

A Representation of Malaysian Malay Women Identity from a Systemic Functional Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Employing a systemic functional analysis of two selected stories written by two different Malay women writers, namely Dina Zaman and Karina Bahrin, this paper investigates the perception of Malay women from two contrasting settings, the metropolitan Kuala Lumpur and a kampong in Terengganu. The study explores the social cultural identity of Malay women within a linguistic context based on an analysis of thematic choice derived from the Hallidayan notion of grammar. In *And She Became an Angel* (Dina Zaman), suggesting a subordinated female identity in a Malay kampong context, findings derived from the clausal analysis concluded that the main protagonist, Mandak successfully transcended herself from a victimized role into a heroin at the end of the story. She eventually had become an angel in a fire to embrace the only one thing of her life. However, in *A Subtle Degree of Restraint* (Karina Bahrin), Elena and Badariah, the two representations of new Malay women living in the cosmopolitan Kuala Lumpur, encountered subtle feelings of deprivation in their contrasting life conditions through either marriage or barrenness. Applying a Hallidayan framework that looks at thematic choice in the system of Theme and Rheme and the System of Transitivity, this paper justifies its findings from the distribution and the experiential elements of thematic choices in the two short stories from a linguistic spectrum. It also signifies a refreshing approach on literary studies in the MLE.

Keywords: Identity; Malay women; MLE; Systemic Functional Linguistics; thematic choice

INTRODUCTION

Compared to Muslim women from other parts of the world, Malaysian Malay women enjoy a more carefree life style as they have been dwelling in a more liberal and diversified cultural setting of Malaysia (Manaf, 2015). However, the evolution of Malaysian Malay women took an uneven journey since the British Colonial period and they were shaded with a mysterious veil since the beginning of Malaysian literature. From a chronological report, even though Malay women were

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given opportunity for education in the 60s and 70s, they would withdraw themselves from the educational system half way when it was time for them to compromise themselves to the arranged marriage by their parents (Ungku Maimunah, 1986). Owing to this social-cultural setting, the knowledge of Malay women was limited as the landscape of Malaysian Literature or Malaysian Literature in English (MLE here forth) was simply dominated by their male counterparts. Through the lane of these male writers, Malay women were destined. For example, Malay women in Shanon Ahmad's novels did not play significant or critical roles compared to the male protagonists. They were there in the stories simply because there needed women roles in the story, playing female roles who were willingly dominated by the male's mission (Metger, 1991).

The interpretation of Malay women came to a cutting edge when Nor Faridah (2001) claims that Malaysian literature both in Malay and English turned over to a new page in the 1980s and 1990s whereby the themes and description of Malay women were illustrated by Malay women writers' fictions and has advanced to a broader and bolder sphere (ibid). The knowledge of Malay women was unveiled by the Malay women writers through a few writing competitions. Among them, Che Husna Azhari, Elinna Majid, and Dina Zaman stood out representing contemporary Malay women writers in the MLE. Inherited from the post-colonial ambience because of its historical legacy, Malaysian Malay women have been celebrating a significant degree of freedom in gender equality from a traditionally male dominant Muslim world. Nevertheless, in the study of literary works written by Che Husna, Dina Zaman and Elinna Majid, Muslim et al., findings concluded that from an Islamic perspective, Malay women after achieving high education and prosperous career, were still highly devoted themselves to the traditional values as home makers in the patriarchal social background (Muslim et al., 2012). Moreover, other research and news headlines never ceased to expose social issues such as gender equality, domestic abuse to be part of the life for these Malay women in a rapid globalizing society (Koh 2019; Tan; 2019). In light of this, the representation and voices of the existence of these Malay women should be heard from the content through literature involving women as a reflection of the universal values of humanity (Noritah, 2014; Syazliyati, 2007).

The present study argues that given the same social-cultural background, contrasting experiences between Malay women from different parts of Malaysia and their perceptions of life are worth scrutinising. By employing a Hallidayan framework in analysing thematic choice and its transitivity representation in two selected short stories taken as examples of contextualised social semiotics, namely *And She Became an Angel* and *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*, these Malay women writers had shed lights on Malaysian Malay women's identity across a linguistic spectrum. In addition, the study also hopes to pool together explorations on the humanity issues of Malaysian Malay women and suggests a different approach in the study of Malaysian Literature in English (MLE here forth) from the investigation of text to its context.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Studies of woman-identity could have included fundamental exploration in all forms of social sciences, namely, psychology, sociology, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity (Cerulo, 1997; Frable, 1997). The past research of women issues has generally probed women's beings as an essential entity of the society and the core values of humanity signified. With the same note, the portrayal of Malaysian Malay women that remains under researched in terms of literary criticism and humanistic studies is worth scrutinising as another research contended that Malay women are still closely tied to their traditional cultural values as a mother and are expected to be subservient as a

wife, especially those who live in the rural area (Abdullah, Noor, & Wok, 2008). The statement has evidently demonstrated by the scenario found from the Global Gender Gap Index 2018 where Malaysian women, who are mostly Malay women (World Economic Forum, 2018) did not show a breakthrough though they were given better opportunities to obtain higher levels of education in the ranking of higher education for women across the globe. It was further proven in terms of the general index which included their economic adaptability, education, physical condition and involvement in politics in the report (“The global gender gap report 2018”) whereby Malaysian women with a majority of Malay women were only ranked 101 across 149 countries in the investigation. The report has also reflected that Malay women’s priority is adhered to the Islamic traditional cultural value of family and children despite of the existing globalized platform they dwell in and higher education they achieved (Muslim et al., 2012).

Empirically, this study focuses on Malaysia Malay women and their representation investigated from a linguistic spectrum, neither from the traditional literary criticism or Islamic theories from many angles. In addition, the concern falls on Malay women and their many views in the society they reside in from the selected literary works, serving as a validation of Hallidayan language notion. For Halliday, any piece of text is a social semiotics that reflects the social reality; thus, through the linguistic investigation and a contextualised setting of MLE, the study hopes to explore whether Malay women in literature have been destined to kitchen, oppression and suppression in the patriarchal Muslim world (Halimah, 2015; Hamid, 2015).

Overall, it is not unusual that Hallidayan notions of text have been testified and justified in various genres of other texts, such as research journals, business communication texts, newspaper or sports commentaries, political aspects, and also literary works (Almurashi, 2016; Patpong, 2009; McCabe & Heilman, 2007). However, in the MLE context, deriving the theoretical framework from SFL is very rare and remains unexplored. SFL as a tool probing the representation of Malaysian Malay women’s identity would leverage the arena of literary studies in MLE and further shed light on humanity in the discourse analysis.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The present study aims bridging humanity studies with a linguistic theory, in particular, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL here forth). It is an exploration of Malay women writers’ apprehensions, particularly, the perception of women’s identity in the bosom of these Malay women writers from selected short stories. Within a specific genre, selected short stories from Malaysian Malay women writers, the investigation of social and cultural meanings from a Systemic Functional perspective would contribute to the portrayal of Malaysian Malay women, from the text to the context. In search of fulfilling the research objectives as mentioned, the research design is aimed to answer the following the question:

What are the perception of Malaysia Malay women’s identity in the selected short stories from a Systemic Functional perspective?

To explore the perception of Malaysia Malay women’s identity from a Systemic Functional perspective, the sub questions were therefore designed as the following:

1. What are types of thematic choice found in the selected short story texts?
2. How would these thematic choices interpret Malay women in the selected short stories?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Showalter, from the evolution of the history, women were able to create literary works of their own because of the environment they resided in and their creative nature beings (Showalter, 1998). Tracing feminist studies in the MLE, Nor Faridah (2000) further declared that Malay women writers have experienced the similar evolution through three stages namely, feminine, feminist, and female. The writings of these Malay writers evolve from feminine to feminist and finally female. They first followed what often regarded as the tradition practiced by the males when producing literary works. Next, they started protesting and advocating on minority rights and values as feminists with a certain level of maturity. Lastly, they become female writers who embark on the journey of self-discovery as they produce literary works and eventually make a discovery of themselves or find themselves as the centre of producing works. Clearly, they have since transcended their works from imitating the male writers' works to producing works that echoed their own voices and identity in it, reflected in the themes in their works. Followed by the feminist theory above mentioned, the portrayal of Malaysia Malay women took off to a new age and were relatively disclosed more, especially these literary works were screened and commented by Malay female scholars in the MLE (Muslim et al., 2012; Nor Faridah, 2000; Nazimah, 2008).

The issue of gender equality has always been debated across many countries (Zuraini, Tan, & Noor, 2018). Even though an emerging trend shows that Malay men begin involving in household chores, in a society where the Malay community adopted patriarchal practice, women inevitably are expected to finish all the household chores as well as playing the role as child-bearers (Zuraini, Tan, & Noor, 2018, Alharafesheh, 2016; Kan & Laurie, 2016; Samani, 2016). Typically, household chores such as "cooking, cleaning and washing, and ironing" are labelled equally to the role of Malaysian women; even if women are involved in the workforce, household chores are still tied to their daily responsibilities as they are called as home makers (Kan & Laurie, 2016). Along with the assigned household chores, these Malay women are found to be juggling between their family roles and career path in the workplace, causing them not be able to outperform at their workplace (Zuraini, Tan, & Noor, 2018). Taking Dina Zaman's and Ellina's works on highlighting the issues faced by women, women are being treated as housemaids and along with other issues, highly educated Malay women are expected to place family and their children at the first place; consequently, their personal goals of life are often neglected by the Malaysian society (Muslim et al., 2012; Syazliyati, 2007).

Overall, Malay women in the 60s, 70s and 80s were not much depicted as Malay women writers were scarce both in the Malaysian Literature and MLE. In a few past studies, the image of Malay women were insignificant at all in the novels written by renown writer Shanon Ahmad. The heroes were all men playing "doers" and always active as life was an everlasting journey where male had to take actions and control while female were simply moving around without any given mission. They were obedient, timid and willingly dominated by their male counterparts in the stories (Metger, 1991). The description of Malay women was again proven when Ungku Maimunah (1986) contended that women played trivial roles and were mainly related to domestic concerns, matters of family, household chores, women chatters with didactic purpose.

The knowledge of Malay women was unveiled gradually when more Malay women writers started surfacing in the MLE. Prominent Malay women writers such as Che Husna Azhari and Dina Zaman contributed to the feminist themes and women discourse in the traditional or fast changing Malaysian settings. However, Muslim et al. (2012) asserted that these Malay women writers, though writing Malay women's problems, heartaches, and various life challenges in

different tones and creativity, they were consciously aware of their Islamic principles and values. Another research affirmed similar findings that Malay women writers in the MLE would tactfully express social issues that they were passionate with without transgressing their Islamic principles (Ng, 2011).

Owing to the social background as mentioned above, the description of Malay women in the literary works could not go too far beyond the Islamic perspective (Bradley, 2012) even in Dina Zaman's literary work. Being labelled as a very open Muslim writer, Dina Zaman received harsh questioning about her faith in her bold expressions on certain social issues women faced (Muslim et al., 2012). In *Of Bunga Telur and Bally Shoes*, Che Husna wittedly mocked her male protagonist in the wedding arrangement under a bossy mother. For Dina Zaman's *King of the Sea*, various female figures were presented. They were representation of Malay women who were underprivileged and side lined by their community. Dina Zaman, with her academic and professional training from the University of Lancaster, her mission is to write the spontaneity of her world; taboo topics were never her limits.

In general, most critics would review literary works of MLE from prominent literary criticism theories such as Feminist Study, Islamic theories, or other conventional framework. Few would scrutinise creative genres with a linguistic spectrum, particularly in a clausal base investigation of the lexico-grammar of the text. The Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) was coined by M. A. K. Halliday in the 1960s. Halliday claimed that a written text was a system of networks where meanings were made through an ongoing selection of language (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Thus, language is "a resource for making meaning" which "resides in (a) systemic patterns of choice" (ibid, p.23). He further detailed the systemic functions into three: Experiential or Ideational Metafunction, Interpersonal Metafunction, and lastly Textual Metafunction. Abide with this linguistic notion, the clausal base investigation of the selected short stories is hypnotised to realise meanings of the text from where the text resides, from the text to the context or vice versa.

Overall, it is not unusual that Hallidayan notions of text have been testified and justified in various genres of other texts, such as research journals, business communication texts, newspaper or sports commentaries, political aspects, and also literary works (Almurashi, 2016; Patpong, 2009; McCabe & Heilman, 2007). However, in the MLE context, deriving the theoretical framework from SFL is very rare and remains unexplored. Nazimah has initiated one in 2012; however, it was more on the deconstruction of the character in the stylist domain. It was in different focus. In addition, probing the representation of Malaysian Malay women's identity from SFL perspective would leverage the arena of literary studies in MLE and further shed light on humanity in the discourse analysis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

TEXTUAL METAFUNCTION – THE THEME AND RHEME SYSTEM

The present study falls on the Textual Metafunction, one of the Hallidayan propositions in language functions whereby the Theme-Rheme system is presented. In the English language, a clause consists of a Theme and a Rheme. Theme is also defined as the "psychological subject" of the clause by Halliday (2004) and it is always in the first position as "the point of departure" that serves to the body in an English clause (Halliday, 1994, p 37). Bloor and Bloor define the first position of the structure of a clause as the "Given" information (Bloor, 2004, p 65) and the remaining of the clause as the "New" information of the message. In line with the framework, "the

point of departure” or “Given” is the clause initial that foreground the message while the following is the “New” information of the message. However, exceptions sometimes occur. The following examples derived from the clauses in *And She Became an Angel* demonstrate how **Theme/Rheme** in a message is organized into different interpretations of meanings as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Theme/Rheme in English –Examples adapted from *And She Became an Angel*

	Theme / Rheme	Types of Theme
C252	Mandak / starts by making excursions at night.	Unmarked Topical Theme
C280	On another night, she (Mandak) / climbs to the top of a shed.	Marked Topical Theme (Experiential – Temporal)
C295	and, [she covers] her ears with her hands.	Textual + Topical Theme
C256	Initially, she (Mandak) / ventures only a few yards of their compound.	Interpersonal +Topical Theme

For C252, a clause forms a message when the point of departure “**Mandak**” is taken as the topic of the message. It is thus called Topical Theme but an Unmarked one since there is no distinctive feature before the subject and it is a typical S+V clause. However, not all the clause initials start as typical subjects in the messages. Sometimes, experiential elements such as time or place could be found as themes in the messages and the focus of the message is thus shifted to the experiential representation, here the temporal information. C280 is one of these instances and is labelled as Marked Topical Theme. In other words, the positioning of Theme in the organization of text is the options made by the speakers or the writers. For interpersonal function, a thematic choice could be a personal judgment like “**initially**” in C256 while Textual Theme “**So**” in C295 serves as one of the textual elements that are interwoven across the messages in the text and attain cohesion of the text.

EXPERIENTIAL METAFUNCTION- THE TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM

The Experiential Metafunction concerns the human experience which is an interpretation of the happenings around and inside us and it is interpreted by the transitivity system. Within the system, it allows the analyst to label the roles of each clause constituent that realizes the physical and emotional experiences of human beings accordingly (Egins, 2004, p.211). In the system, meaning potential is rendered from the linguistic forms to its meaning and function in the semiotic space. It is subsequently developed as an analytical tool kit to check the representation of experiences of the world (Bloor & Bloor, 2004, p.107). Such experiences are construed as processes, or “goings on” (expressed as a verb group), the attendant participants (typically noun groups), and circumstances (typically adverb groups or preposition phrases), if any (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004, 170). The framework recognizes six processes, each with its own unique set of participants. Circumstances, however, are not tied to any one process but are generalizable across different processes. They serve to enhance, extend, or elaborate the experiential processes, and so do not exist on their own but as an expansion of something else (Halliday & Metthiessen, 2004, 261). The transitivity system is summarized in Table 3 (Halliday, 1994, 143) with the examples adapted clauses from *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*.

TABLE 2. Transitivity System in English -- Examples adapted from *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*

Process (meaning)	Participants (roles)	Examples
<i>Material</i> (doing, happening)	<i>Actor, Goal</i> (plus others)	Badariah reached across the table. (C33) (Pt: <i>Actor</i> + Pr: Material + Pt: <i>Goal</i> + Circ: <i>spatial</i>)
<i>Mental</i> (seeing, feeling, thinking, wanting)	<i>Senser, Phenomenon</i>	Elena wanted to pick up the vase. (C154) (Pt: <i>Senser</i> + Pr: Mental + Pt: <i>Phenomenon</i>)
<i>Relational</i> (being, having; identifying or attributing)	<i>Carrier, Attribute; Token, Value</i>	The unagi was already in pieces. (C35) (Pt: <i>Token</i> + Pr: Relational-Identifying + Pt: <i>Value</i>) Some tea would be good with that. (C97) (Pt: <i>Carrier</i> + Pr: Relational-Attribute + Pt: <i>Attribute</i>)
<i>Behavioral</i> (psychological behavior)	<i>Behaver, Behavior</i>	Badariah cackled . (C148) (Pt: <i>Behaver</i> + Pr: Behavioral + Circ: <i>Manner</i>)
<i>Verbal</i> (saying, indicating)	<i>Sayer, Verbiage</i>	Elena interrupted . (C124) (Pt: <i>Sayer</i> + Pr: Verbal + Pt: <i>Verbiage</i>)
<i>Existential</i> (existing, being)	<i>Existent</i>	[There was] No extra flesh oozing over the lip of the chair's bottom. (C141) (Circ: <i>Time</i> + Pr: Existential + Pt: <i>Existent</i>)

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The study is a qualitative research whereby the findings of the thematic choice in the selected short stories are tabulated to provide a more comprehensive discussion of the study. It uses purposive sampling where the researcher first screened for short stories written by selected Malaysian Malay women writers whose publications were from 1990 onwards. Then, two short stories were chosen according to their publicity, accessibility and the authors' popularity. The chosen short stories were numbered for a closer investigation.

In the first stage, all the clauses in each story were labelled and numbered in Microsoft excel files. Then, the structure of each clause in the System of Theme and Rheme was examined and tabulated according to the types of thematic choice in different mood types of the clause. After that, the thematic choice found in the texts were sorted out and calculated. The results were tabled to show the overall distribution and the ranking of prominent types of theme that would signify experiential meanings. Stage 1 is the fundamental survey of the clausal census of the text, modulating what and which to investigate in Stage 2 and Stage 3.

In the second stage, thematic choice aligned with different protagonists as Participants were categorised accordingly. The distribution of Thematic choices and the investigation of the experiential elements of the Thematic choice demonstrate how the protagonists and their social context construe the representation of Malay women in the society they reside from an extensive examination which highlighted the types of Participants and Processes in the System of Transitivity. Lastly, discussions on the findings with reference to the research objectives were carried out to determine if the research questions established were successfully answered. The methodology is summarized as follows:

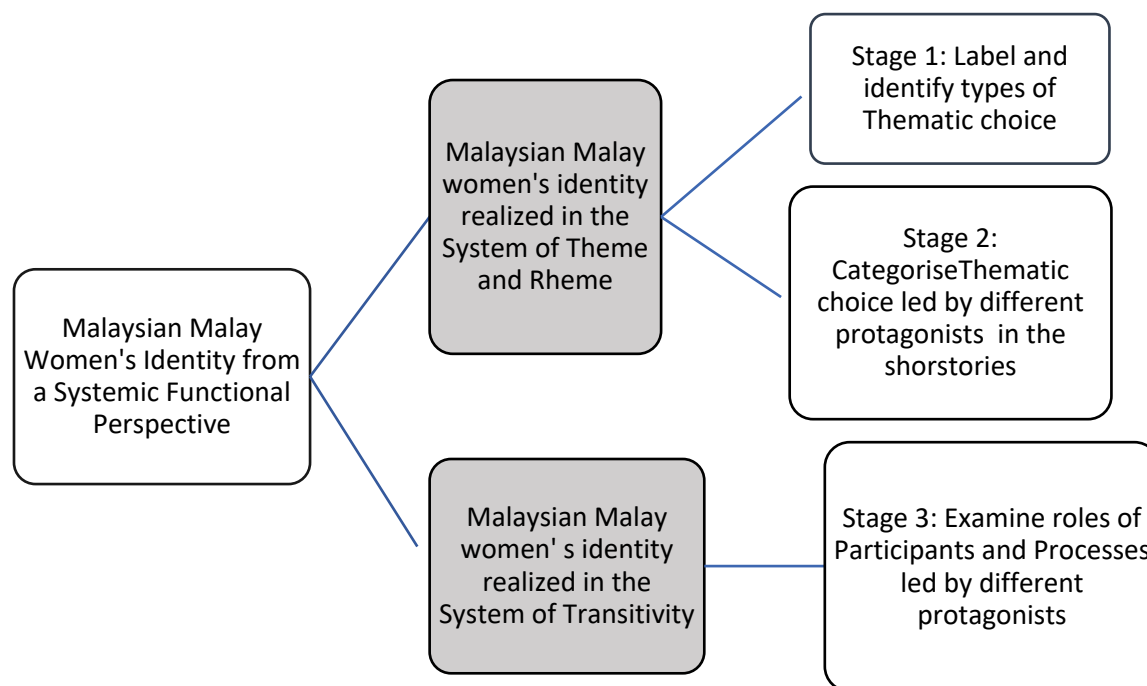


FIGURE 1. Stages of text analysis for the selected short stories.

DATA DESCRIPTION

AND SHE BECAME AN ANGEL

And She Became an Angel is one of the short stories in Dina Zaman's collection, *King of the Sea* published in 2012 by Silverfish Books, Kuala Lumpur. Mandak the protagonist is a Malay kampong woman who impulsively desired to become a Western-look angel with feathered wings. This was completely unpremeditated when a humble and ordinary Malay kampong woman suddenly became very decisive in pursuing her new passion. She was thus judged being afflicted in insane madness by her husband, Ipeng when he later saw Mandak "retrieving feathers from hens and roosters in the coop (p.39) and found out that she ventured as an angel in the night peeping over the villagers' household matters" (p.45). Mandak was then detained in the chicken coop. The story is ended when Mandak managed to flee from the chicken coop and appeared as an angel to rescue the village fire.

A SUBTLE DEGREE OF RESTRAINT

A Subtle Degree of Restraint is the titular story collected in the short story collection "*A Subtle Degree of Restraint and other stories*" written by Karina Bahrin. Hwang (2012, p. 207) called it 'a collection of short stories which were told in an "unpretentious voice" with "simple and earnest" manner'. Elena and Badariah, the two protagonists in the story, demonstrated different extremes albeit with their similar backgrounds as school buddies and girlfriends. They enjoyed a girl talk

during tea time at a hotel's restaurant. From the analysis of thematic choice, Elena's focus revealed her concern over weight loss, restaurant setting, babies and marriage life. Unlike Elena, Badariah enjoyed food and a care free style of living. She also had no issues with her pre-marital pregnancy though she her name was distinctively that of a Malay Woman.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To discuss the findings pertaining to the types of thematic choice found in the selected short stories, a summary of the specification of findings and the distribution of each category is shown in Table 3 below.

TABLE 3. Distribution of Themes in *And She Became an Angel* (ASBA) & *A Subtle Degree of Restraint* (ASDA)

Theme in Declaratives	No of clauses		Frequency of occurrences	
Name of the short stories	ASBA	ASDR	ASBA	ASDR
Marked Topical Theme	22	25	4.6	10.2
Unmarked Topical Theme	282	162	59.2	66.1
Textual + Unmarked Topical	130	28	27.3	11.4
Interpersonal + Unmarked Topical	1	2	0.2	0.8
Textual +Interpersonal + Unmarked Topical	-	1	-	0.4
Fronted β Clause	2	1	0.4	0.4
Theme in Wh Interrogatives				
Unmarked Topical	15	7	3.2	2.9
Textual + Unmarked Topical	5	6	1.1	2.4
Interpersonal + Unmarked Topical	1	-	0.2	-
Theme in Yes/No Interrogatives				
Unmarked Topical	9	7	1.9	2.9
Textual+ Unmarked Topical	2	1	0.4	0.4
Theme in Exclusive Imperatives				
Unmarked Topical	2	1	0.4	0.4
Unmarked Textual	1	-	0.2	-
Theme in Exclamative				
Unmarked Topical	1	-	0.2	-
Total Themes	476	255	99.7	99.9

THEMATIC CHOICE OF THE TWO SELECTE TEXTS

All the Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes either accompanied by Textual or Interpersonal elements in the thematic position have been investigated and categorised. From the analysis, it has been found that Unmarked Topical Themes are the most prominent themes found in the two short stories, 59.2% and 66.1% for *And She Became an Angel* and *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*

respectively (here forth *ASBA* and *ASDR*). These findings are parallel with past research claiming that Unmarked Topical Themes dominated the most distribution of clauses in any types of texts (Katrini, 2015 as cited in Erni, M, 2017; Arunsirot, 2013; Ma, 2003). Unmarked Topical Themes precede the subject matter of the clauses and enable the experiential interpretation of the text to be revealed (Matthiessen, 1995, p.20). The second prominent type of thematic choices are Textual + Unmarked Topical Themes (27.3% & 11.4%). Textual themes enable a systemic flow from a clause to another and create cohesion and continuity in the text. In addition, the textual elements leading the clause, transpose the flow of text from one clause to another without undermining the message construed in the Unmarked Topical Themes. The distribution of themes for the two short stories goes in the order: Unmarked Topical, 282 clauses or 59.2% for *ASBA*, and 162 clauses or 66.1% for *ASDR*. Textual + Unmarked Topical, 130 clauses (27.3%) and 28 clauses or 11.4%; Marked Topical, 22 clauses (4.6%) and 25 clauses (10.2%). Findings pertaining to RQ1 serves as a fundamental clausal census of the selected texts that would initiate the second and the third stages of analysis. From the types of thematic choice led by the protagonists of the texts, the weightage and degree of importance by ranking justified the concerns of the writers.

THE EXPERIENTIAL INTERPRETATION OF AND SHE BECAME AN ANGEL(*ASBA*)

In keeping with Halliday’s (1978) notion, a text can never be separated from the context when it comes to the interpretation of meanings (Banks, 2002). Within the suggested framework, the ranking of the writers’ concern from the dominant distribution of participants in thematic choice is another measure of meaning potential as a text is not merely a presentation of strings or clusters of words (ibid). The second stage of analysis follows the classification like this: clauses with Mandak as Marked/Unmarked themes is sorted into one group while Ipeng, her husband, takes up clauses with Ipeng and also clauses including Ipeng and Mandak as Marked/Unmarked Topical themes. Others are grouped into social-cultural elements as themes. Thus, the constitution of the Malay Muslim community in the text is simplified into three categories: Mandak, Ipeng, and the social-cultural entity. The findings that show a certain pattern of representation of meanings are as follows:

TABLE 4. Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes in *As She Became an Angel*: Types of participants and domination

No		No of Clauses	Percentage of Occurrences
1.	Mandak as Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes	193	40.9%
2.	Ipeng as Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes	154	33.5%
3.	Social-cultural elements as Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes	129	25.5%
	Total of clauses investigated	476	99.9%

In ‘*And She Became an Angel*’, it is obvious that Mandak dominates the largest distribution of Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes, with 193 clauses upon 476 investigated or 40.9% of the story representing Mandak and her *Processes* as acting, sensing, being and uttering. Ipeng, her husband, with 154 clauses or 33.5% of the clauses, a seemingly important character in the story, follows it. The findings have determined the roles played by the protagonists and reflected the

concern of the writers in the story. Thus, the ranking unveiled that Mandak is the main protagonist though she resides in a male dominant world and the story revolved around “the one thing of life”, to become a feathered-wing angel. Moreover, the findings were further transited to the analysis in Stage 3 that examined the transitivity meanings which reveal whom she is.

TYPES OF PROCESSES BY PROTAGONISTS

Viewing the selected short stories from a Systemic Functional perspective, Marked and Unmarked Topical themes can be very experience-based as Marked Topical Themes are mostly representations of environmental features such as time, locations and manner, while Unmarked Topical Themes are made up by the participants of the stories as actors, carriers, sensers, behavers or sayers. Similarly, identity can be construed through the understanding of oneself and the environment (Correa, 1983). In order to enhance the interpretation of women’s identity in ‘*And She Became an Angel*’, the process types and the experiential elements that disclose the identity of these participants are detailed in Table 5 below.

TABLE 5. Types of processes dominated by groups of protagonists in ‘*And She Became an Angel*’

Types of Process (<i>meaning</i>)	Groups of protagonists			
	Mandak		Ipeng	
	N. o. C.	%	N. o. C.	%
<i>Material (Actor; Goal)</i>	96	49.7	78	50.6
<i>Mental (Senser, Phenomenon)</i>	28	14.5	34	22.1
<i>Relational (Carrier, Attribute; Token, Value)</i>	32	16.6	10	6.5
<i>Behavioral (Behaver, Behavior)</i>	14	7.3	15	9.7
<i>Verbal (Sayer, Verbiage)</i>	23	11.9	16	10.4
<i>Existential (Existent)</i>	0	0	1	0.7
Total of processes	193	100	154	100

N.o.C.: Number of Clauses

According to Eggins (2004), transitivity patterns represent the experiential world, encoding “meanings about the world, about experiences, about how we perceive and experience what is going on” (p.249). The system construes inner and outer experiences of the doer into different types of processes and participants. As shown in Table 5, when Mandak carries a *Material* process, she is labelled as an *Actor* (49.7%); while she experiences a *Mental* process (14.5%), she takes the role as a *Senser*. The role as the participant, Mandak, construes the quality of her personality in the story and manifests her identity as a Malay woman from the overt and inner processes she preceded. Table 5 also shows that Mandak and Ipeng demonstrated different patterns of distribution in terms of types of processes. As for Mandak, the sequence of distribution follows like this: *Material* process (49.7%), *Relational* (16.6%), *Mental* (14.5%), *Verbal* (11.9%), and

lastly *Behavioral* (7.3%). The portrait of Mandak is thus well proportioned, evenly illustrated from different angles. Readers can see her, feel her, hear her and anticipate her doings. She is not only known for the actions taken once she determines to become an angel overtly, but also the *Relational* processes which shows the qualities she carries, and the *Mental* and *Verbal* processes that reflect her determination to become an angel.

MANDAK – THE ANGEL

The *Material* processes that Mandak leads is quite compatible compared to her male counterpart if looked from a male dominant Muslim world. The *Material* processes she holds (49.7%) is just slightly lesser than her counterpart, Ipeng (50.6%). A closer examination of the processes she has would unfold her true identity and justify her as the heroin of the story, an action taker with mind and might. She yearns for transformation and freedom in an obscure form. Mandak fights against life with routines and boredom from the beginning of the story as evidenced in the extract taken from ‘*And She Became an Angel*’:

One day, **Mandak** looks up from the mashed chilli, onions and garlic mix **she is pounding** in the old batu lesong that **she had inherited** from her mother, **and [she] decides** that she **wants** to be like in the movies on television **she watched** when she was young; **exactly like those in foreign books of devotion she had seen** when while **[she was] attending** primary school run by missionaries – **all white-robed, with white feathered wings [were] spreading** serenely; that kind of angel.

Mandak is not a woman given to impulsive, life-changing decisions. **She does not think** very deeply about anything either, for **how could she when she has** a family and household to run, and chickens to care for? **This is** a new thought; **one she cannot ignore**. **The thought ignites** a very strange feeling somewhere deep in her chest. **It feels** warm, and **[It] keeps** growing until **she becomes** breathless.

(Dina Zaman, p.37)

Mandak’s life is captivated in a scene where she is mashing up a chili, onions and garlic mix with an “old *batu lesong* that she is inherited from her mother”, an old mortar and pestle passed down to her from her mother. The monotonous rhythm when grounding the mixture makes her fed up with the cooking that she does every day (C18). She has done nothing but taking care of her husband throughout her married life” (p. 38). Drowning into the daily house chores, she suddenly gets a flashback from a remote time from her primary school days. It is an impulsive thought of becoming a western angel with feathered wings she witnessed when she was very young. It is a ridiculous and absurd idea to anyone in a Malay society, especially her husband Ipeng, who represents the head of religion in a patriarchal Muslim family. Looking further, she is nevertheless a true Actor from the *Material* processes she performs from a Systemic Functional perspective. Table 6 shows the *Material* processes that surpass all other human inner activities and justify Mandak an action doer.

TABLE 6. Material processes performed by Mandak in *As She Became an Angel*

No	Clause No	Examples
1.	C15	She sits on the floor
2.	C28	She stops mashing
3.	C32	She rips the feathers...

4	C119	and [she] nibbles the rayed meat.
5.	C137	She has also abandoned her monthly trips to ...
6.	C180	and [she] blows out the kerosene night-lamp.
7.	C259	she ventures only a few yards out of their compound.
8.	C283	On one night, she climbs to the top of a shed.
9.	C309	“ I have been travelling.”
10	C414	She kicks the weak wood of the reban

The *Material* processes she performs are a realisation of her dream and turn her into an angel, the “one thing in her life” (C26). The *Material* processes whereby she is realized as Actors is dynamic and vigorous. These clauses further enhance the interpretation of Mandak’s as the heroin of the story together with her other roles of participants in the clauses. Definitely, Mandak is vividly depicted from different types of processes she is preceded, such as *Carriers* to the adjective adjuncts describing her, “I **am** a pretty angel;”; *Behavers* “she **sees...**” “she **hears...**” or *Sayers* “she **blesses...**” as *Verbiages*. The roles of participants that Mandak embodied with has proven she is a real protagonist, a 3-Dimensional character who could be seen, heard and anticipated from all angles: the *Material* processes (49.7%) as *Actors* performing all the doing, *Relational* processes being *Carriers* for her attributes She has been angry before (C109), when she was younger (C144); *Tokens* suggesting *Values* of her being, “if she could be just one thing in her life...” (C26), “she is on mission” (141), and “I am a pretty angel” (C219); *Sensers* who can see, hear, feel and think in clauses like “she looks at her bewildered husband...” (C68), “she feels time is short” (C142), “I simply want to become an angel” (C172), and “she hears [her friend] plead to God ...” (C274).

In addition, Mandak as the protagonist could be observed by the readers when she performs the role as *Sayers* in a number of clauses with approximately 11.9% of the overall processes. She “grunts” (C60), “sighs” (C63), “complains” (C105), “petulantly tells” (C113), “retorts” (C117), asks (C123, C347, C391), “wishes” (C143), “says” (C178, C232), “blesses” (C186), “nothing to say” (C222), “tell” (C311, C316), “lies” (C322), protest (C330, C331), “squeals” (C334), query (C339, C411), refuse (C341, C342, C343), command (C344), insist (C358), “shoos” (C383), “calls out” (C409), “cries” (C442), and exclaims (C 450, C459). With all these *Verbal* processes, Mandak is the heroin who does not quietly accept her fate but courageously fights against being anonymous in a remote kampong.

The angel that Mandak wants to be is “all white-robed, with white feathered wings spreading serenely” (C5). It is the angel she “had seen when attending primary school run by missionaries (C4). The angel that Mandak wants to be is grouped under the third category of participants: social-cultural elements as Participants in the story text. In contrast to the old *batu lesong* inherited from her mother and the Islamic *malaikats* (C174), the feather-winged angel depicted in the Christian-Western cultures she has seen during her missionary-school days represents a new thought (C9). This desire to transform into a Christian-Western version of an angel grows until she becomes breathless (C13). To gather feathers for making the two wings, she “rips” her pillows (C32), “spry, chasing the hens and roosters in their compound” (C75), resulting in, “there are already five naked chickens and one naked rooster (C76).” All that she could get from her surroundings became significant when Mandak wants to make a transformation to her life, a breakthrough from the *Material* and *Mental* processes she carries, turning her determination into actions.

Oppression in *And She Became an Angel*, came disguised in the form of Ipeng, Mandak's husband. He is a good man with a humble background and mediocre nature, working as a carpenter in the kampong, and accepting simple meals. However, when seeing his wife new behaviours, he timidly and gently questions why his wife's obsession to become a western form of angel but not an Islamic one. He envies his wife's passion but keeps reminding himself that all her strange behaviours are against the Malay customs, thus, he often emphasises "**we are Malays**" (C233). This is depicted in the following extract below:

To have a wife who wants to become an angel, is one thing. **He could tolerate** that as long as she confines her activities to the home, but now **she says** she wants to go out. **We are Malays**, **he thinks**, such a thing would be unbecoming, not to mention *syirik*. *How is he going to explain* this to his friends and his family? *How is he going to tell* them that **Mandak wants** to fly? (C230- C236)

A gentleman's solution for his struggles of handling his literary insane wife, shown through a *Material* process, "**He could lock her up**" (C237), but he "*has always prided himself on not being*" (C238) that type of husband who does not allow his wife to do what she wants. The struggle resolves when "**he peers** through the open window to see her admiring her angel-self in the mirror" (C248). The inner deprivation in disguise has pushed him to become the predator of oppression towards Mandak. The impact of seeing his wife admiring her angel-self in the mirror could possibly be jealousy, rooted from his own disability of expression, "and [**he**] *becomes* jealous for her new passion" (C183). A good man is always deprived because of his fearfulness of making his own decision. He is only too good to follow what being a Malay man should be and live comfortably with life as a carpenter, a husband, and a member of the Malay constitution. The only challenge he faces is to stop his wife's abnormal mission to become an angel. Framing within the cultural and religious constitution, Ipeng decides to detain his wife in a chicken coop and it leads to a tragic end of the story. Thus, Ipeng eventually has become the source of oppression, the predator of domestic abuse.

THE EXPERIENTIAL INTERPRETATION OF A SUBTLE DEGREE OF RESTRAINT(ASDR)

The Experiential metafunction construes the meanings of text from the human's experiences, behaviours and relationships (Tan & Teh, 2014). Generally, within the metafunction, the realization of meanings is investigated through types of *Participants*, *Process*, *Markedness* of themes presented with the temporal or spatial elements in the themes. Therefore, the interpretation of text could be sorted from the domination of the participants and also types of *Processes* that were followed by the *Participants*.

WHO HAS BEEN RESTRAINT?

The concern of the writers is revealed through the experiential elements of the clauses, first from the participants, next the processes. The markedness of the themes complement the experiential interpretation of the participants and processes, contextualizing the text. Be it marked or unmarked, presented in various forms of the clauses, the thematic choices enable the Experiential and Interpersonal meanings to be construed into the messages from the dominating distribution of clauses. The exploration of the experiential components is bound to the types of themes in the

nomination with a scanning of the characteristics of the participants and processes. The whole procedure has been categorized into four groups in *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*, where, the protagonists and the circumstantial elements of the story are labelled according to the frequency of occurrences in the analysis. Examples of the analysis is shown in Table 7, and its findings are tabled in Table 8:

TABLE 7. Groups of participants as taken from ‘*A Subtle Degree of Restraint*’

Groups of Participants					
No.	Clauses	Elena as Topical Themes	Badariaha s Topical Themes	Azman as Topical Themes	Social and Cultural Elements as Topical Themes e.g. dining chairs, the vase, the unangi, the willow, babies, luck, etc.
C233	Elena left the cash on the table.	1			
C234	and [she] walked towards the restaurant’s entrance.	1			
C235	The florid, pinkish vessel loomed steadfast in her path.				1
C236	She reached out	1			
C237	and [she] pushed it with the palm of her hand.	1			
C238	It rocked left,				1
C239	[It rocked] right,				1

TABLE 8. Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes in *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*: Types of participants and domination

No		No of Clauses	Percentage of Occurrence
1.	Elena as Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes	86	35.1
2.	Badariah as Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes	57	23.3
3.	Azman as Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes	12	4.9
4.	Social-cultural & natural elements as Marked/Unmarked Topical Themes	90	36.7
Total of clauses investigated		245	100.0%

Surprisingly, the most dominant protagonist in *A Subtle Degree of Restraint* is neither Elena nor Badariah, but the Social-cultural elements that are a combination of the surroundings of the restaurant and the decoration or the incidences, such as the slimming programme. The ranking of distribution followed by the protagonist or the heroin, Elena, who ironically plays a passive role when she is further investigated from the processes she is embodied with. Next to Elena, the third ranking goes to Badariah, an action taker and vocal protagonist unlike Elena, seemingly a more passive and quieter role in the story.

ELENA –THE PRISONER OF HER OWN

The experiential metafunction in the analysis is an attempt to investigate how the identity of the protagonists could be realized through the SFL analysis. The focus is drawn on the types of processes bound to the participants. The processes determined the types of *Participants* the protagonist possess and the interpretation of identity is then dived in as shown in Table 9.

TABLE 9. Types of processes dominated by group of protagonists in ‘*A subtle degree of restraint*’

Types of Process (<i>meaning</i>)	Group of protagonists					
	Elena		Badariah		Azman	
	N.o.C.	%	N.o.C.	%	N.o.C.	%
<i>Material (Actor; Goal)</i>	33	38.4	26	45.6	6	50
<i>Mental (Senser, Phenomenon)</i>	21	24.4	5	8.9	1	8.3
<i>Relational (Carrier, Attribute; Token Value)</i>	11	12.8	6	10.5	0	0
<i>Behavioral (Behaver, Behavior)</i>	10	11.6	9	15.8	3	25
<i>Verbal (Sayer, Verbiage)</i>	11	12.8	9	15.8	2	16.7
<i>Existential (Existent)</i>	0	0	2	3.5	0	0
Total of Processes	86	100	57	100	12	100

In *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*, it is easily seen that Elena, being an elected main protagonist, involves more *Mental* processes as *Sensers* in the story when compared to the normal pattern to her other counterparts. Despite the normal trend that occurred for most leading protagonists, Elena looks inactive by dominating 38.4% *Material* processes that is merely 14% more than her *Mental* processes (24.4%). She is presented as a quiet and reserved Malay woman in an international metropolis, confining herself in her own judgments towards the surroundings. The excerpt below is one of the chunks with clauses that shows her inactiveness:

(C1) **On entering the restaurant, she saw** it. (C2) **A large fuchsia orb that occupied** the room with its gaudy hue, (C3) [**The large fuchsia orb was**] holding a generous spray of elegant brown willow twigs. (C4) **The vase was** probably imported from Vietnam, with a cracked lacquered surface intended to lend it an antique effect. (C5) **All through lunch, her eyes strayed** to its bulbous presence.

Elena the protagonist, occupied 38.4% of the *Material* processes, but 24.4% of her *Mental* processes lead to the surroundings and past happenings. Eventually, these *Mental* processes have been developed into the highest group of *Participants*, the social-cultural elements and the interaction and judgement she makes towards her high school girl friend, Badariah. 36.7% of the total themes comprises the concern of Elena: Her mind and eyes fixates on the decorations of the restaurant; the food she fancies, the slimming programme she goes through in order to secure a husband; the baby she is hungry for; the judgements upon Badariah’s weight and a subtle disappointment after knowing Badariah’s pregnancy and so on so forth.

The clauses collected in the following Table 10 is a summary of the *Mental* and *Behavioural* processes that Elena is leading. The pattern of thematization of these *Mental* and *Behavioural* processes all lead to external groups of participants such as “the delicate, lithe backs of the dining chairs (C7), the demureness of the cream carpet (C8), the hunger of her body (C38), the hunger for a baby (C45 – C52), the Iron Chefs of human bodies (C55-C61) and “[her **uncorsetted waist** was] restrained by her throat that constricted against all manner of deliciousness” (C62). It is Elena who is self-restrained against the surroundings, the food and the marriage with “tak ada rezeki”, *no baby no luck no blessing*. The *Mental* processes underline all these. Evidences are provided below in Table 10.

TABLE 10. Examples of Mental Processes in *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*

N. o. C.	Examples of Mental Processes
C44	Fancy, she now <i>knew</i> , was a dangerous thing.
C50	She <i>imagined</i> they [babies] tasted like lamb, only sweeter.
C60	She <i>forgot</i> the taste of real food,
C97	She <i>was hesitating</i> between the green and the white (mochi).
C110	She <i>watched</i> the waiter return with a fresh pot.
C138	Elena <i>mentally calculated</i> how much Badariah weighted.
C167	She <i>wanted</i> to grab the chair from beneath Badariah,
C179	[her eyes were] <i>staring</i> at the now empty plate.
C182	Elena <i>thought</i> .
C 205	All these years, Elena <i>assumed</i> Badariah didn’t have a love life.

BADARIAH – A TRUE ACTOR

Unlike Elena, Badariah is more vigorous with material (45.6%), verbal (15.8%), and behavioral (15.8%) processes that make her a modern and outspoken Malay woman. She is a 3-Dimensional protagonist, a heroin in action. She is presented in Material, Verbal and Behavioral processes (45.6% +15.8% + 15.8%). She is heard as Sayers, “**So how come you still don’t have babies?**”, “**Are you going to eat that?**”, “**So, do you even want babies?**” (C94), “Sure, thanks. **Food’s** good. Nice restaurant”, (C101-C104), “**What? The vase? I think** it’s lovely! **Don’t you like it?**” (C116-C119) and “**I’m pregnant**” (C202). She is seen as Behavers, “**Badariah frowned**” (C114), “**Badariah laughed** (C128), **her eyebrows raised** (C129), “**Badariah cackled** (C149)”. Lastly, she is performing as Actors, “**Badariah reached** across the table” (C34). “**its neat, uneaten half** [was] **pried** apart by **Badariah’s deftly held chopsticks**” (C37), “**Badariah wiped** her generous

lips” (C95), “Her trunk-like hand *reached* out for a mochi” (C96) “**Lips together, she stretched** her lower jaw” (C165), and “**She rose**” (C219), “[**she was**] *tossing* a clutch of ringgit on the table (C220). The ranking of themes led by Badariah is in the third place, lesser than the social cultural elements as Themes and Elena as Themes. However, she is the one who performs most of the doing in the restaurant.

DEPRIVATION

From a close investigation of thematic choices dominated in *A Subtle Degree of Restraint*, ironically, neither Elena (35.1%) nor Badariah (22.3%) is ranked as the most dominated *Participant* of the story. Instead, the highest domination of thematic choices of the clauses is the social-cultural elements or inanimate objects (36.7%) such as a vase, a mochi, unagi, carpeted floor, the willow found in the text. Elena is a slim, modern young wife whereas Badariah is an overweight Malay woman, the latter who have come back from abroad with an open perspective on various topics which could possibly define as the new hybrid Malay women. They are two representations of the modern Malay women in a globalized metropolis, where they could be seen enjoying Japanese desserts while criticizing the design of a Vietnamese vase. Elena seems to be independent in her thinking while enjoying a luxurious lifestyle with her sentiments about the vase, the food and Badariah’s body shape; amusingly, all these take up all of Elena’s focus and dominates topical themes of the clauses that intertwine each other as text. Elena experiences a subtle degree of deprivation that is invisible from the scene. The invisible oppression is from within, when she ‘**imagined**’, ‘**forgot**’, ‘**wanted**’, ‘**didn’t expect**’, ‘**watched**’, ‘**thought**’, ‘**assumed**’, and so forth. The processes accompanied by Elena as participants are mostly passive; they are *Mental, Relational, Verbal, Behavioral* and *Existential* processes that are passive and motionless. Elena is intensely prisoned in her own thoughts, the terrible experience of getting herself married through a torturing slimming programme. The ravenous hunger starts from her marriage life to keep herself in shape and the helplessness of being barren since married. Apparently, she is a lady of leisure who has little to do with her days, a new modern Malay woman with freedom of time and good taste of life that many envy; however, the invisible prison surrounding her resonates from the *Mental* processes she entailed in the clauses collected in Table 11.

TABLE 11. *Mental* processes taken by Elena

No	Examples of processes taken from <i>A Subtle Degree of Restraint</i>
C167	Elena <i>watched</i> her friend chew, [she was] <i>imagining</i> the soft elasticity of the white ball in her own mouth,
C168	its pliant dough [<i>was</i>] <i>sticking</i> to the teeth.
C169	The crunch of finely ground peanuts [<i>was</i>] <i>bursting</i> salty amidst the sweetness.
C170	She <i>wanted</i> that last <i>mochi</i> .
C171	But Badariah <i>had devoured</i> it without asking.

As for Badariah, she enjoys food, sex and all the good things of life. She finishes the unagi, mochi and enjoys a laughter while discovering her friend’s intolerance with the round- shaped vase placed at the centre of the restaurant. She shows her victory when Elena is startled by “I’m pregnant” and asked her “But when—who married you?” Badariah with a ‘wry smile’ says, “Not everyone has to starve themselves to get a man.” Badariah a Malay woman with a distinctive Malay

name does something to appear ridiculous and contradicts the Muslim way of life. Allegedly, she claims success in fighting for freedom with her ‘wry smile’; however, there is a subtle degree of restraint after she mockingly comments on herself:

"I'm a skinny girl in a bodacious body.
[I am] Just like that vase.
Inside, I'm thin.

In response to Badariah's statement, Elena gives her judgment:

Elena *mentally calculated* how much Badariah weighed.
[**Badariah is**] *Pushing* eighty kilos probably, [**she is**] *judging* from the spillage of thighs over the edges of the delicate dining chair.
Almost twice the size of Elena, whose own limbs *stayed* neatly within the boundaries of her seat. [**There is**] No extra flesh oozing over the lip of the chair's bottom.

Badariah a fighter for freedom announces victory but in a ‘wry’ and mocking manner. The level of victory hence is an on-going question though it is not concluded in the story.

THE REPRESENTATION OF MALAY WOMEN

The portrayal of Malay women in the selected short stories were descended by the Malay women who lived in the 60s and 70s. They were there but they were silenced. Mandak, being the only representative of Malay women in *And She Became an Angel*, characterises a very contrasting image of Malay women's identity. Her life effort is to become a western-like angel with two feathered wings, the one thing of life after garnishing garlics and chili every day for almost her entire life. Mandak portrays an awakening Malay woman whose eyes sparks with the dream of becoming an angel. She forsakes her feminism elements such as preparing meals, waiting for the husband, and starts her pursue of the one thing of life. Mandak indeed signifies a breakthrough that Malay women can fight against the didactic and submissive role in the tradition of being Malay women. Her sacrifice in the village fire is a transformation of life that is destined, from the progress of feminism, to feminist movement and lastly a complete female who fears not the public, the culture and the tradition.

A Subtle Degree of Restraint foregrounds an eruption of Malay women's sentiment in a rapid globalised cosmopolitan. Elena has physically qualified her identity as a native of the cosmopolitan Kuala Lumpur; however, the struggles of securing a first-class husband with the slimming programme and controlled diet, becoming timid and quiet in front of her husband and her long-time girlfriend have shuttered the dream of the new hybrid Malay woman. She represents the new hybrid of Malay women who are materially and superficially a fit habitant of the fast globalised cosmopolitan Kuala Lumpur; however, her anger explodes while walking out from the restaurant accentuated the degree of restraint being a Malay woman in the great cosmopolitan. On the other hand, Badaria, another representation of Malay women seems declaring her victory over the traditional and cultural bondage and truly lives her life independently, a breakthrough of Malay women is nevertheless failed with her “wry smile” in an unanswered ending. The freedom for new hybrid of Malay women in the rapid globalised cosmopolitan is seemingly sophisticated. There is an invisible bondage that both of them are unlikely to break through. The experience of life goes differently under the same roof. A subtle degree of restraint underscores all.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the current study holds its concern on the Malay women and the society they dwell in. Focusing on the Hallidayan notion of language and its configuration of meanings in the text, the investigation demonstrated how textual and experiential metafunctions construed the representation of Malaysian Malay women identity. In addition, the interpretive text analysis also suggested a refreshing approach of literary criticism in the MLE. From a linguistic spectrum, SFL is indeed a resourceful framework, letting the text tell its context.

Unlike other Muslim women in different parts of the world, in a Malaysian context, Malay women enjoy a greater degree of liberty; however, the description of freedom is sophisticated. Being planted in a highly Islamised society of Malaysia, these Malay women shared various life experiences that realise certain universal truth of humanity. Either in the remote kampong or in a materialised cosmopolitan, challenges and issues these Malay women faced are commonly anticipated by many women all over the globe. The invisible bondage is universally alike; the experience of life goes differently under the same roof; the humanistic values echo in one tune, from feminism, feminist to female, and from the text to its context.

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