

# **Researching Ideologies Using Discourse Analysis: A Case of Bakun Hydroelectric Public Controversy Study<sup>1</sup>**

by

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## **1. Preamble**

This paper essentially is our reflections and assessment of our own study of Bakun Hydro Electric Project which was conducted in 200-2003. Our discussion will focus on specifically on methodological perspectives that we have employed in conducting our study – discourse analysis. However, it should noted a the outset that the study was not about environmental discourse, although it does contain discourse on environment. The study was more concerned on the public controversy and examined the ideological forces behind the debates.

This paper will begin by outlining our study on public controversy. This will serve as a reference point while discussing discourse analysis as a methodology. The objective of this paper to discuss discourse analytic method as an appropriate methodology in understanding ideology and ideological forces.

Using the case of Bakun Hydro Electric controversy study this paper seeks to discuss the methodological aspects of the study, particularly on discourse analysis and articulation theory. The purpose of the study is to chart the various ideological perspectives that guide the participants in their debate on the hydro-electric projects. Specifically, this paper will outline how discourse analysis can be used to analyze ideological stance of various parties engaged in the discourse on hydro-electric project.

### **1.1 Bakun Hydro Electric Project – A Brief History**

The Bakun Hydro Electric Project located in Sarawak was approved by the Federal Government in 1986. The feasibility study was conducted in 1981 by SAMA Consortium on behalf of German Agency of Technology Co-operation (GTE). The initial cost of the project was estimated at RM 13.6 billion, which covered 69000 hectare of tropical forest. The project would have to relocate about 10,000 residents around the area. The Bakun Hydro Project is expected to generate electrical energy of about 2400 megawatt (MW).

The federal government decided to temporarily halt the project in 1990 due to several unforeseen problems especially the protest from various parties as well as financial and economical problem faced by the government at that time.

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In 1993, the Federal Government decided to resume the project but the budget allocation was reduced to about one-half of the initial cost and in 1994, federal government decided to award the Bakun Project to Ekran Berhad, a Sarawak-based company.

In 1995, three Sarawak locals filed a petition directly at the High Court citing the Sarawak State Government failed to follow procedure in carrying out a study for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). As a result of the petition, the project was declared illegal by the High Court in June 1996. However, in 1997, The Court of Appeal reversed the High Court ruling citing reason being Sarawak was not subjected to the Environmental Act because Sarawak has its own environment regulation.

In 1997, the project was stopped for the second time when Ekran Berhad, the main company that manage the Bakun project had some disagreement with the main contractor ABB, a Swedish conglomerate resulting in the Federal Government taking over the project.

In 1999, The then Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, announced that the Bakun Project would resumed, but on a smaller scale, generating 500 megawatt (MW). Nevertheless, it was reversed in 2001 to its original scale i.e. generation 2400 megawatt (MW) but the plan to build deep sea electrical channel was dropped.

## **2. The Bakun Study**

The Bakun Hydro project in Sarawak which was started in 1996 has attracted many groups of people and organizations locally and internationally. It is very interesting to analyze since it has become a controversial subject. A project that cost a lot money (initially the estimated cost was RM 7 billion) naturally received a lot of attention and comments from individuals, non profit organizations, private sectors and corporate bodies, political leaders and the likes. There were some pros and cons expressed by these interests groups.

The study is not about ideology per se, but rather understanding the various ideological forces behind the debate and how various parties articulate those ideology.

This paper seeks to analyze and elaborate the public debate surrounding public interest's issue especially the Bakun Hydro controversy by studying how the authority and the publics (individual, groups and organization) articulated their views, opinion and their stand with regard to the issue. This paper will also compare the form of their arguments, the values projected, the ideology with which they based their arguments on and the channel or media used to articulate their views.

Taking into consideration the media situation in Malaysia which are controlled and are not allowed to discuss public issues freely and openly, this paper not only analyze the discourse in the main stream media , but also analyze the discussion from the alternative channels and public arenas inclusive of internet, public forum and seminars.

This paper will apply articulation theory by Stuart Hall (1988) to elaborate ideological forces which empowered the particular opinion articulated by both parties whether they are for or against the Bakun Hydro Project.

#### Methodology

In order to understand the debate and the controversial issue of Bakun, the researcher had analyzed reports and public document published from 1986 to 2002, whether they were published in mass media such as the newspapers The new Straits Times, Berita Harian, (inclusive of Sabah and Sarawak edition), Nanyang Siang Pau, Majalah Aliran, Asiaweek, Far Eastern Economic Review, as well as from internet sources. The materials were chosen based on the availability and accessibility. Since this study is not quantitative, which try to reach a conclusion based on representative sample, therefore the data collection technique would not pose any problem where the validity of the analysis is concerned.

Based on the content of the report, the researcher analyzed the perspective of a report, the actor involved whether they were government political leaders, opposition political leaders, foreign political leaders, government officers or administrators, pressure groups and ad hoc, NGOS be it local or foreign, media or individual that took part in the debate concerning The Bakun Project issue.

The purpose of this study is not to quantify which arguments get more coverage or more attention but it is to see the debate about the Bakun Controversy as an ideological competition of the interest groups. This study is more interested to see how the interests groups participated in the debate and how they present their views and opinion. This study will try to evaluate the ideology behind the arguments by using articulation theory. It will also look at who are the interest groups and what are the channels they used to present their views.

The Bakun Hydro Project was chosen because this controversy has dragged on for a long time since 1996 and is still attracting peoples' attention. It is a mega project, high cost implication, involved environment and is expected to have a great impact on socio-cultural of the people especially the local community. The Bakun project controversy has multi dimensional – economic, politic, social and legal. It has attracted not only local interest groups but also various groups outside the country.

The researcher has analyzed main stream media reports as well as alternative media especially internet since the Bakun Project started in 1986 to 2002. The analysis includes news reports, editorials, general features and letters to the editor for the newspapers New Straits Time, Aliran, Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), Asiaweek as well as various sources from the internet. As far as possible, this study tries to be exhaustive in getting all the materials and reports to analyze.

This paper is part of the discourse analysis of the environment which looked at the Bakun Hydro Project. There are two general aspects the researchers wished to study; the first one is the media and Bakun issue, second is the discourse about Bakun and the environment. The second stage of the study is to look at the debate about the controversial issue and the Bakun project is made into a case study. Realizing the Fact that the main stream media in Malaysia are not free to report and discuss controversial issues, this study take into consideration other forum that might be used

by various groups who wish to influence the policy on environment such as alternative media, forum or seminar and interviews with NGOs.

## 2.1 Articulation Theory

Articulation theory was formulated by Stuart Hall (1986) in elaborating the ideology and public discourse. According to Hall (1986: 53);

The theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects.

Articulation theory looks at the relationship between power and domination in determining the disseminations of any ideology in the public discourse.

Based on the above definition, Hanczor (1997) said that articulation theory is made up of two components. At one level, articulation is about the flow of ideological forces such as capitalism, nationalism, patriarchy, heterosexualism, democracy and technology which materialized from general discourse and that limit the involved individual and group potential to build meaning as well as to support social movement. At the second level, articulation theory elaborate the ideological power imprecated with interests and activities of social group (Grossberg, 1992, pg. 123)

Hanczor (1997) contended that articulation has to take into consideration the resulted relationship between social group and ideology, and to evaluate the importance of the relationship in a certain historical context.

However, Hall (1986) warned that articulation between certain social group or movement and any one ideology that formed a socio-political system and later new social and political subject, is a relationship that is non-necessary.

According to Makus, by understanding the term and logic in the public discourse within historical environment context, a researcher would understand the consciousness produced. Therefore Hall not only looked at the relationship between power and domination but also build a subtle understanding of the consciousness. Through his idea about articulation, Makus concluded that "*Hall's critical theory of ideology provides a systematic and comprehensive method for the analysis of discourse in interaction with social practices and structures.*"

Hall referred the articulation concept to;

"...the complex set of historical practices by which we struggle to produce identity or structural unity out of, on top of, complexity, difference, contradiction. Basically it refers to how individuals relate themselves to their social contexts and histories. While we are all in the same sense the repositories of past practices, thorough our actions we 'articulate' bridge and connect ourselves to practices and contexts in ways that are new to us. In other

terms, we continually shuttle between practices and meanings that are already constituted and 'the real conditions' in which we find ourselves. (Quoted from Grossberg).

In short, articulation theory emphasized communication as ... "*struggle to articulate and re articulate meanings and relations of power.*" (Probyn).

In Bakun controversy study, articulation theory is applied to look at the struggle between groups involved in the debate and how a certain ideology is articulated to provide meaning easily understood by the public. The ideology with which the arguments were based will only be detected by looking at the perspectives with which the arguments were put forward.

## **2.2 The Analysis of Perspectives and Ideological Forces in the Bakun Controversy**

The perspective and arguments in the Bakun controversies is organized into two categories; one perspective is supportive of the Bakun Project (pro-bakun) while the other one is against the project (known as anti-bakun). The categorization is based on the analysis of each report gathered from the all types of media whether the mainstream, alternative, or the internet. The perspectives would later be identified and named and the groups, institution/organization represented in the perspective would also be identified. The ideological forces which empowered the perspective (forces?) would be evaluated.

The debate on the issue can be classified into two opposing groups – the supporters of the hydro-electric project and those who opposed the projects.

Anti-Capitalism which includes green politics or environmentalism, feminism and economic boondoggle. On the other major ideological forces which is capital interest, developmentalism and free market economy.

### **2.2.1 Resistance towards Bakun Hydro Project**

The anti-bakun project came out with three perspectives; first, bakun project has a negative impact on environment; second, peoples' right; and the third one is economical boondoggle. There were a few marginal perspectives discovered such as feminism which were reviewed to attract women to join in the debate, the sovereignty of the law especially when the court ruled for the anti-bakun group.

#### **i. Peoples' Right**

The peoples' right perspective is the main perspective used by the anti-bakun group. In fact almost every report about bakun originated from anti-bakun group would touch on the question of the rights of the local community around the Belaga district. The

interest of the aborigine groups of Kenyah, Keyan, Penan and others has to be relocated by force. This has become the main issue in championing peoples' right perspective to explain the interest of these groups of people affected by the Bakun Project. The relocation of these people was not voluntarily implemented even though they were awarded compensation.

According to Aliran, *"The people's right to be consulted before the decision is made to implement a project affecting them is a fundamental right entrenched within our system of natural justice."* (Aliran Monthly, Jan/Feb. 1986: 19)

These statements clearly indicate people's right perspective used by NGO to protest the Bakun Project. In short, the negative impact on the environment and the quality of life of the local people has attracted local and foreign NGOs, and individuals who used ideological forces founded on democracy and human rights.

## ii. Negative Impact on environment

The main issue and the fundamental reason for the resistance are related to environmental damage of the environment. Since Bakun Project is directly related to the environment, therefore the main thrust of the debate was about the negative impact it has on the environment. The environmental issue was raised by NGOs such as International Rivers Network (IRN), Aliran, Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), opposition political party and a handful of individuals. This perspective was also related to the question of quality of life and the safety of the people. The question of relocation, floods, land slide, the safety of deep-sea cable transmitting the electricity across South China Sea were also highlighted by the anti-bakun group garnered from the reports studied, alternative media, public forum and the likes. The report by International Rivers Network (IRN), an NGO that champion human rights and environment, mentioned that Bakun project has serious impact on the tropical rainforest ecosystem. The Coalition of Concerned NGOs against Bakun (CCNAB) provides facts about the impact of Bakun on the environment.

## Opposition

**Green politics** is a body of political ideas informed by environmentalism aimed at developing a sustainable society. It is considered by its advocates to be an alternative to both left and right views and parties, although adherents to both views tend to view Greens as "on the other side". Certainly it is true that Green parties advocate measures that appear to conventional politicians different from those grouped into labour and capital by economic interests.

## iii. Economical Bondoggle

The critic said that the Bakun project was not founded on sound economic principles, one of which is, demand. It is considered unnecessary because the electricity supply

is sufficient. This project is like any other prestigious project before like Petronas Twin Tower and National Car Project.

According to CCNAB *"The rationale behind the project is fundamentally flawed: with its maximum capacity of 2400 MW, a consumption base of will have to be artificially created. This is against the principle of sustainable development, which prioritize demand management and full-scale studies of alternatives."*

SUARAM, in a statement commented that, *"The manner in which the Bakun dam has been justified – from the original 2400MW with submarine cable to West Malaysia, to a downscaled 500MW dam, now back to 2400 MW without submarine cable – smacks of very irresponsible policy making ... Almost certainly, no serious attempt has been made to justify the projects in terms of need and supply."*

The estimated cost of RM8,185 billion based on the cost, Feb 1983, does not take into consideration the interest rate during construction. Aliran raised the increasing debt of the country has surpassed the level permitted by the World Bank. The huge expenditure allocated to Bakun would increase the debt of the country and affect the allocation for education, for instance.

It can be seen as an ideological energy that opposes the privatization policies practiced in Malaysia. Privatization projects more often than not disregard the people's welfare but would guard the interest of economical and the ruling elite.

From the economic perspective the Anti-Bakun argued that the project was very luxurious as agreed by economic analyst, Chew Ping, an Associate Director of Standard and Poor's Rating Services, "... more about prestige than having greater returns on investment". Some critics characterized the Bakun Project as white elephant.

The issue of who really benefits from the project were one of the common arguments derived from Anti-Bakun group. Only a few people enjoyed the benefit. The local people did not get the direct benefit at all.

The probability of involvement by Tenaga Nasional Berhad in the project has become controversial from the economic point of view. In one article by Aliran predicted that the project would fare the same fate like other privatization projects before but this time Tenaga Nasional would be forced to finance the Bakun project. The article clearly emphasized the failure of the privatization policy. "The privatization gone wrong" was the title of the article referred.

Aliran further suggested that;

*"Tenaga should be left to purchase the electricity from independent producers only if it is cheaper than generating the electricity itself. The indications, however, are that Tenaga will eventually be made to pay Bakun Power a higher rate than its own cost of generation. The government will then be, once again, violating the conditions for a successful privatization ... (Aliran Monthly, 1996, 16 [3]:35.*

#### **iv. The Sovereignty of the Law**

This perspective is viewed as marginal perspective because it emerged for a short time only. It is created and used by the Anti-Bakun Project when the High Court ruled the Bakun Project illegal because it did not adhere to the procedure set by Environmental Quality Act [EQA], 1974. Aliran observed that High Court decision as "landmark judgment." The High Court blamed the Sarawak government and other parties involved in the project for failing to adhere to the AQA Act and it is unfair to the local people who were not given the opportunity to express their views. This perspective becomes the foundation of democracy ideology. The title of the article is "Remarkable Courage: Justice James Foong Lives up to the democratic expectation" (Aliran Monthly, 1996 16 [15]: 11) clearly demonstrated the democracy ideology of the Anti-Bakun group. The High Court ruling (decision) must be respected by all parties.

#### **v. Feminism**

This feminism perspective was not very obvious in the environmental debate. It was raised by Anti-Bakun group to give new dimension to the impact of environment. Aliran, in one of its articles, titled "Bakun and its impact on Women" (Aliran Monthly, 1996, 16 [2]: 20) looked at how Bakun affect women negatively because of sources of food, stress from relocation exercise; they lost the ownership of the traditional land and other source of nature. However this perspective cannot stand on its own, it has to be supported by the people's rights perspective discussed earlier. It is quite common for the groups engaged in the public debate to use women perspective (and children). In this instance, ideology based on feminism was not good enough to attract even the Anti-Bakun groups.

The Bakun Hydro Project controversy reveals several interesting aspects to be studied. The development project which involve large sum of money has economic implication, politic, wide socio-cultural impact on the society would surely create huge controversy. The Bakun controversy has been going on for almost two decades, the longest public controversy which involved many parties compared to other issues. This is because of the huge dimension of the project as well as the sum of money involved. The economic problem faced by the country and other country in the region would definitely has an impact on the implementation of the project.

From the academic point of view especially communication field, Bakun has some significance as a case study. First, the environmental discourse started to attract communication scholars and the development environmental communication. The second significance is from the aspect of communication theory concerning the public debate and controversies. Various theoretical approaches tries to understand how anyone ideology gat to be disseminated and accepted as an ideology of the country. Agenda setting perspective, political economy, rhetoric analysis, hegemony and articulation respectively tries to explain and elaborate the phenomena of the development and adoption of ideology in a society.

Based on the articulation theory by Stuart Hall (1986), this paper has underlined the various perspectives discovered, used and debated by the Anti-Bakun group. Each group involved would definitely calculate the perspective they want to assume. From that perspective, we will be able to understand the ideology that guide the perspective.

The second part of this study will look at the ideological forces that serve as perspective foundation of the pro-bakun groups.

### **2.2.2 Capital Interest - The Pro-Bakun Ideological Forces**

- i. Economic Development**
- ii. Pro-Globalisation**
- iii. Free Market Economy**

### **3. Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis is a broad term for various theoretical and analytical framework that examine the processes and practices in the construction of knowledge, social and political relationships between groups of people. Discourse analysis are commonly applied in conversational environment. However, this study focus on mediated communication, ie. discourse through media. Hence, it could be call media discourse.

Following Fairclough (1992) discourse refers to a socially constitutive use of language, constrained by social and instrutional contexts in which it is produced and consumed.

In studying the debate on Bakun, the analysis of discourse offers a promising way to examine the interplay of ideology, the power of representation and media practice, speciafically, the practices of news making and the working of language.

Discourse analysis is a perspective on social life that contains both methodological and conceptual elements. Discourse analysis involves ways of thinking about discourse (theoretical and metatheoretical elements) and ways of treating discourse as data (methodological elements).

Potter (1997) defines discourse analysis:

Has an analytic commitment to studying discourse as text and talk in social practices. That is, the focus is not on language as an abstract entity such as lexicon and set of grammatical rules (in linguistics), a system of differences (in structuralism), a set of rules for transforming statement (in Foucouldian geneologies). Instead, it is the medium for interaction; analysis of discourse becomes, then, analysis if what people do. (p.146)

Discourse analysis is more popular and accepted in the study of language and literature than in communication. For a more well written literature and definition of discourse one have to look into the language are – language and literature.

Discourse analysis is beginning to gain currency as one of the important methodology in communication studies. However, not many communication scholars have outline discourse analysis as a systematic methods. Much of the literature are derived from literature. One of the most significant contribution by Phillips and Hardy (2002) which provides an extensive, comprehensive and systematic discussion on discourse analysis and more importantly provide a coherent framework for understanding the different forms of discourse analysis that currently appear in the literature.

Phillips and Hardy (2002) stress the need to link to discursive level in the analysis, an aspect which would go beyond that what have been done in semiotics, hermeneutics, and narrative analysis, which mainly connect next to context without giving much consideration to the discursive levels.

Woodilla (1998) define discourse as actual practices of talking and writing. Adapting and borrowing Parker (1992), in my study, I define discourse as an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being. One cannot simply focus on an individual text, however; rather one must refer to *bodies* of text. Similarly, one must make reference to the social context in which the texts are found and discourses produced. It is this connection between discourses and the social reality that they constitute that makes discourse analysis a powerful method for studying social phenomena, such as the ideological debate on seemingly non-ideological issues such as the Bakun controversy.

Social reality is produced and made real through discourse, and social interactions cannot be fully understood without reference to the discourses that give them meaning.

Discourses are embodied and enacted in a variety of text, although they can exist beyond the individual texts that composed them. Text can thus considered a discursive 'unit' and a material manifestation of discourse (Challaby, 1996). Text may take a variety of forms, including written texts, spoken words, pictures, symbols, artifacts, and so forth (Grant, Keenoy & Oswick, 1998). Hence, discourse can exist either through mediated or face-to-face communication.

According to Kress (1995, p.123), text are the sites of the emergence of complex social meanings, produced in the particular history of the situation of production, that record in partial ways the histories of both the participants in the production of text and of institutions that are "invoked" or brought into play, indeed a partial history of the language and the social system, a partiality due to the structurings of relations of power of the participants.

Discourse analysis is interested in ascertaining the constructive effects of discourse through the structured and systematic study of texts (Hardy, 2001).

As suggested by Fairclough (1992), study on discourse will normally be 'three-dimensional', in the sense it connects texts to discourses, locating them in a historical

and social context, by which we refer to the particular actors, relationship, and practices that characterize the situation under study.

Ontologically and epistemologically, discourse analysis embodies a social constructivist view of the social world. Discourse analytic approaches share an interest in the constructive effects of language and are a reflexive, as well as interpretive, style of analysis.

Discourse analysis is distinguished by its commitment to a strong social constructivist view and in the way it tries to explore the relationships between, text (news media reports), discourse (Bakun issues), and context (politics and media).

Discourse analytic methods are unavoidably reflexive because the strong social constructivist epistemology that forms its foundation applies equally to the work of academic researchers. According to Wood and Kroeger (2000: 29-30);

Thus, the task of discourse analysis is not to apply categories to participants' talk, but rather to identify the ways in which participants themselves actively construct and employ categories in their talks. Further, all categorization is provisional; analysis requires constant reflexive attention to the process of categorization of both the participant and the analyst.

The term discourse analysis is broad and sometimes ambiguous. Across the social science literature, DA referred to many different approaches based on their theoretical assumptions. There are two key dimensions – one that emphasizes individual text or on the surrounding context and the other on the degree to which the research focuses on power and ideology as opposed to process of social construction.

Based in Phillips and Ravasi (1998) categories, the approach of the Bakun study is somewhat in between the critical linguistic analysis and critical discourse analysis. However, the Bakun study is not confined strictly to the critical discourse analysis, but uses the third dimension as suggested by Fairclough (1995) and Phillips and Hardy (2002), on the discursive activity.

Individual texts are closely examined to understand structures of ideology embedded in the text, and how rhetorical strategies to understand how green ideology and economic boondoggle are reproduced in the media reports.

Critical discourse analysis focuses on the role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining unequal power relations (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). In the Bakun study, the context in which the media exist provides the unequal power relations between the mainstream media and the alternative media. Critical discourse analysis, according to van Dijk (1996: 84), "should describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimated by talk and text of dominant groups and institutions." Researchers attempt to analyze "dialogical struggle (or struggles) as reflected in the privileging of a particular discourse and the marginalization of others" (Phillips and Hardy: 25).

The Bakun study is not on the discourse per se but on the ideology and ideological framework of various parties participated in the discourse. Informed by Articulation

Theory that proposed by Hall, every participants in any discursive activity are guided by a particular ideology. It is the ideology behind the discourse is focus of the study

### **3.1 The context**

Discourse analysis *requires* an analysis of text in a particular context. The context for mediated communication is the media system that governed and shaped the behavior of the Malaysian media. Hence, media in Malaysia are broadly and loosely classified as mainstream media and alternative media. In terms of political ideology, the mainstream media generally support the ruling political party and hence subscribe to same political ideology of the ruling class. On the other hand, the alternative media, generally do not subscribe to the political ideology of the ruling class. Against the backdrop of such media system, we could easily choose newspapers that would represent the ruling class and opposed to the ideology of the working class.

The basic premise of this paper is that participants of a discourse are guided by certain ideologies. Whether they are individual, social action or reforms groups, non-government organizations, political parties, all embedded in their argument are ideology. Hence, we can discern a particularly ideology through analyzing the structure of their argument which can be traced in their language. Discourse analysis seems an appropriate methodological perspective to analyze the ideology of the participants involves in the discourse.

### **3.2 The Text and media corpus**

I analyzed the following text; news, reports and articles on Bakun on two mainstream newspaper Berita Harian dan the New Straits Times and various alternative media, namely FEER, The Economist and Aliran.

The text were selected because they were considered to represent a broad spectrum of the ideological positions on the Bakun issues. In focussing intensively on textual and linguistic dimensions of discourse, the Bakun study prioritizes text over context in terms of data analysis.

The research proceeded in two phases. First, an comparative analysis of the articles that appears in the mainstream media and the alternative media (contextual analysis). Second, drawing form the work of Hanczor (1997) and informed by Articulation Theory, we explored the linguistic mechanism and strategies to examine the ideological stances of the discursive participants.

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seems an appropriate methodological perspective to analyze the ideology of the participants involves in the discourse.

In order to analyze the debate and the articulation surrounding the Bakun Hydro Project controversy, this study did not depend solely on or was limited to mass media only. This problem is clear cut, especially in the situation where the limited press freedom is prevalent in the country such as Malaysia where any opinion not aligned with that of the ruling government on any issue, inclusive of the Bakun Hydro Project are not given coverage or due attention by the media. In other words, those who wish to participate in the debate of certain issues would not have access in the main stream media. Mass media, according to Chapman et.al (1977);

*Knowledge about the environment, particularly general public knowledge about distant places, is articulated and circulated by many routes, but one set of routes, known collectively as mass media, has drawn increasing attention in modern society; it is perceived to be very influential and yet it is difficult to see how it can maintain objectivity. This is because, at the very least, the channels of communication have finite and therefore limited capacity. And have to be selective in terms of information conveyed (pg, xv*

#### **4. Challenges**

The need to link text, context, and discourse as proposed by Phillips and Hardy (2002), and to incorporate a highly subjective and reflexive use of research methods, poses a major challenge for researchers. The problem of how to cope with such complexities remains a major challenge. One can never study all aspects of discourse, and inevitably have to choose and select a subset of texts for the purpose of manageability.

#### **5. Conclusion**

As a relatively new methodology, discourse analysis is certainly not without problems. As outlined in the paper, there are many challenges and ambiguity in the research procedures. However, as illustrated by our Bakun study, discourse analysis undoubtedly will become one of the major methodological perspectives in communication studies.

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