

# Logos, pathos and ethos in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches during his comeback as prime minister of Malaysia

SITI MARINA KAMIL, NYUN-CHOW CHAI & SU-HIE TING\*

Faculty of Language and Communication, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan,  
Sarawak, Malaysia

\*Corresponding author: shting@unimas.my

## ABSTRACT

The study examined rhetorical appeals in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches delivered during his comeback as the seventh prime minister of Malaysia. The specific aspects investigated were: (1) the extent to which the logos, pathos and ethos appeals were used; (2) the use of the active and passive voice in attribution of responsibility; and (3) the use of personal pronouns in the appeals. Six of Mahathir Mohamad's political speeches in Malay language delivered in 2018-2020 with a word-count of 13,000 words were analysed using Aristotle's rhetorical proofs. The results show that Mahathir Mohamad relied on logos (56.17%) and pathos (39.63%) but not ethos (4.20%). Mahathir Mohamad came across as a political leader who relied on argumentation and the positioning of himself as a spokesperson for the ruling coalition and the government, reflected in "*kita*" (we-inclusive) accounting for 50.26% of personal pronouns used. However, in the context of a distressing situation, he resorted to the pathos appeal and the frequent use of "I" to show personal interpretations. The passive voice and circumstantial referents were strategically used in disparaging remarks without identifying the doer. The study indicated that seasoned political leaders have a stable rhetorical style with flexibility to suit situations and audiences.

Keywords: Rhetoric, Aristotle's rhetoric theory, political speech, Mahathir Mohamad

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication using rhetorical appeals to persuade frequently take place in advertisements, religious talks, and political speeches. The emotional appeal dominates in advertisements to convince customers to buy advertised products (Ab Rashid et al., 2016; Emanuel et al., 2015; Nair & Ndubisi, 2015; Robberson & Rogers, 1988). Persuasion is also at the core of communication in complaint letters (Al-Momani, 2014), requests (Chakorn, 2006; Ting, 2018), journal articles (Osman & Yusoff, 2019), and argumentative essays (Uysal, 2012). Even newspapers use a variety of rhetorical strategies to influence readers to believe that the government is handling socioeconomic issues well, as shown by Bakar and Hamzah's (2015) analysis of Utusan Malaysia and Sinar Harian. Rhetoric is the art of using language to achieve optimal effectiveness in conveying ideas and feelings, whether in speech or in writing (Abdulhamid, 2015; Dehan & Yaakob, 2015), with the ultimate goal of persuading the audience to change their way of thinking or to take certain desired actions (Enos & Brown, 1993). Rhetorics focuses on persuasion and words that contain hidden meanings (Brummett, 2000).

Many studies on the use of rhetorics in speeches have been based on Aristotle's rhetoric and Enos and Brown's (1993) modern rhetorical theory. Enos and Brown (1993) divide rhetorical strategies into narrative rhetoric, descriptions, disclosure, sequences, submissions, and explanations. Using this framework, Yaakob et al. (2018) analysed six religious talks given by popular Muslim speakers, namely, Ustaz Azhar Idrus, Ustaz Kazim Elias and Ustaz Don Daniyal Don Biyajid in 2012-2013. Their results showed an inclination towards the narrative rhetoric (29%) rather than descriptions, disclosure, sequences, submissions, and explanations. In Ustaz Kazim Elias's religious teachings in the Malay programme, "*Kalau Dah Jodoh Siri I*", Mansor et al. (2018) found that imaginative representatives (55%) were used more than scientific representations (45%), which is understandable as sermon is a religious genre. In another study, Razak et al. (2016) found that Sultan Muhammad V, the sultan of Negeri Sembilan, frequently stated feelings of hope in his speech delivered during the opening of the state assembly in 2010, 2012 and 2014. This is expected as the speech precedes the debate and decisions which, hopefully, would be good for the country. In three speeches delivered with the purpose of educating the public on the blue ocean strategy, Osman et al. (2017) found that persuasion was the most frequently used rhetorical appeal. Using Brooks and Warren's (1970) analysis framework, Osman et al. (2017) found that Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak used rhetorical appeals differently from Tan Sri Dr. Ali Hamsa and Dato' Seri Chor Chee Heung.

Dato' Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak used persuasion in the opening, body and conclusion of his speech, description in the introduction and conclusion, and exposition in the body of his speech. However, the other two politicians used persuasion throughout the speech, but exposition was also found in the body of their speeches.

Aristotle's (383-322 B.C.) rhetoric has been widely used to study political speeches, particularly speeches delivered by the head of the country. The three rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos and ethos) are appeals to logic, emotion and credibility respectively. Research have found that the pathos or emotional appeal works best in advertisements (Ab Rashid et al., 2016; Nair & Ndubisi, 2015) but similar findings are not available on political speeches. Choong (2002) analysed 36 utterances in the speech given by the Brunei king (Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddien III) on the issues of the Brunei constitution and the Malaysian Plan 1959-1963. The Brunei king relied on the logos appeal but used more invention strategies when talking about the constitution and more disposition strategies when talking about the Malaysia Plan. In the French presidential campaigns in 2002 and 2007, Mshvenieradze (2013) revealed that the presidential candidates used the ethos appeal differently. Jacques Chirac constructed himself as a leader who would work with the electorate to solve the problems of the country, reflected in the extensive use of "we". On the other hand, Nicolas Sarkozy presented himself as a capable leader with trustworthy plans for the country, and frequently used "I". Mori (2016) studied the speeches of three Iranian heads of state delivered at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. Mori's (2016) findings showed that Rouhani relied on the ethos appeal, portraying his moral character and piety, but Netanyahu relied on the logos appeal. Abbas, on the other hand, extensively used the pathos appeal to create sympathy for the bad situation the Palestinians were in. The emotional appeal is useful to reach out to the voters' sensitive side, as revealed by Andronicuc (2016) who analysed the social media posts of a political candidate in Iohannis, Romania.

The Malaysian political leader that is most studied is Mahathir Mohamad. He was the fourth and the seventh prime minister of Malaysia. During his first term as the prime minister of Malaysia (1981-2003), researchers found a strong thread of logical appeal in his speeches (Alkhirbash, 2010; Lee, 2001). For instance, Lee (2001) analysed Mahathir Mohamad's speeches delivered at the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) General Assembly in 1992, 1994 and 1996 using discourse analysis (Grimes, 1975). Out of the 1,032 sentences analysed, 13 rhetorical strategies were identified, and the most frequently used was information statement (29.5%) in the form of examples, generalisations, hypotheses, old information, and additional information. As the UMNO President, Mahathir Mohamad's main responsibility was to convey new and old information to party members, which makes it understandable why the least used rhetorical strategies were recall and politeness (0.4% each). Alkhirbash (2010) also analysed Mahathir Mohamad's speeches, and concluded that Mahathir Mohamad used the logos and pathos appeals more than the ethos appeal. The logical appeal was in the form of giving examples, statistics, facts, and metaphors, and Mahathir Mohamad came across as a competent and knowledgeable political leader who was aware of current issues. The analysis of the pathos appeal revealed that he showed respect and care for the welfare of people. Alkhirbash's (2010) analysis using Searle's (1969) Speech Theory showed that the assertives used to persuade were giving emphasis (insisting) and claiming while the directives used to get the audience to do something were suggesting and commanding.

However, less is known about Mahathir Mohamad's rhetorical style when he returned to be the seventh prime minister of Malaysia in 2018. This time around, he was leading the opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan, and won the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election, breaking the monopoly of a 60-year rule by the Barisan Nasional coalition, which he had previously headed. However, his term was cut short when a political upheaval led to him tendering his resignation as the prime minister. There was a splinter in his political party which caused his coalition government to lose the majority to rule the country. Fatmawati et al. (2020) compared the speeches delivered in 1982, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2018, and 2019 by Mahathir Mohamad and Najib Razak. Fatmawati et al. (2020) concluded that Mahathir Mohamad exuded competence and concern about people's welfare in his speeches on "socio-political issues such as Islam and terrorism, wars, the situation of the Muslim world, domination by the West, and abuse of power" (p. 276). However, Shahrill Ramli and Hasan's (in press) paper was only a conceptual paper. In view of the passing of time and Mahathir Mohamad being on the other side of the partisan politics, it is important to examine his rhetorical style displayed through his speeches delivered in 2018-2020.

The study examined rhetorical appeals in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches delivered in Malay during his term as the seventh prime minister of Malaysia. The specific objectives of the study were to: (1) determine the extent to which the logos, pathos and ethos appeals were used in the speeches; (2) analyse the use of the active and passive voice in attribution of responsibility in the appeals in the speeches; and (3) analyse the use of personal pronouns in self-prominence in the appeals in the speeches.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF STUDY**

The theoretical framework of this study on persuasion was taken from Aristotle's (388-322 B.C.) rhetoric, which consisted of *logos* (logical appeal), *pathos* (emotional appeal), and *ethos* (credibility appeal). Table 1 in the Method section shows the analysis framework based on Aristotle's conception of rhetoric and the definitions employed by researchers who have used his conception of rhetoric.

*Logos* is a rational appeal that derives its persuasive power from facts and evidence. What is paramount in the rational appeal is the clarity and integrity of arguments (Higgins & Walker, 2012). According to Gagich and Zickel (2018), speakers have to give strong arguments which are not one-sided to make a good logical appeal in speeches.

As for the *pathos* appeal, persuasion rests on appeals to emotions such as safety, love, guilt, greed, pity, and humour (Gabrielsen & Christiansen, 2010), anger, empathy, fear, confusion and insult (Mshvenieradze, 2013). To make an effective appeal to emotions, it is important for the speaker to identify with the "needs, values and desires of the audience" (Higgins & Walker, 2012, p. 198). To connect with the audience, the speaker needs to consider the status, age and other characteristics of the audience (Mshvenieradze (2013). To Al-Momani (2014), expressions of both positive and negative feelings can appeal to the audience such as admitting wrongdoing, expressing regrets, making promises, praising, and expressing gratitude. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) advertisements often show photographs of injured puppies and kittens looking sad to persuade the audience to give donations (Gagich & Zickel, (2018). Stories of a single mother struggling with life are effective in moving the audience to action (Gaiman, 1998).

Finally, the *ethos* appeal appeals to the character of the speaker (Demirdogen, 2010). Higgins and Walker (2012, p. 197) define *ethos* as the "persona, or projected character of a speaker/communicator, including their credibility and trustworthiness". Higgins and Walker (2012) stated that the speaker can build their power by appealing to shared common ground with the audience because this shows their respect for the audience's rights and feelings. Examples of phrases that achieves this effect "with your permission", "in my opinion" and "join me, if you would".

## **METHOD OF STUDY**

The descriptive study involved content analysis of six speeches delivered by Mahathir Mohamad when he ruled Malaysia as the leader of the Pakatan Harapan (Alliance of Hope) coalition who won the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election on 9 May 2018.

Videos of Mahathir Mohamad's speeches delivered between 9 May 2018 and 27 February 2020 were downloaded from Youtube. The six speeches analysed were:

- 1) Speech delivered to ministers and citizens in Terengganu in his capacity as the chairperson of Parti Politik BERSATU Malaysia (PPBM) on 17 May 2018 (MM1).
- 2) Speech delivered at the General Debate of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) at New York on 29 September 2018 (MM2).
- 3) Ceramah Mega delivered to ministers and citizens at PD Waterfront, Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan to help Anwar Ibrahim return after a crisis following the 1988 by-election on 9 October 2018 (MM3).
- 4) Speech delivered at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Parti Politik BERSATU Malaysia (PPBM) at Pusat Konvensyen Antarabangsa Putrajaya (PICC) on 29 December 2018 (MM4).
- 5) Special announcement as Interim Prime Minister in the headquarters of Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) delivered to ministers from the PKR party on 26 February 2020 (MM5).
- 6) Announcement of Pakej Ransangan Ekonomi 2020 (Economic Stimulus Package) delivered to ministers and citizens in the capacity of Interim Prime Minister on 27 February 2020 (MM6).

The selection criteria for the speeches were as follows: (1) the speeches were delivered during his rule as the prime minister of Malaysia the second time (9 May 2018-28 February 2020); (2) the speeches were in Malay; and (3) the speeches were national level speeches, and hence speeches given during small gatherings were excluded. The six speeches had a word count of 13,000 words.

The analysis framework for rhetorical appeals were based on Aristotle's modes of persuasion which included *logos*, *pathos* and *ethos*. Table 1 shows the framework for rhetorical appeals in political speeches with definitions from other researchers who used Aristotle's (1954) framework (Al-Momani, 2014; Gagich & Zickel, 2018;

Gaiman, 1998; Higgins & Walker, 2012; Mshvenieradze, 2013; Ting, 2018). The examples are from the dataset in the present study.

**Table 1.** Framework for rhetorical appeals in political speeches based on Aristotle’s modes of persuasion

Rhetorical appeal and Definition	Indicator	Example
Logos - Appeal to logic, rationale and facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses argumentation, logic, claims and justifications</li> <li>• Presents data, evidence and examples</li> <li>• Questioning and wondering</li> <li>• May use factual language to reason when talking about behaviours or actions</li> <li>• May use linguistic connectors in arguments</li> <li>• Does not present personal interpretation</li> </ul>	<p><i>Buat beberapa abad negara telah perkenal Dasar Ekonomi Baru; dasar yang bertujuan mengurangkan jarak perpisahan antara kaum. Dasar ini telah menambah sedikit kejayaan dan kemajuan Bumiputera.</i></p> <p>For a few decades, our country has introduced the New Economic Policy; a policy that aims to reduce the divide among races. This policy has increased the success and progress of the Bumiputera a little.</p>
Pathos - Appeal to emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentions feelings, needs, values, and wishes of the speaker or audience</li> <li>• Admits wrongdoing, express regret or requests</li> <li>• Makes promises</li> <li>• Gives praises</li> <li>• Expresses gratitude</li> <li>• Uses emotional words to manipulate the audience’s feelings</li> <li>• May use elements of safety, love, guilt, greed, pity, sympathy, humour, anger, fear, confusion and insult</li> <li>• May use metaphors for effect</li> </ul>	<p><i>Terlebih dahulu, saya mengucapkan terima kasih banyak-banyak kerana kata-kata manis yang ditujukan kepada diri saya. Terima kasihlah. Dulu semasa saya dekat nak berhenti, bila kapal terbang turunnya dia rosak, nampak ramai orang berkumpul di situ</i></p> <p>...  First of all, I would like to say a big thank you for your sweet words directed at me. Thank you. Last time when I was about to stop, when the aeroplane was descending, there was a damage, saw a lot of people gathered there ...</p>
Ethos - Appeal to credibility and trust in the speaker or audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows the speaker as capable and close to citizens</li> <li>• Shows the good background of the speaker</li> <li>• Shows the speaker as an expert in a particular field</li> <li>• Shows that the speaker comes from the same group as the audience</li> <li>• Shows respect for rights and feelings of the audience</li> <li>• Appeals to ethics, that is, the character, personality and other characteristics of the speaker</li> <li>• May use phrases such as “in truth”, “in my opinion”</li> </ul>	<p><i>Saya bersyukur kerana dipanjang umur dan masih dapat terus memberi khidmat kepada negara.</i></p> <p>I am grateful because I am given long life and can still serve the country.</p>

The data on Mahathir Mohamad’s speeches were obtained by using the following search words: “Youtube”, “ucapan (speech) Tun Mahathir”, “ucapan Perdana Menteri terkini” (latest Prime Minister speech), and “Pengerusi (President) Pakatan Harapan”. Altogether six videos fulfilling the selection criteria were obtained and they were downloaded and transcribed. The speech transcripts focussed on the text and not non-verbal communication such as clapping, body language, intonation and laughter.

The unit of analysis was chunks of text showing a particular rhetorical appeal. Whether the text was a few words (e.g., “*malu tak*”) or a few sentences (e.g., Excerpt 2), they were coded as one instance. This is based on Feez’s (2003, p. 4) definition of text: “A text is any stretch of language which is held together cohesively through

meaning”. The three types of rhetorical appeals were identified with reference to the framework (Table 1). After the transcripts were coded, the frequencies and percentages of logos, ethos and pathos were computed.

## RESULTS

In this section, the six speeches are referred to as MM1 to MM6. Table 2 shows the results on Mahathir Mohamad’s use of rhetorical appeals in his speeches. Altogether 381 instances of rhetorical appeals were identified in the six speeches, and Mahathir Mohamad was found to rely on logos (56.17%). Pathos was also frequently used (39.63%) but there were few ethos appeals (4.20%). Mahathir Mohamad used reasoning more than emotional or ethical appeal.

**Table 2.** Frequency and percentage of rhetorical appeals in Mahathir Mohamad’s speeches

Speech	Logos		Pathos		Ethos		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
MM1	49	59.04	33	39.76	1	1.20	<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>
MM2	38	67.86	17	30.36	1	1.78	<b>56</b>	<b>100</b>
MM3	26	49.05	23	43.40	4	7.55	<b>53</b>	<b>100</b>
MM4	75	54.75	55	40.15	7	5.10	<b>137</b>	<b>100</b>
MM5	5	27.78	11	61.11	2	11.11	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>
MM6	21	61.77	12	35.29	1	2.94	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>56.17</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>39.63</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>381</b>	

Table 3 shows the results on personal pronouns in Mahathir Mohamad’s speeches. On average, Mahathir Mohamad’s speeches used the most “*kita*” (we-inclusive, 50.26%), followed by “*saya*” (I, 27.69%). This is the pattern for all the speeches, except MM5 where “*saya*” (I) accounted for 97.83% of the personal pronouns in the speech, and this anomaly will be explained in the context of the speeches later in this section. The third person pronoun “*mereka*” (they) was used to some extent (15.13%) but the third parties were mostly specifically referred to, either using name or descriptors like positions. Although using the second person pronoun is a strategy to connect with the audience, Mahathir Mohamad hardly used “you” in his speeches, and when he did, he chose the formal you (“*anda*”). The informal you (“*awak*”) was never used. “*Kami*” (we-exclusive) was hardly used (2.69%), compared to “*kita*” (we-inclusive), indicating mindfulness about not making the audience feel excluded.

**Table 3.** Frequency and percentage of personal pronouns in Mahathir Mohamad’s speeches

Speech	<i>saya</i> (I)		<i>kami</i> (we-exclusive)		<i>kita</i> (we-inclusive)		<i>anda</i> (you)		<i>mereka</i> (they)		Total
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	
MM1	104	43.33	6	2.5	109	45.42	7	2.92	14	5.83	240
MM2	16	17.02	15	15.96	21	22.34	5	5.32	37	39.36	94
MM3	36	17.82	0	0	111	54.95	3	1.49	52	25.74	202
MM4	13	7.07	0	0	144	78.26	13	7.07	14	7.61	184
MM5	45	97.83	0	0	1	2.17	0	0	0	0	46
MM6	2	14.29	0	0	6	42.86	5	35.71	1	7.14	14
Total	216		21		392		33		118		780
Average		27.69		2.69		50.26		4.23		15.13	

### Logos appeal

In all the six speeches, Mahathir Mohamad made argumentation using facts. For example, Excerpt 1 shows that in his opening remarks in the speech delivered at the second AGM of his BERSATU party half a year after the historic win of Pakatan Harapan, he said that it was a success in itself to meet at Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC) because previously, they could not get close to this (“*Dahulu, kita tidak pun dapat berdekatan di sini*”). PICC is a convention centre used for government events, and opposition parties could not use the facilities. Hence, Mahathir Mohamad brought up seemingly simple privileges like meeting in PICC for the AGM to remind his audience of the many big and small privileges that being in the ruling coalition brought. Through this, he implied the unprecedented success of an opposition party in becoming the ruling government.

Excerpt 1

- 1 ... Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia di Pusat Konvensyen Antarabangsa Putrajaya (PICC) ini.
- 2 Berada di PICC ini pun adalah satu kejayaan. **Dahulu kita tidak pun dapat berdekatan di**
- 3 **sini.**  
... Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia in Putrajaya International Convention Centre (PICC). Being  
in PICC in itself is a victory. **Previously we could not even get close here.** (MM4, 29  
December 2018)

Mahathir Mohamad usually moved towards argumentation in the middle of his speech. Excerpt 2 shows the use of the logos appeal that is pre-empted by an appeal to emotion (“*Ini adalah kemenangan rakyat melawan rasuah*”, meaning This is the people’s victory in fighting against corruption). This pathos statement is not shown in Excerpt 2. This victory speech, titled Ceramah Mega in Youtube, was delivered right after the results of the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election were announced.

Excerpt 2

- 1 **Setelah kita menang, barulah kita tahu setakat mana buruknya pemerintahan Dato Seri**
- 2 **Najib.** Bukan saja duit dicuri tetapi semua pegawai-pegawai juga dialih fikiran supaya mereka
- 3 rela untuk membantu penyangak ini dan mereka pun ada juga menjadi penyangak juga. **Jadi**
- 4 **bila kita ambil alih, masalah kita adalah untuk memulihkan semula jentera kerajaan.**
- 5 Kerajaan tak boleh bergerak melain kerajaan ada jentera yang cukup kuat yang cukup ramai
- 6 untuk berkhidmat membangunkan negara tetapi apabila kita dapati ramai daripada jentera kita
- 7 sudah dirosakkan oleh Dato Seri Najib. Maka kita terpaksa tukar mereka dengan mengganti
- 8 orang baru ini, tak cekap macam orang lama. Sebab itu, perjalanan kerajaan terpaksa diusaha
- 9 semula. Kita perlu susun balik kerajaan supaya pemerintahan dapat melaksanakan segala dasar-
- 10 dasar tindakan-tindakan yang dibuat oleh pihak kerajaan. Itu adalah masalah jentera kerajaan.
- 11 Pemulihannya amat sukar dilakukan tetapi alhamdulillah.

**After we win, only then we knew how bad Dato Seri Najib's government is.** Not only was the money stolen but all the officers were also distracted so that they were willing to help this rogue and they also became rogue as well. **So when we took over, our problem is to rehabilitate the government machinery.** The government cannot move unless the government has a strong enough machinery that is large enough to serve the development of the country but when we find many of our machinery has been damaged by Dato Seri Najib. So we have to change them by replacing these new people, [they] are not as efficient as the old people. As a result, the government's journey had to be reworked. We need to restructure the government so that the government can implement all the policies and actions of the government. That is the problem of the government machinery. The recovery is very difficult, but God-willing.

(MM3, 9 May 2018)

Mahathir Mohamad began his argumentation with a premise in lines 1-2 to show a problem: “*Setelah kita menang, barulah kita tahu setakat mana buruknya pemerintahan Dato Seri Najib*” (After we won, only then we knew how bad Dato Seri Najib’s rule was). Here the plural first personal pronoun “we” was used to refer to the Pakatan Harapan coalition that he led. This was followed by claims on stealing money and brainwashing officers to assist in the acts. Passive voice was used, thereby hiding an explicit mention of the parties involved. Attribution of responsibility was made implicitly. Then he moved on to offer a solution to the problem (lines 4-5). His premise was “*Jadi bila kita ambil alih, masalah kita adalah untuk memulihkan semula jentera kerajaan*” (So when we took over, our problem is to revive the government machinery). Again reference was made to the ruling coalition using the plural first person pronoun “we” to contrast the people who could solve the problem and the people who caused the problem to the government machinery. Mahathir Mohamad proceeded to a justification for his premise, that is, the government cannot function without a strong machinery. At this point, he returned to his earlier statement that Najib Razak’s rule was bad and he had damaged a lot of the government machinery. Here Mahathir Mohamad used the active voice to attribute blame to his predecessor for causing the problem. With this, he came to the crux of his argument which he knew might not be well-received because replacement of officers affected people’s livelihoods and ego (lines 8-9). He explained the necessity of the action because their incompetency was an obstacle to implementation of government policies. Mahathir Mohamad concluded his argumentation by restating the premise in lines 12-13: “*Itu adalah masalah jentera kerajaan. Pemulihannya amat sukar dilakukan*”

*tetapi alhamdulillah*” (This is the problem of government machinery. Rehabilitation is very hard but God-willing). The use of premise in argumentation reflects a deductive reasoning in logic.

Mahathir Mohamad also used questioning and wondering in his argumentation when the audience were familiar people. Excerpt 3 shows a question (line 3) that follows a statement halfway through a speech delivered at the General Debate of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly at New York on 29 September 2018 (MM2). Mahathir Mohamad had been to many such general assemblies in his previous capacity as the fourth prime minister of Malaysia for 23 years (1981-2003). In MM2, he was saying that the war against terrorism would not end as long as the root cause has not been found and eliminated. Then he posed the question, “*Apakah puncanya?*” (what’s the cause). He proceeded to answer his own question with an explanation of the territorial claims of Palestine and Israel. In so doing, he was careful to use the passive voice in describing the Palestinian-Israel conflict so as to avoid pinpointing the doer.

Excerpt 3

- 1 Peperangan menentang pengganas tidak akan berakhir selagi punca di akar umbi tidak ditemui
- 2 dan dihapuskan, manakala hati dan pemikiran dikuasai. **Apakah puncanya?** Pada 1948, tanah
- 3 rakyat Palestin dirampas untuk mewujudkan Israel. Rakyat Palestin dibunuh beramai-ramai dan
- 4 dipaksa meninggalkan kampung halaman. Rumah dan ladang mereka dirampas.

(MM2, 29 September 2018)

The war against terrorism will not end as long as the root causes are not found and eliminated, where hearts and minds are controlled. **What is the cause?** In 1948, Palestinian land was confiscated to create Israel. Palestinians were massacred and forced to leave their hometowns. Their houses and farms were confiscated.

Mahathir Mohamad used questioning in MM1, MM2 and MM4 (9 and 3 and 3 instances respectively). MM1 had nine instances of questioning which was far more than other speeches, probably because he was speaking to members of his own political party BERSATU and the speech was delivered about one week after the election win. The speech was given in Terengganu where a government-owned fund (1Malaysia Development Berhad, 1MDB) was set up for overseas investment under the Terengganu Investment Authority and became the site of a financial scandal. He asked “*Duit lebih itu nak buat apa?*” (The excess money, to do what?) after he described various dubious 1MDB transactions. As an argumentation strategy, questioning reflects the use of inductive reasoning, which starts from specific instances and leads towards a general conclusion. Mahathir Mohamad started from specific instances of the financial transactions and concluded his reasoning with a generalisation expressed as a question. Throughout his speech, he did not mention “1MDB” but his mention of “Jho Low” was sufficient to identify the topic as 1MDB. By using questioning, he avoided alleging fraudulent use of government funds but left the audience to form this answer in their minds. This is important because at the time of the speech, the 1MDB investigation was on-going. In the context of public speaking, the frequent use of questioning characterised MM1 as an interactive speech where Mahathir Mohamad had a dialogue with his audience.

Mahathir Mohamad’s speeches had more deductive reasoning than inductive reasoning. According to Gagich and Zickel (2018), deductive reasoning is an effective way to influence the public. Using a mixture of deductive and inductive reasoning in argumentation is good because from his analysis of speeches delivered by French presidential candidates, Mshvenieradze (2013) concluded that inductive reasoning is good for engaging the audience and getting feedback from them. Overall, the extensive use of the logos appeal in Mahathir Mohamad’s speeches indicates that the audience were being convinced with facts to believe in his premises.

### Pathos appeal

Almost 40% of the total instances of rhetorical appeals were pathos or emotional appeals. Excerpt 4 illustrates the use of emotional words to convey desired values as a strategy to manipulate the audience’s feelings. The speech was delivered at the United Nations General Assembly, and Excerpt 4 was the last part of the speech. The audience were the heads of various countries and Mahathir Mohamad had an agenda, which was to remove the veto power of the permanent member. His proposal was for United Nations General Assembly to have the power to support a decision with a simple majority. To lead up to the request, Mahathir Mohamad first praised United Nations’ effort to eliminate poverty, and to promote conservation, peace, prosperity and democracy. To lend weight to his proposal, he told the audience that he was 93 years old and came back as the prime minister the second time around bearing a heavy responsibility. He added praise for Malaysian citizens who made an earth-breaking democratic achievement by voting Pakatan Harapan into power to end a 60-year rule by the Barisan Nasional coalition (lines 3-5). He continued by expressing the people’s mounting hope for peace, development and prosperity (“*mempunyai harapan menggunung untuk melihat keamanan, kemajuan dan kemakmuran di*

*seluruh dunia*”). These values resonated with the goals of the United Nations and he had interjected these values at different junctures in his speech. The adjective “mounting” was used to accentuate the high hopes of the Malaysians (“*harapan menggunung*”). He closed with an appeal to United Nations to consider their request for more democracy in United Nations decisions.

Interestingly, throughout MM5, Mahathir Mohamad relied on the active voice to attribute responsibility to himself as the new prime minister and the people of Malaysia for voting him and his coalition component parties into power. In concluding his speech, he made a direct request when he said, “*Kami berharap PBB akan mendengar permintaan kami*” (We hope United Nations will listen to our request). “We” and “our request” made the doer prominent, and the object of the request was PBB (United Nations). The attribution of responsibility to UN to consider a more democratic process in UNGA decisions could not be clearer.

Excerpt 4

1 Puan Presiden. **Selepas 15 tahun dan pada usia 93 tahun, saya kembali ke podium ini**  
2 **dengan memikul tanggungjawab berat membawa suara dan harapan Malaysia baharu**  
3 **ke pentas dunia. Rakyat Malaysia bangga dengan pencapaian demokratik mereka baru-**  
4 **baru ini mempunyai harapan menggunung untuk melihat keamanan, kemajuan dan**  
5 **kemakmuran di seluruh dunia.** Kami berharap PBB akan mendengar permintaan kami.  
6 Terima kasih, Puan Presiden.” kata Tun Mahathir.

(MM5, 26 February 2020)

**Madam President. After 15 years and at the age of 93, I return to this podium with the heavy responsibility of bringing the new Malaysian voice and hope to the world stage. Malaysians proud of their recent democratic achievements have mounting hopes of seeing peace, progress and prosperity around the world.** We hope the UN will listen to our request. Thank you, Madam President,” said Tun Mahathir.

Besides the usual use of the pathos appeal to persuade the audience, emotional appeal is used when political leaders admit wrongdoing or express regrets. Excerpt 5 shows the second last speech made by Mahathir Mohamad as the seventh prime minister of Malaysia. It was delivered at a special press conference held by Pakatan Harapan at the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) headquarters in Petaling Jaya, Selangor on 26 February 2020. In MM5, Mahathir Mohamad apologised for the chaotic political situation in the country (lines 1-4): “*Terlebih dahulu, izinkan saya memohon maaf kepada semua rakyat Malaysia kerana keadaan politik Negara yang agak kucar-kacir*” (First of all, allow me to apologise to all Malaysian citizens because the political situation of the country is quite chaotic). Mahathir Mohamad showed his awareness of the disturbed feelings of the audience: “*menimbulkan keresahan di kalangan tuan-tuan dan puan-puan*” (caused unrest among you, ladies and gentlemen). He objectivised the political situation by describing it as a chaotic situation but did not attribute blame at the outset of his speech. He went on to say that he had tendered his resignation to the King (Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong), but the factual details showing the use of the logos appeal have been left out of the excerpt because it is very long. The second part of Excerpt 5 shows Mahathir Mohamad addressing the accusation that he was power-crazy (“*gila kuasa*”) and wanted to hang on although his political party BERSATU had left the Pakatan Harapan coalition, resulting in a loss of majority to form the ruling government. In the rest of the speech, Mahathir Mohamad explained the political developments, alternating between pathos and logos appeals. This is when the perpetrators of the political chaos were mentioned, mostly political parties rather than individuals.

Excerpt 5

1 Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan yang dihormati. Terlebih dahulu, izinkan saya **memohon maaf**  
2 **kepada semua rakyat Malaysia kerana keadaan politik Negara yang agak kucar-kacir**  
3 dan mungkin **menimbulkan keresahan** di kalangan tuan-tuan dan puan-puan. ...  
4 Selain itu, terdapat juga tuduhan bahawa saya tidak berniat untuk melepaskan jawatan dan **gila**  
5 **kuasa.** Maka saya letak jawatan kerana saya tidak melihat kuasa dan jawatan itu sebagai “be  
6 all and end all” adalah matlamat saya. Bagi saya kuasa dan kedudukan itu adalah “a means to  
7 an end” ataupun satu alat untuk mencapai objektif dan **objektif kita semua tentulah untuk**  
8 **kebaikan negara.**

(MM5, 26 February 2020)

Dear ladies and gentlemen. First of all, allow me to **apologize to all Malaysians for the political situation in the country which is quite chaotic** and may **cause unrest** among ladies and gentlemen. ...

Besides that, there were also allegations that I had no intention of resigning and am power-crazy. So I resigned because I do not see the power and the position as "be all and end all" as

my goal. For me, power and position is "a means to an end" or a tool to achieve our objectives, and **our objective is certainly for the good of the country.**

MM5 was an emotional speech and Table 2 shows that this is the only speech where the pathos appeal (61.11%) was used more than the logos appeal (27.78%) and the ethos appeal (11.11%). Incidentally, this is also the only speech where the ethos appeal exceeded 10% but this will be addressed in the next section of results. In MM5, Mahathir Mohamad broke away from his rational persona to offer personal interpretations of the unprecedented event of a prime minister resigning. In this speech, he frequently used the first personal pronoun "I" to reveal his feelings, needs, values and wishes. As Mahathir Mohamad focussed on his personal interpretations and describing how he felt, many of the verbs used were intransitive verbs such as "*saya tidak berniat*" (I do not intend), "*saya letak jawatan*" (I resigned), and "*saya tidak melihat kuasa dan jawatan itu*" (I do not see power and position). The active voice was dominant in this speech, placing the speaker at the centre of the unfolding events. Towards the end of his speech, Mahathir Mohamad said, "*Saya hanyalah membuat sesuatu saya anggap baik bagi negara*" (I am only doing something I consider to be best for the country). The focus of MM5 was Mahathir Mohamad himself, evident in the use of the first personal pronoun "I" and the active voice. The absence of the plural personal pronoun "we" is obvious because he was no longer speaking on behalf of his party, the ruling coalition or the government. The only instance of "we" was a generalised usage in "*objektif kita semua tentulah untuk kebaikan negara*" (our objective is certainly for the good of the country), as shown in Excerpt 5. With this statement, he appealed to the audience to understand that his drastic decision was not for selfish personal reasons but a sensible decision with the interests of the nation in view.

Speeches involving negative emotions such as regrets and admitting possible wrongdoing are more challenging than speeches involving positive emotions such as appealing to love and security needs for persuasion. In speeches involving negative emotions, engaging the emotions of the audience probably works better than engaging their rational minds as shown in Mahathir Mohamad's speech, MM5. Higgins and Walker (2012) believe that use of adjectives and emotional words manipulates the feelings and thinking of the audience. It is in MM5 that adjectives, personal interpretations and appeal to similarities were dominant but seldom used in the other speeches.

### **Ethos appeal**

On average, 4.20% of 381 instances of rhetorical appeals was the ethos appeal (Table 2). In this study, the greetings which include honorifics (Excerpt 6) demonstrates respect for members of the audience who are considered Very Important Persons (VIPs). Excerpt 6 was taken from Mahathir Mohamad's speech delivered during the announcement of Pakej Ransangan Ekonomi 2020 (Economic Stimulus Package) in the capacity of Interim Prime Minister on 27 February 2020 (MM6). On 1 March 2020, the helm of leadership in the country was taken over by Muhyiddin Yasin. Using honorifics in greetings for VIPs was found in all the speeches, as this is protocol.

#### Excerpt 6

- 1 Bismillah Hirahmanirrahim. Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi wabarakatuh dan salam
- 2 sejahtera. **Yang Berbahagia Lembaga Suria Juruacara, Yang Amat Berhormat Dato Seri**
- 3 **Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Timbalan Perdana Menteri, Yang Berhormat Menteri**
- 4 **Pertahanan, Yang Berhormat Menteri-menteri, Yang Berhormat Lim Guan Eng,**
- 5 **Menteri Kewangan yang penting, Tuan-tuan, puan-puan, Hadirin sekali.**

(MM3, 9 October 2018)

Bismillah Hirahmanirrahim. Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and peace be upon you. Blessed are the Solar Board Hosts. **The Right Honorable Dato Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Deputy Prime Minister, the Honorable Minister of Defence, Honorable Ministers, the Honorable Lim Guan Eng, the Minister of Finance, gentlemen and ladies.**

More interestingly, the ethos appeal in the form of establishing similar ground with the audience was quite frequently found in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches. An example is shown in Excerpt 7. This is a speech delivered to ministers and citizens at Port Dickson on 9 October 2018 (MM3), Mahathir Mohamad said, "*Tetapi tuan-tuan dan puan-puan, kita semua tahu*" (But gentlemen and ladies, we all know). He was reminding the audience of the shared information they had about the night when the 14<sup>th</sup> General Election votes were being counted. According to Mahathir Mohamad, the results showing that Pakatan Harapan had won was known as early as 8.30 p.m. on 9 May 2018 but the announcement was delayed till 2 a.m. because Barisan Nasional was unwilling to admit defeat. The audience was reminded of the shared information almost in a conspirational tone. By highlighting the shared information, Mahathir Mohamad was placing himself on the same level as the audience to be close to them. However, right after this, he projected his own credibility as a political leader: "*Saya dulu adalah pemimpin BN,*

*Presiden UMNO, Pengerusi BN dan saya telah memimpin lima pilihan raya*” (Previously, I was the BN leader, UMNO President, BN chairman and I have led five elections). His political background made him unrivalled as a political leader. Mahathir Mohamad’s confidence in winning was evident in his subsequent statement: “*Setiap kali saya menghadapi pilihan raya, saya sedar saya akan menang tak mungkin parti lawan menang*” (Every time I face an election, I am aware that I will win, [and it is] not possible that the opposition will win). Later on in his speech, Mahathir Mohamad also talked about how he had brought down a kleptocratic government. These examples are a good illustration of how politicians project their capability to earn the trust of the audience.

Excerpt 7

1 Tetapi tuan-tuan dan puan-puan, **kita semua tahu**. Pakatan Harapan telah menang waktu lapan  
2 setengah malam pada 9 hari bulan tetapi pihak BN takut nak bagi tahu rakyat. Maka mereka  
3 tangguh perisytiharan itu sehingga pukul 2 pagi. Tetapi akhirnya, mereka terpaksa mengakui  
4 bahawa tak boleh dikalahkan itu sudah pun kalah. Kita harus bertanya kepada diri kita dan BN  
5 pun harus bertanya kepada diri mereka. Kenapakah mereka kalah? **Saya dulu adalah**  
6 **pemimpin BN, Presiden UMNO, Pengerusi BN dan saya telah memimpin lima pilihan**  
7 **raya. Setiap kali saya menghadapi pilihan raya, saya sedar saya akan menang tak**  
8 **mungkin parti lawan menang.**

(MM3, 9 October 2018)

But ladies and gentlemen, **we all know**. Pakatan Harapan won at eight-thirty on the 9th but BN is afraid to let the people know. So they postponed the declaration until 2 o'clock in the morning. But in the end, they had to admit that the invincible had lost. We have to ask ourselves and BN must also ask themselves. Why did they lose? **Previously, I was the BN leader, UMNO President, BN Chairman and I have led five elections. Every time I face an election, I am aware that I will win, not possible that the opposition will win.**

Finally, an example of ethos is extracted from Mahathir Mohamad’s speech where he apologised for the political chaos and his resignation as the prime minister of Malaysia. This speech was delivered in the last few days of his term. MM5 was the only speech among the six speeches where there was greater presence of the emotional and ethical appeal. Even in the midst of the political shake-up when he lost the majority to be the ruling government, Mahathir Mohamad was able to project himself as having the support of the people, as shown in Excerpt 8: “*cukuplah saya katakan bahawa saya merasa kononnya mendapat sokongan dari semua pihak*” (it’s enough for me to say that I feel, apparently, [I have] the support from all parties). The single first person pronoun “I” was repeatedly used to show personal ownership over the views expressed, and not opinions expressed as a spokesperson for his political coalition or for the government. However, note that hedging was used (“*kononnya*” meaning apparently) for the statement that he had the support from all parties. The hedging is important because the truth of the statement might be contested.

Excerpt 8

1 Ada banyak sebab mengapa saya meletak jawatan tetapi **cukuplah saya katakan bahawa saya**  
2 **merasa kononnya mendapat sokongan dari semua pihak** sehingga saya tidak dapat memilih  
3 pihak mana yang saya pilih.

(MM5, 26 February 2020)

There are many reasons why I resigned but **suffice it to say that I felt supposedly getting support from all parties** so I couldn’t choose which party I chose.

Towards the end of MM5, Mahathir Mohamad reiterated his apology for tendering resignation on the basis that as an ordinary human being, he was not free from making mistakes. This premise was a pathos appeal and it was followed by an ethos appeal (Excerpt 9). Mahathir Mohamad implied that the King still had confidence in him to appoint him as the interim prime minister while the political situation was sorted out (lines 1-2). He repeated his point that he had the support of some (line 3). However, earlier he had said that he was supported by all parties (Excerpt 8), and modified this to the adjective “some” towards the end of his speech. He concluded with some form of damage control on his reputation for creating the political chaos, that is, he said that his action was in the interests of the nation, “*Saya hanyalah membuat sesuatu saya anggap baik bagi negara*” (I’m just doing something I think is good for the country).

Excerpt 9

- 1 **Yang di-Pertuan Agong bertitah supaya saya dilantik sebagai Perdana Menteri**
- 2 **sementara.** Saya sedar apa juga yang dilakukan oleh saya sekarang akan ditentang dan ditolak
- 3 oleh ramai, **tetapi mungkin ada yang menyokong.** Saya tidak cari untuk disukai ramai. **Saya**
- 4 **hanyalah membuat sesuatu saya anggap baik bagi negara.**

(MM5, 26 February 2020)

**The Yang di-Pertuan Agong said that I should be appointed as the caretaker Prime Minister.** I realise whatever I do now will be opposed and rejected by many, but there may be some who support it. I'm not looking to be liked by many. I'm just doing something I think is good for the country.

These excerpts on the ethos appeal in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches showed that he was good at projecting his credibility and dynamism as a political leader to earn the trust of the Malaysian citizens. In MM4, he reminded the audience that he had been a politician for 70 years, showing his experience in politics. He certainly capitalised on his return to the helm of the government a second time, showing his political prowess to end a 60-year monopoly, and to bring about a government led by a coalition of opposition parties. However, overall the speeches given by Mahathir Mohamad made less use of the ethos appeal than the logos and pathos appeals. The public knew of his political background, and there was little need for him to remind them of this in their face, with the exception of one instance in MM3 when he announced the economic stimulus package as the interim prime minister on 27 February 2020.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study on rhetorical appeals in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches during his term as the seventh prime minister of Malaysia showed that he used a dominant logos or logical appeal in his speeches, supplemented by the pathos or emotional appeal but the ethos appeal to credibility was minimal. Mahathir Mohamad strategically used the plural first person pronoun "we" to refer to the ruling coalition along with the use of the active voice to show the rehabilitative actions taken by the new government to remedy the broken government machinery left by his predecessor. He used the passive voice and circumstantial referents in disparaging remarks without identifying the doer, and this was a safe approach in making speeches.

Compared to previous findings on Mahathir Mohamad's speeches delivered during his first term as the fourth prime minister of Malaysia, it is clear that he had retained his rational style of speeches. The results supported Choong's (2002) finding on the reliance on the logos appeal. According to Lee (2001), Mahathir Mohamad had frequently included logical statements and facts in his speeches. Similarly, Alkhirbash (2010) had also identified the predominance of cause-and effect, statistics, examples and facts in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches. The present study discovered that the preponderance of these argumentation strategies found by other researchers was due to Mahathir Mohamad using more deductive reasoning than inductive reasoning in his speeches. An argumentation strategy that had not been identified in previous analyses of Mahathir Mohamad's speeches is questioning and wondering, which he was inclined to use with a familiar audience to engage their rational minds.

Our findings concurred with other studies on the minimal use of the ethos appeal in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches. Mua'ti (2007) reasoned that the ethos appeal was hardly used because Mahathir Mohamad is a capable leader, and his competence and character are reflected in his actions. Because of this, he need not assert his credibility in his speeches to convince the audience of his trustworthiness. "Mahathir's ethical proof was not stated explicitly but was embedded in his logical and emotional evidence" (Fatmawati et al., 2020, p. 277).

The only speech where Mahathir Mohamad broke away from his usual rhetorical style was in MM5 when he made a special announcement as Interim Prime Minister in the headquarters of Parti Keadilan Rakyat after he had tendered resignation as the prime minister of Malaysia. In this speech, the pathos and ethos appeals were unusually more than the logos appeal as it was a speech of apology and defence in the face of accusations. This was when he moved away from using "we" to "I" to show his personal interpretation of events because this was a speech about him and not about his political party or the government. Previous studies on Mahathir Mohamad's speeches presented the cumulative results on the rhetorical appeals but did not dwell on the context of the speeches (e.g., Alkhirbash, 2010; Fatmawati et al., 2020). In the present study, we found it necessary to contextualise the speeches to understand the use of the persuasive appeals and how the active and passive voice as well as the use of personal pronouns were used to achieve the goals of persuasion.

As an endeavour to understand the rhetorical style of an enigmatic political leader who returned as prime minister at 93 years old, this study has indicated that his appeal is in his clear-headedness and his connection to the concerns of the audience. It seems that seasoned political leaders have a stable rhetorical style but makes strategic use of language to suit the situation and needs and values of the audience. Future research on rhetorical appeals in political speeches should investigate audience reaction to identify the appealing parts of the speeches, and language and content analysis can be conducted to determine how the persuasive appeal is achieved. In this way, the understanding of persuasion in political speeches would not be based on only the researcher's perspectives but, more importantly, on the audience's perspective.

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