports equipment – the football. The football is normally associated with the game of football, its players, the field, the supporters and the scores. The headline of the text is in inverted commas and the reader can see that it is a spoken discourse which deviates from the conventional Christian marriage vow where “football” has replaced the lexical item of “woman”, “lady”, “girl” or even the name of the wife-to-be e.g. Rose, Angela, Mary, etc.

If “football” has been used to displace a female wedded partner to Mr. Wong, then the advertiser has chosen to do so for some good reasons. This is an advertisement for Carlsberg beer. As some football supporters consume beer

while enjoying a football game and, perhaps, show neglect for conjugal duties, the advertiser portrays the football symbolically to allude to the whole engagement of attending a game, consuming beer and enjoying the game, perhaps even at the cost of enraging the real "lawfully wedded wife", to still say that the above action is alright. The advertiser's intention to portray the football in such a manner infuses an interaction at the syntactic level that contributes to the semantic density of the text, while bringing to the reader an idea or message that it is alright to put "game before wife". This is an ideology that stems from male chauvinism at the very least and only a discerning reader would be prepared to digest this message accordingly. The football is elevated. The syntactical position of "football" supercedes "wife" and it comes after "Mr.Wong". This implies an intrusion into the relationship of husband and wife. This metaphorical intrusion can be taken in jest by the reader but there are several levels of interaction why football has been placed in this position and not, perhaps, beer, since this is an advertisement for beer.

First, sports is almost totally accepted in even the most conservative of societies. It cuts across race, culture and religion. The same cannot be said about Carlsberg beer, more so in the context of a nation that enjoys a Muslim majority. The advertiser attempts to reach out to a larger cross-section of readership by cleverly leaving out "beer" in the whole text. Perhaps the advertiser's brand has become so synonymous to beer that he does not need to explicitly say "beer" but the researcher feels that there are other reasons for the advertiser's doing so. The first, being a demographic one, is already mentioned above. Second, the interaction that is portrayed is between a certain Mr.Wong who is engrossed with his game and probably also with his beer, so much so that someone else has deemed it fit to playfully ask him if he wants to marry a football. The relationship between a man and his game – football, in this context - is deemed socially and politically correct, although the underlying message of Mr.Wong being an avid beer drinker is totally kept out of the text.

Third, football emits positive connotations. A person who is involved with sports, or specifically football, is considered healthy, athletic, vigorous, fit and skillful. The advertiser's act of placing football as the focus of the text draws connotations that are acceptable. The ideology that it connects with is a respectable one although the picture of "the lawfully wedded wife", probably with a frying pan in her hand waiting for the husband who is forever out for a football game or one who sits up late waiting for her husband who never misses a live telecast early in the morning, may come to mind. It is as though the advertiser opts for the lesser evil – football instead of beer drinking when, in actual fact, he attempts to equate the two. Fourth, in the one line body copy, the discerning reader would be able to uncover how football is related to the text. The advertiser claims that *Football is love*. This metaphor qualifies the football to be a substitute for a wife because for a man, a wife is generally a manifestation of love and affection. So, the advertiser



has placed the football on one end of an equation that has love in the center, and wife, on the other. The ideology behind this claim is one founded on passion, interest and a motivation to be *part of the game*, as the Carlsberg slogan says. This is another angle of interaction at the syntactic level that the advertiser uses to realign the focus of the advertisement from beer to football. Part of the body copy and the slogan reveal the advertiser's request – *Enjoy Carlsberg, enjoy football* and *Drink Up, Come Up*. The repetitive “enjoy” and “up” interact at the levels of phonology and syntax to increase the semantic density of the advertisement. The advertiser attempts to equate the pleasure of drinking beer and watching or playing football that will elevate the status of the drinker by going “up”. This is also implied in the last section of the body copy – *Are you up to it?* This question almost demands a “yes” for an answer as the question is immediately followed by a strong request to *Drink Up and Come Up*. “Up” is the “high(er)” plane that beer drinkers would normally arrive at, regardless whether the higher plane is accompanied with idle rhetoric, boisterous chatter or a wife who is at her wit's end with excuse after excuse.

This advertisement employs mainly one criterion of literariness, which is an interaction at different levels leading to semantic density, with one encounter with polysemy, but it has layers of ideology embedded within it. The relationships between men and women are perpetuated in this advertisement and one ideology being portrayed is that men are given the opportunity to “have their cake and eat it, too” in the sense that they enjoy their game of football, drink beer, be merry and still remain devoted to their wives. Football and beer are made to look not as distracters, and the advertiser has carefully constructed a valid reason for people to drink Carlsberg beer by establishing a link between football, love and marriage: if you love your game and your drink, as much as you do your wife, you're alright. Taking the football “as his lawfully wedded wife” could also be interpreted as Mr. Wong having to treat the football as he would his wife, in terms of loyalty, devotion and affection, not as a replacement but as a partner. Within this union stands Carlsberg beer, as the hidden factor, to permeate the relationship by being “Part of the game”. “Game” in the above context would also connote the “charade” that the husband seems to be playing with his wife as a reasonable excuse to consume beer with his friends, while watching a football match. The polysemous sense of “game” is activated here alongside the ideology of sexism.

The advertiser argues for maintaining a steady marital relationship “despite the fact that spirits befuddle the senses” (Goatly 2000:190), when beer is consumed throughout the duration of a football game. The ideology here is sexist in so far as the advertiser propagates the view that it is alright to indulge in beer and football at the expense of not spending time with a wife and come waltzing home after the merry making at a football pitch. The man is seen as dominant and the woman, subservient. This would account for sexism and Mills claims that “sexism forces



subjects into an acceptance of the status quo of prevalent views of woman as inferior and sexually available to men, with men as superior, in control” (1997:43-44).

Literariness and ideology are infused in this advertisement to carry the message of the advertiser. This advertisement is also a good example to substantiate claims made by Cook (1992) in Carter (1997:202) that “Indeed, a market trend in advertising discourse is for advertisers to construct texts which contain features of language more normally associated with the spoken rather than with the written language”. The following three texts B, C and D, are also constructed with “the spoken rather than with the written language”.

### ***Text B (Imedeen)***

*The secret women keep from other women.*

“  
The hard part was reminding myself to take it.  
But as I got used to it, I found it really works.  
My complexion is different, like I'm wearing  
new skin. It feels silky smooth and strong.”  
Ong Siew Peng, 30, Chief Executive Officer, since 2001

It shows when you take IMEDEEN®  
The original skincare that works from within.  
Proven\* and natural. Details, call 03-7803 8801,  
email [exc@house.com.my](mailto:exc@house.com.my) or visit [www.imedeen.com](http://www.imedeen.com)

This is an advertisement for a skincare product whose claims are supported by scientific evidence and a genuine customer comment. *The secret women keep from other women* is a declarative that immediately begs what the secret is. The body copy does not answer this but contains customer quote that refers to the product as “it”. The product slogan eventually reveals the brand name – Imedeen. The interaction between the words at the syntactic level emphasizes “women” and focuses on the “secret” that is kept. The semantic density created is a result of the possible connotative meanings of the statement.

One interpretation is that women do not keep secrets from other women but this is one secret that they do keep from other women. "The" ahead of "secret" would validate this interpretation. The advertiser places great importance on his product by making the above claim. A feminist viewpoint would definitely view this with contempt because it implies that women give such importance to physical appearances and give in to vanity and grooming to the extent of keeping from other women the secret to superior complexion. The contradiction here is that the advertisement including the customer comment reveals the "secret" to all at large. The advertiser's ploy to elevate the product as a secret is "revealed" to readers of the advertisement. The secret in this advertisement is used as a euphemism for an acute snobbery and it is an effort to induce an ideology of exclusiveness for the product advertised. It implies that the product is so exclusive that only a rare few have access to it, and to either "keep" or "reveal" it to others. Goatly comments that "this mindset explains the exploitation of the consumer's snobbishness" (2000:193). The irony is that by placing a full half page advertisement of the product, it becomes less exclusive and more accessible to all. Goatly also says that "there is, of course, a deep paradox in pretending that products are exclusive, since they are mass produced and adverts are designed to increase the number of buyers, thereby making them less exclusive!" (2000: 193).

Another interpretation of the advertisement statement is that women may even reveal the secret to other men but they will not reveal it to other women. It is a unique secret that will not be contentious among men but will only be so among women. The sexist viewpoint is still prevalent in this probability. Women's selfishness in guarding precious information could be pointed at, as another interpretation. The ideology here is that women are possessive towards some things held dear or which may pose a threat to themselves. It portrays women as insecure beings who are selfish and envious of other women. They are also competitive in terms of how they look. It would also mean that the advertisement propagates certain myths about women as those mentioned above. McCracken feels "that 'feminist messages' can be contradicted by heightening insecurities about trivial aspects of physical appearance, reducing women to fragments of themselves through metonymic visual portrayal and presenting male visual consumption as the best measure of self-approval" (1993:280). Imedeem, by claiming that the secret of appearance for continued beauty is well kept by its users, supports the above notion. The interaction at semantic and syntactic levels exposes the ideological positioning of sexism within the text and shows how advertisers construct their messages to do more than inform or communicate. This Imedeem advertisement has attempted, and to a large extent, succeeded, in "linking feminism to consumerism" and by doing so, they have also channeled "women's desire into consumerism" (McCracken 1993:287, 301). Only a discerning customer would see through the advertiser's intentions.



*Text C (British Council)*

EDUCATION  
the best you can be

BRITISH COUNCIL

We may not  
be great cooks.  
But you'll find plenty  
of food for thought.

Education UK 2003 Expo

<p>Shang 22 March 2003 12.00 p.m. - 7.00 p.m. Shangri-La Hotel</p>	<p>Kuala Lumpur 22 &amp; 23 March 2003 12.00 p.m. - 7.00 p.m. PWTC</p>	<p>Kuching 24 March 2003 12.00 p.m. - 7.00 p.m. Hilton Hotel</p>	<p>Kota Kinabalu 29 March 2003 12.00 p.m. - 7.00 p.m. Shangri-La's Tanjung Aru Resort</p>
--	--	--	---

What's an English 7-course dinner? Six potatoes and a pint of Guinness. Ah, the fun people have taking jobs at our culinary skills. True, gastronomy may not be our forte, though we did invent the toaster, stove and the material that's standard in every professional kitchen: steel.

But it's outside the kitchen that we've really excelled. That television in your living room was invented in the UK. Likewise the telephone, computer, radio, fiberoptics, facsimile and the worldwide web.

Mention the UK and most people would think music, theatre, literature, law, economics and a heritage in education. It's easy to see why a UK degree is recognised and much sought after by most employers.

If that's not compelling enough, consider the fact that a typical undergraduate honours degree takes 3 years, not 4. Postgraduate taught masters degrees take only one year.

You can take advantage of the hundreds of scholarships and other forms of financial assistance. Healthcare is free from up to 30 hours a week (and full time during vacation).

www.educationuk.org.my Re-visit the Education UK 2003 Expo and speak

This advertisement is for an education exposition and it proposes considering options to study in the U.K. The two sentences in the headline show the advertiser's placing of two opposing ends of one line of thought that is laced with a "ploy of modesty" (Goatly 2000:207) and due recognition. The first line – *We may not be great cooks* – is a modest admittance of weakness, *but the second line* – *But you'll find plenty of food for thought* – is a strong reminder to do some serious thinking about British Education. The word "food" is re-registered to serve as reason or cause for thought within the otherwise idiomatic expression.



Although the first line is a disclaimer, the second is a full-fledged guarantee of quality. There is an inter-connectedness between them that takes the form of a discourse patterning, an element of literariness that flows from the headlines, right down into the body copy. The language unfolds with a discourse of nourishment by mentioning 'cooks' in the first line and "food for thought" in the second. This submerges into the body copy where there is a statement in jest of what constitutes an English 7-course dinner, where the answer given is that it would be merely *six potatoes and a glass of stout!* The modesty and admittance of weakness continues to mention people having fun *taking jibes* at English culinary skills. There is even an open confession – *True, gastronomy may not be our forte* – the modesty continues to be exuded here, but after "forte", the underlying ideology of the advertisement that attempts to extol the virtues of British Education previews itself alongside the discourse of nourishment. The discourse patterning of nourishment continues after "gastronomy" to bridge onto *toaster, stove and kitchen* – all alluding to inventions for the preparation of food. The reader is carried along in a "mental accompaniment" (Carter 1997:137) as the advertisement reveals itself using food as a base. British inventions are mentioned including a construction staple – steel. The mentioning of steel reflects strength and durability, terms in which the advertiser would want the reader to think of for British education.

The reader rides on this discourse patterning and at the point of *But it's outside the kitchen that we've really excelled*, the reader can sense the gradual enveloping of inventions confined to the kitchen by other greater causes for self-praise like the television, computer, radar, fiber optics, facsimile and the worldwide web. The transition from food to communication systems is pertinent as the advertiser constructs a further link to the realizations of ideas in the form of creations through mental "food". The discourses of food and invention are united in the above observation. The advertisement comes to its fore in the next paragraph with what is thought of British education and a claim of why the world seeks it. The ideology that British education produces the best is reflected in *the best that you can be* in the advertisement slogan. The advertisement announces British achievements and innovations to prove this. The discourse patterning comes to a climax here in the second paragraph of the body copy after ... *worldwide web*. Henceforth, the tone of the advertisement becomes less intent to capture attention but more to inform the reader why a U.K. degree is prestigious and how potential candidates can study in the U.K., work, and even apply for scholarships. It begins to induce the reader to consider the U.K. as a destination for higher education. The ideology of "British is Best" pervades the advertisement: first, by announcing past achievements, then by covert inducement that potential students would be also saving time studying in U.K., besides enjoying free healthcare and job opportunities.

The whole advertisement is an exposé of the ideology of British superiority. Achievements claimed in the advertisement cannot be denied but whether the

specific place of study in the U.K. chosen by the student will enable him to yield such achievements would depend on his individual abilities, as much as it would the capabilities of his tutors.

*Text D (Honma Golf Sale)*

There's 1 chance in a thousand  
you'd hit a birdie

There's 1 chance in a million  
you'd hit an eagle

There's 1 chance in a billion  
you'd hit an albatross

(But there's no chance you'd miss out on this)

**HONMA**  
Factory Clearance Sale  
27.9 - 10.10.2002

Here's your big chance to enjoy the best of Honma - quality golf clubs, accessories and apparel - all at low, low, low factory prices. Bargains so fantastic, everyone is grabbing something, no hesitation, no second chances!  
So, why take any chances? Swing over to the Honma Factory Clearance Sale, today - before you miss it!

**We are here!**

Remembrance Hotel, Menara Public Bank, Wisma Angkasapaya, KLCC

**HONMA**

**Business Hours: Mon - Sun 11am - 8pm**  
Honma Golf Sdn. Bhd. (411764-V) Wisma Selangor Dredging East Block,  
1st-1st Mezzanine & Vault Floor, 142B Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur  
Tel: **03-2715 3393** website: **www.honmagolf.co.jp**

Beware of imitation goods. Always insist on genuine Honma golf equipment



This advertisement is targeted mainly at golf enthusiasts. The body copy reveals the sale of *quality golf clubs, accessories, and apparel*, but it is the 4-tiered headline above the announcement of the Honma factory sale that attracts the eye of the reader. The sentence structure that consists of selective repetition makes use of a discourse patterning which implies the probabilities of the reader achieving an objective – *There's 1 chance in a ..., you'd hit ...*, is repeated, firstly, for emphasis and secondly, for progression. The word numbers that are deployed have not only a phonological sound patterning of /n/ sounds, they possess a mathematical progression of value with thousand, million, and billion, each increasing by three zeroes.

Even so, since they refer to a probability, the sentences in fact point to something that is diminishing and continue to do so until the fourth sentence when it comes to zero probability of missing the target of the advertisement, that is the Honma Clearance Sale. The instance of a golfer scoring a hole-in-one in a no miss situation is implied. The fourth sentence in brackets relates to the three above, before the sale proper is announced in the line below. The patterning of discourse gives the reader an impression of progressive ascendancy of size, of creatures of flight – birdie, eagle and albatross. However, if interpreted at the denotative level, the chances of “hitting” something “bigger” are surprisingly smaller. This inverse relationship would be possible in terms of scoring in golf.

The careful repetition of the word “chance” is not only predominant in the 4-tiered headline, it moves all the way down to the body copy until the last line. *One chance* becomes *no chance*; then, after the announcement of the sale, it becomes *big chance* - a probability transformed into a lucrative opportunity. This big “chance” offers no “second chances”, meaning that the lucrative opportunity comes once only. This patterning then culminates in chance becoming a risk factor – *Why take any chances?* The highly polysemous lexical item of “chance” is exploited well by the advertiser to inform the reader of an excellent chance or opportunity to purchase golf equipment at competitive prices. The ideology within is, in fact, the reverse where, eventually, it will be the advertiser who will capitalize on the “chance” of making profits from the purchases of potential customers.

Another level of interaction that increases the semantic density of the text is the offer of three chances in the headline in the beginning of the advertisement that comes with an implied rejection, towards the end, with a rhetorical question – *So, why take any chances?* “Take” in the question is polysemous, meaning “to carry something from one place to another” and, in the context of the question, “to bear the risk”. The reader who is informed about the sport of golf would realize the greater probabilities of striking the golfing scores of birdie and eagle or the lesser, remote possibilities of hitting the animals themselves – a birdie (normally small bird), an eagle or albatross, on an open golf course. The repetition of “low” in *low, low factory prices*, and the cross-sentential reference to “miss” – *...you'd miss*



*out on this and before you miss it*, add to the semantic density of the headline and body copy. "Low" is repeated to reflect an extreme situation where the prices are extremely affordable. This is intended to influence the reader into believing that the advertiser is genuine in his claim. This is because the *low, low, low prices* is not in bold, nor does it constitute a portion of the headline. The advertiser wants the reader to share the advertiser's point of view that the sale is an absolute bargain. "Miss" is another lexical item that plays on two meanings. One, as "having forgotten" the date of the sale, and another, as having "missed the target set" to attend the sale. Here, in the last line of the body copy, the advertiser uses golfing register – a re-registration in itself, to remind the reader – *swing over to the... sale today – before you miss it*. This manner of spoken discourse reduces the gap between the advertiser and potential customer. The ideology here is to establish rapport with the customer, thus enticing him to "swing" over, being the avid golfer that he would be, for the sale. Another criterion of literariness mentioned in the earlier paragraph, re-registration, is also present in the text to facilitate a unique naming function. This is an advertisement for golfing equipment. A discerning reader will be able to point out that *birdie, eagle, albatross and swing* are golfing terms. "Birdie" means one stroke fewer than par – the number of strokes set for a hole. "Eagle" is a score of two strokes less than average and albatross is three under par. "Swing" is a golfer's movement of striking at a golf ball with a golf club. The word *hit* in the first three sentences refers to "score" and not to "assault" or "kill" that a policeman or hunter may assume. The element of re-registration is partly responsible for the denotative and connotative interpretations available in the text. It not only appeals to golfing enthusiasts, it blends with the other lexical items in the text to put forward an ideology of golf and an ideology of materialism. Golf is not merely a game. It is a whole lifestyle that includes club memberships, contacts with people in power, being seen with the right people and at places where one should "be seen". Golf is also an endeavour to climb the social ladder and one that attracts social reverence. This is intrinsically offered by the advertiser.

The ideology of elitism is also laced within this advertisement. Golf has become a status symbol. Possessing golf clubs and golf equipment makes one more important as the golf equipment is looked upon as valuable property. Andrew Goatly quotes Lester Faigley who says "The desire to consume is predicated on the lack of a stable identity. Purchasing and using a consumer object is a temporary and unstable attempt to occupy an imagined identity provoked by an image" (1992: 13, cited in Goatly 2000:191). There is an attempt to be socially in command, so golf is proposed as a medium to achieve that need.

The advertiser intends to attract golf enthusiasts but at the same time, he does not want to leave out probable newcomers to the sport, so the headline is given a rhythmic structure with words partly related to golf. This rhythmic structure with names of birds could attract even the innocent non-golfer who would then

descend into the body copy of the advertisement to discover a clearance sale of golf equipment. He could then be taken in by the advertisement to “swing over” and consider a purchase. The advertiser would have then attained his greater objective of reaching out to non-golfers as well.

## **Conclusions and Implications**

### ***Summary of RQ 1***

The above analyses have shown how advertisements combine literariness and ideology to put forth messages in Malaysian English language newspapers. We see how subtly ideologies are embedded within elements of literariness to shape the advertisements. In keeping with the intention of this study to establish the link between literariness and ideology in newspaper advertising texts, the findings are able to show the extent to which literary elements are used in non-literary contexts and how advertisers use these elements to encode ideology within the message of the advertisement. This link is important for ESL learners and practitioners as there is a need to be equipped with a critical language awareness that will not only empower them to see through the language used by the advertisers but to also resist ideologies and ideas that go against their beliefs and viewpoints.

In answering RQ 1, it is found that an interaction of levels leading to semantic density is the most active criterion of literariness. This criterion has a rather broad spectrum of analysis that includes phonological, syntactic and semantic levels. This could be one reason for its omnipresence in almost all texts in an active way. Another feature of its presence is its “supportive” nature where it reinforces ideologies that are propounded more vigorously by other criteria. In a passive sense, however, medium independence appears most frequently. This is because as long as the advertiser has not produced a text that needs a code, or a key for explanation, the text fulfils this criterion. Although this criterion is rather dormant, all the texts analyzed are medium independent. The more independent a text is, the more literary it becomes. The criterion of displaced interaction is the second most frequent criterion that appears in a passive sense. The absence of direct speech acts and an invitation to decipher the message of the advertisement in a “displaced and indirect manner” allows this criterion to permeate most of the texts. The more displaced a text is, the greater the incidence of literariness in it.

The criterion of polysemy is considered fairly dominant in the corpus. It is nevertheless important as it helps intertwine ideology within the message of the advertisement by helping to keep embedded messages. It also allows words with multiple meaning structures to be used extensively in texts. Beyond this, although re-registration and discourse patterning are not prevalent in all texts they remain



strong criteria of literariness that can shape and structure advertising texts to put forward messages and ideologies. Re-registration encourages intertextuality by borrowing terms and references from one register to illustrate descriptions in another. Discourse patterning gives the effect of emphasis and reinforcement in cross-sentential patterns that help retain the message for the reader's attention.

There is evidence in the advertising texts that advertisers have used elements of literariness to "reveal yet conceal" (Carter 1997) their motives in putting forth their messages. They say one thing but mean much more. This seems to be the unique quality of literariness that allows subtle expression of opinion and ideology yet permits the advertiser room for justification for his claims.

### *Summary of RQ2*

The analyses have also shown that ideologies are embedded in covert fashion for various reasons. The advertiser could have a motive of wanting to sound politically correct, so he disguises the ideology within his message to make it more appealing and acceptable to the reader. As seen in the analysis of the Carlsberg text, the word 'beer' is not mentioned at all throughout the advertisement although the advertisement encourages beer drinking. This is because of the majority Muslim population in Malaysia and the stigma society has that drinking can "befuddle the senses" (Goatly 2000:190) to inebriate and intoxicate a consumer. Text A adopts a disguise for the beer drinking within the ideology of consumption that is achieved through literariness.

The most pertinent ideology in the analyses is the ideology of consumption. This is most appropriate and purposeful as most advertisements are intent on making the product or service of the advertiser sell. With this intention as the advertiser's premise, the consumer's mindset is coerced to purchase and basically consume the product or service advertised. This ideology often appears with other ideologies as in Text D; it appears with an ideology of elevated status or elitism, through the game of golf and the purchase of golf clubs and equipment. In Text A and Text B, it occurs with the ideology of sexism. The advertiser reinforces a sexist ideology to manipulate the consumer and make the consumer buy his products. Even customer comments are used to influence other potential customers as in Text B. In Text C, the ideology of consumption combines with that of superiority to revere British education. Not only does the advertisement want the reader to consume British education, it gives "concrete" reasons why "British is Best" where education is concerned with its track record of achievements and inventions.

The second most dominant ideology would be that of sexism. This ideology sets out to demean and demote women to a subservient position in the process of

transmitting the message of the advertiser. The irony is that an advertising text such as Text B expects women customers to actually purchase the product after being subtly ridiculed and trivialized: the skin and body care product advertisement creates an impression that women are extremely conscious and preoccupied with their appearance. This is an impression that is not necessarily true but the advertiser's message rests upon this ideology. Less dominant ideologies include those of exclusiveness, materialism, elitism and superiority.

### ***Summary of RQ3***

Carter's framework (1997) provides for six criteria of literariness. All the criteria were deployed to a significant extent, some actively, others passively. In this study, it is found that four of these criteria are more active in their approach towards encoding ideology in the texts analyzed. Two are passive in comparison. The active criteria are an interaction of levels leading to semantic density, polysemy, re-registration and discourse patterning. Through them, there is a conscious undertaking by the advertiser to construct and control the shape and form of the advertisement. The passive criteria are displaced interaction and medium dependence. Their roles to decipher ideology are rather subdued in comparison to the four above. The analyses have shown that the ideology in a text relies on a combination of several criteria of literariness.

### ***Implications and Recommendations for Educators and Curriculum Planners***

The advertising texts analyzed show that elements of literary language are used in the transmission of advertisers' messages. Educators should take advantage of this fact to make use of advertisements found in daily newspapers to impart knowledge of the practical uses of literary language and how it is used in non-literary contexts. With the re-introduction of literature in schools, it would be helpful for educators to use this study as an additional approach to critical literacy studies and to show the presence of literary elements in non-literary texts so that students will be able to appreciate the relevance of their studying literature. An opportunity for analyzing advertisements should also be given to students to create awareness of the importance of advertisements in imparting messages. The ideological positioning of the messages will also help to inform and relate to students the importance of being discerning readers of texts and discourses that are exposed to them.



Since newspapers are available in most resource centers in schools all over country, curriculum planners should take into consideration this accessibility and include advertising material as a resource for investigating literary language in a practical context in future textbooks. They should also accept the fact that literature is a social discourse, and adopt a more functional approach in their planning of the literature syllabus in the future.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The findings of this study can lead to further investigation. The corpus in this study is selected from advertising texts in two Malaysian English language newspapers. More Malaysian English language newspapers could be researched for corpus to provide a broader database of findings. Other newspapers could cater for different sets of clientele who would, in turn, have different ideologies to transmit through their messages. Besides that, advertisements with pictorial accompaniments could be used as corpus to see how visuals can influence the literary language used to transmit the message and the ideology embedded within.

Research could also be done on advertising texts in other Malaysian print media such as magazines to see if similar findings are revealed or whether advertisements in magazines that cater for specific clientele produce different results. One could go a step further and study advertising texts of foreign magazines using a similar framework to search for similarities and differences in terms of findings.

The findings put forth in this study suggest that advertisements in Malaysian English language newspapers have a reasonable preponderance of literary elements that are able to encode ideologies within the messages transmitted to the reader. Some advertisements use linguistic camouflage to conceal actual messages that only a meticulous investigation is able to decipher and reveal. The ideologies of the advertiser are often revealed indirectly for want of being politically and socially correct. For instance, a beer advertisement does not mention the word "beer" at all to divert the attention of the reader to the subject of football to make his appeal more acceptable.

The researcher has found that the criteria for literariness and ideology proposed by Carter (1997) can be categorized into active and passive criteria. The active criteria are an interaction at several levels leading to semantic density, polysemy, re-registration and discourse patterning. These criteria encode ideologies in a vigorous manner and are the active agents. The flagship of the above could very well be an interaction at several levels leading to semantic density.

The passive criteria are medium dependence and displaced interaction. These

criteria are more dormant and contribute to literariness and ideology in a passive way. They are activated when they do not require references to other glossaries or codes, and also when they restrict the use of direct speech acts. The findings of this study could contribute to a modification of sorts to Carter's (1997) framework to separate the active and passive criteria and further consolidate Carter's framework to make it more formidable and relevant towards analysis for literariness and ideology.

This study has also ventured a step further into the area of literariness in non-literary discourse and it could spin further approval for the diminishing divide between literary and non-literary texts. It has also shown that literariness can be counted upon as a viable medium of encoding ideology. It is hoped that the impact of literariness upon all types of texts will be considered pertinent to help create an awareness of critical language acquisition, especially among teachers and learners of the language.

## Notes

1. In "Investigating English Discourse" (1997), Carter analyses 5 different texts according to his framework. The full texts are given on pp. 128 – 135.
2. "Defamiliarization" or "making strange" is a Russian Formalist concept that "art refreshes our sense of life and experience". According to Shklovsky, "art defamiliarizes things that have become habitual or automatic". For a fuller discussion, see Jefferson and Robey 1985:27 – 32.



## Works Cited

- Annie Lee, Lyla Roberts and Magdalene Chew. (2002). *English Form 4*. Malaysia: PGI Cipta.
- Asmah binti Haji Omar. (1984). *Bahasa Iklan Perniagaan*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka.
- Birch, D. ed., (1989). *Language, Literature and Critical Practice – Ways of Analyzing Texts*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Carter, R and Nash, W. (1990). *Seeing Through Language*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.  
 ----- (1997). *Investigating English Discourse*. London: Routledge.
- Cook, G. (2001). *The Discourse of Advertising – Second Edition*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.  
 ----- (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. London and New York: Longman.
- Fowler, R. et.al. (1979). *Language and Control*. London: Routledge.  
 ----- (1981). *Literature as Social Discourse*. London: Batsford.  
 ----- (1986). *Linguistic Criticism*. Oxford : Oxford University Press.
- Goatly, A. (2000). *Critical Reading and Writing – An Introductory Coursebook*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Halliday, M.A.K. and Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London and New York: Longman.
- Miall, D.S. and Kuiken, D. (1999). *What is literariness? Three components of reading*. Online.Internet.  
<http://www.ualberta.ca/~dmiall/reading/Literariness.htm>
- McCarthy, M and Carter, R. (1994). *Language as Discourse: Perspectives for Language Teaching*. London and New York: Longman.
- McCracken, E. (1993). *Decoding Women's Magazines – From Mademoiselle to Ms*. London: Macmillan.
- Mills, S. (1997). *Discourse*. London: Routledge.

- Nor Suharti bt. Abdul Karim. (2000). *Conversational Implicatures and Cohesive Devices in over-the Counter Pharmaceuticals Product Advertisements: A Pragmatic Analysis*. Unpublished Master's thesis. School of Humanities. Pulau Pinang: Universiti Sains Malaysia.
- Reah, D. (1998). *The Language of Newspapers*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Richards, B., MacRury, I. and Boterill, J. (2000). *The Dynamics of Advertising*. Canada: Harwood.
- Salkind, N.J. (2000). *Exploring Research*. U.S.: Prentice-Hall.
- Simpson, P. (1993). *Language, Ideology and Point of View*. London: Routledge.
- Tanaka, K. (1999). *Advertising Language – A pragmatic approach to advertisements in Britain and Japan*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Williamson, J. (1978). *Decoding Advertisements*. London: Marion Boyars.