PERSATUAN LINGUISTIK MALAYSIA
Bahasa Sendi Tamadun Bangsa

JURNAL LINGUISTIK Vol. 23 (2) Disember 2019 (021-040)

"*Pemuda zaman kini sangat memilih kerja*": An Appraisal Analysis of FELDA Youth's Attitudes Towards the Palm Oil Industry

Kesumawati A. Bakar[1], Siti Hamin Stapa[2] & Fuzirah Hashim[3]
kesuma@ukm.edu.my[1], sitihami@ukm.edu.my[2], fuzy@ukm.edu.my[3]

*School of Language Studies and Linguistics,
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia*

_____

Abstract.

Oil palm production, being the fourth largest contributor to Malaysia's national economy, has seen significant progress and rapid development over the past few decades. Despite concerted efforts being placed to promote and create more awareness among the youths of the potential of this sector, most of them are not interested to serve the industry, choosing instead to work in the manufacturing and retail sector. Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics Appraisal theory, in particular its system of Attitude (Martin & White, 2005), this paper presents a linguistic analysis of interpersonal meanings expressed by 5 FELDA youths towards the palm oil industry. This study investigates the attitudes of the youths and how these highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the industry's current practices. 5 interviews were analyzed and coded in terms of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation, capturing the ways in which each respondent conveyed positive and negative evaluations according to the value they perceive the industry possesses and the behavior of the FELDA community. The analysis highlighted three areas of strengths and weaknesses involving the industry's sustainability and significant socio-economic contribution to the FELDA community. Despite these positive evaluation, most respondents displayed disinterest in the sector, indicating the need for new and modern ways of engaging these youths with palm oil through technology and the social media.

Keywords and Phrases: Appraisal, SFL, ATTITUDE, youth, palm oil industry

"Pemuda zaman kini sangat memilih kerja": Analisis Penilaian Sikap Pemuda FELDA terhadap Industri Minyak Sawit

Abstrak

Sebagai penyumbang ekonomi keempat terbesar di Malaysia, industri kelapa sawit telah menyaksikan perkembangan yang ketara sejak beberapa dekad yang lalu. Terdapat usaha yang padu oleh kerajaan untuk mempromosikan dan mewujudkan kesedaran di kalangan belia akan potensi sektor ini. Walaubagaimanapun sebahagian besar golongan muda tidak berminat untuk berkhidmat dalam industri ini, sebaliknya memilih untuk bekerja di sektor perkilangan dan perniagaan. Menggunakan pendekatan Sistemik Fungsional Linguistik

khususnya sistem Attitude (Martin & White 2005), kajian ini membincangkan analisis linguistik makna interpersonal dalam pernyataan 5 belia FELDA mengenai industri minyak sawit. 5 wawancara dianalisis dan dikodkan dari segi Affect, Judgement dan Appreciation untuk menunjukkan penilaian positif dan negatif terhadap industri dan tingkah laku masyarakat FELDA. Kajian makna interpersonal ini secara tidak langsung mendedahkan kekuatan dan kelemahan industri sawit di Malaysia melalui tiga faktor yang melibatkan kemampanan industri dan sumbangan sosio-ekonomi kepada komuniti FELDA. Walaupun terdapat penilaian positif, kebanyakan responden menunjukkan minat yang kurang terhadap industri ini. Implikasi utama kajian menyarankan agar fungsi dan peranan media sosial dan teknologi diteliti dan digunakan sebagai kaedah untuk menarik minat dan melibatkan lebih ramai golongan muda dalam industri kelapa sawit.

Kata kunci Penilaian, SFL, sikap , belia, industri minyak sawit

_____

1. Introduction

Oil palm production is the fourth largest contributor to the national economy of Malaysia and one of the major driving forces for the country's agro-industry. It has seen significant progress and accounts for an overwhelming contribution to world's palm oil production and export (Ferdous Alam, Er and Halima Begum, 2015). However, the rapid development in this industry has created many issues, among which is the dependence on foreign workers in the plantation sector. Despite concerted efforts being placed to promote and create more awareness among the youths of the potential of this sector, most of them are not interested to work in plantation when they choose agricultural sector as the third choice after manufacturing and retail sector (Malaysia Human Resource Statistic 2013).

There are studies showing a substantial number of Malaysian youths viewing the palm oil industry negatively due to the labour-intensive nature of the industry, low job satisfaction and poor employment conditions and advancement. A study by Roslina et al (2016) also reported that perceiving the working environment as unappealing and dirty, pushes the youths further away from joining the industry. FELDA, in its effort to eliminate poverty through the cultivation of palm oil and rubber, remains dedicated to carry its role by providing adequate and advanced facilities to ensure that the youth would be able to enhance the socio-economic and quality of life so that various economic activities can be generated. However, despite these endless efforts to increase the number of youth engagement in palm oil industry, the youth still do not show much interest to get involved in the industry.

Positive and negative attitudes are important for explaining and predicting future behaviour. Yet, the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is controversial. Most empirical research supports a small to moderate positive relationship between attitudes and behaviour (McGuire, 1985). Despite the fact that attitudes may be a good indicator of human behaviour, it cannot predict actions all the time across situations and places. The reason is that there may be many moderating variables, conditions and situational constraints causing attitude-behaviour discrepancy (Ajzen, 1993; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; McGuire, 1985). Research has generally concluded that there is consistency among components of attitudes and behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). This means that learning about attitudes can help predict future behaviour among individuals.

Thus, this study was conducted to describe the general attitude and perceptions of FELDA youths towards different aspects of the Malaysian palm oil industry. By identifying and learning more about their attitude, we could determine how their attitudes form, change and influence the way they behave. Furthermore, the second objective of this study is to gain insights into the factors that may result in positive and negative attitudes among the younger FELDA generation towards the palm oil industry. Acquiring the youths' perception is significant as they are the future generation who are more

educated, and hopefully will develop to become individuals who think out of the box, innovate, drive performance as they are accountable to continue the FELDA legacy.

This article focuses on the linguistic choices made by 5 selected FELDA youths in their responses to a set of interview questions regarding the palm oil industry, and how these choices reveal interpersonal evaluations about different aspects of the industry and its community. Using Martin and White's (2005) APPRAISAL system, this study investigates the attitudes of FELDA youths and how these highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the industry's current practices. 5 interviews were analyzed and coded in terms of Affect, Judgement and Appreciation, capturing the ways in which each respondent conveyed positive and negative evaluations according to the value they perceive the industry possesses and the behavior of the settlers.

2. Literature Review

Many attitude theories assert that attitude encompasses three components; namely cognition, affect and behavioral tendencies. Cognition includes beliefs, opinions, knowledge or information held by a person towards an object; the indicators involve verbal expressions of beliefs or non-verbal perceptual reactions. The affective component is the emotional segment of an attitude where the responses involve verbal expressions of feelings towards the attitude object as well as physiological reactions, facial expressions and other non-verbal indicators of positive or negative feelings. Lastly, the behavioral tendencies refer to 'behavioral inclinations, plans, intentions and commitments, as well as overt motor acts involving the attitude object' (Ajzen, 1993, p.42).

Gardner proposed that 'attitude is an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent.' (Gardner, 1985, P. 9). In a similar vein, Martin and Rose (2003) defines attitude as resources used for expressing positive or negative evaluation of human behaviour, processes, animate and inanimate objects, states of affairs and emotions. Baker (1988) summarized the main characteristics of attitude as being both cognitive (thinking) and affective (emotion) and vary in degree of favorability/unfavorability. They are learnt and not inherited, but can change according to experience. Attitudes can influence a person to act in a certain way, but the relationship between attitudes and actions is not a strong one. In this study, we refer to attitude as an individual's positive or negative reaction or disposition to an idea, object, person or situation associated with aspects of the palm oil industry such as working environment, management, labour issues and remuneration.

Attitude towards plantation and palm oil industry

A small number of studies have examined the relationships between attitude, motivation and satisfaction in the agriculture and plantation sectors among Malaysian youths (Roslina et al 2016, Norehan 2016, Mohamad Amizi et al 2016, Norsida 2008). It was found that most local suburban youths preferred to work in manufacturing and retail sector rather than agricultural and plantation sector (Malaysia Human Resource Statistic 2013). They claimed that work in agricultural sector is burdening and tiresome (Norsida 2008). This is further supported by Walsh and Makaravy's study (2011) which reported that plantation jobs are regarded as 3D jobs (Difficult, Dirty and Dangerous) by local youths. Past studies have revealed strong negative perceptions and attitude among local youths and the reasons underlying their negativity and lack of interest. According to Frick et al., (1995), youth found that agricultural sector is unappealing due to the lack of knowledge or skill. Additionally, social issues such as drug abuse and illegal motor racing distance them further from the sector (Saifuddin, The Edge 2017).

Siti Hamin, Kesumawati and Fuzirah (2018) conducted a survey to investigate the attitude among young FELDA generation towards palm oil industry in Malaysia. The results indicate that in

general, young FELDA generation have positive attitude towards the palm oil industry. They realized the importance of this industry and they have the desire to contribute towards the betterment of the industry. The findings of the study also revealed that the workers have both positive and negative attitudes and motivation towards the industry. However, the positive aspects outweigh the negative ones. The research reports the ranking of 8 constructs which were found to be positive among the respondents towards the palm oil industry. Social status is ranked the highest (3.31), followed by managers (3.24), industry person congeniality (3.18), co-workers (3.13), nature of work (3.07), physical working conditions (3.02), commitment (2.91) and finally promotion opportunities (2.84). Social status is ranked the highest, showing that the respondents are confident that their family is proud of their profession in palm oil industry. Apart from that, they believed that working in palm oil industry is a respected vocation in Malaysia. As for managers, the respondents agree that the managers value their employees and they also spend much effort in supporting them in their career development. The managers tend to delegate work and always value employees' suggestions as well as behaving respectfully towards the employees. The respondents reported that the managers made sure that the employees participate in decisions affecting their jobs and provided appropriate training when necessary.

The literature above discussed the attitude of the young generation towards palm oil industry. The present study will investigate the perceptions among the young FELDA generation about the palm oil industry. The participants were interviewed based on their attitude on the industry and the interview were analysed using appraisal analysis. The following section describes the tools for analysing attitudinal expressions of the FELDA youths.

3. Analyzing Attitudinal Expressions of The FELDA Youths

The ATTITUDE framework (Martin and White 2005) is adopted in this study to analyze verbal resources that are used in the focus group interviews to evaluate the palm oil industry. ATTITUDE is a system of interpersonal meanings which offers an analytical framework to systematically identify and classify attitudinal expressions. The focus of our attitudinal analysis will be on the inscribed (direct) and invoked (indirect/token) expressions of emotion, judgement of behaviour and assessment of entities, performance, states of affairs and natural phenomena. The following sections describe the systems of ATTITUDE developed by Martin (2000, 2003) and Martin and White (2005).

Attitude

Attitudinal expressions can be categorised into 3 different types – Affect (expressions of emotion), Judgement (evaluation of behaviour) and Appreciation (evaluation of things). Exemplifications of each attitude types are given using instances from the interviews. The following sections will describe each type together with its annotation conventions from Martin and White (2005) used in the analysis.

The first distinction is made between positive [+] and negative [-] expressions. In the following examples, the words in bold are identified as representing positive or negative value (indicated in square brackets).

> *I am **interested** [+]
> Our youths are **<u>problematic</u>** [-]*

Affect

The next step in classifying attitudinal expressions is to classify them according to Affect, Judgement or appreciation (Martin & White 2005). Affect is concerned with expressions of feelings and can be

classified according to the following five questions: are the feelings positive or negative?; are the feelings a surge of emotion or an ongoing mental state?; are the feelings directed at or reacting to something as opposed to an ongoing mood?; do the feelings involve intention to a stimulus that is irrealis (i.e. involving a trigger)?; and do the realis feelings (i.e. a state or a directed feeling) have to do with un/happiness, in/security or dis/satisfaction? Table 2.3 presents examples of realis affect as un/happiness, in/security and dis/satisfaction.

UN/HAPPINESS	Surge (of behaviour)	Disposition
unhappiness		
misery	whimper	down [low]
[mood: 'in me']	cry	sad [median]
	wail	miserable [high]
antipathy	rubbish	dislike
[directed feeling: 'at you']	abuse	hate
	revile	abhor
happiness		
cheer	chuckle	cheerful
	laugh[2]	buoyant
	rejoice	jubilant
affection	shake hands	be fond of
	hug	love
	embrace	adore

IN/SECURITY	Surge (of behaviour)	Disposition
insecurity		
disquiet	restless	uneasy
	twitching	anxious
	shaking	freaked out
surprise	start	startled
	cry out	jolted
	faint	staggered
security		
confidence	declare	together
	assert	confident
	proclaim	assured
trust	delegate	comfortable with
	commit	confident in/about
	entrust	trusting

DIS/SATISFACTION	Surge (of behaviour)	Disposition
dissatisfaction		
ennui	fidget	flat
	yawn	stale
	tune out	jaded
displeasure	caution	cross, bored with
	scold	angry, sick of
	castigate	furious, fed up with
satisfaction		
interest	attentive	involved
	busy	absorbed
	industrious	engrossed
pleasure	pat on the back	satisfied, impressed
	compliment	pleased, charmed
	reward	chuffed, thrilled

Table 1. Realis affect (Martin & White 2005: 49-51)

Following Martin and White's conventions, the abbreviations used for affect are as follows:

des	'affect: desire'
hap	'affect: un/happiness'
sec	'affect: in/security'
sat	'affect: dis/satisfaction'

Emotions are frequently expressed to describe positive and negative dispositions and reactions to people, activities and things. What follows are examples of positive and negative affect taken from the data, with affect in bold and underlined.

*I am **interested*** [+ sat]

Judgement

Judgement specifically refers to attitudinal evaluation of human behavior, which can be distinguished between "personal judgements of admiration or criticism and moral judgements of praise or condemnation" (Martin & Rose 2003). Personal judgements of admiration or criticism are termed social esteem and are further sub-classified as judgements of normality (how unusual or special someone is), capacity (how capable someone is) and tenacity (how resolute someone is). Moral judgements of praise and condemnation are labeled as social sanction. These are further sub-classified as judgements of veracity (how truthful someone is) and propriety (how ethical someone is) (Martin & White 2005). The following are the abbreviations for the judgement sub-types.

norm	'judgement: normality'
cap	'judgement: capacity'
ten	'judgement: tenacity'
ver	'judgement: veracity'
prop	'judgement: propriety'

As with affect, judgement can also be negatively or positively assessed. The following are examples of positive and negative judgements found in the data. Realizations of judgement are in bold and underlined.

*Our youths are **problematic*** [- cap]

Appreciation

Appreciation typically involves evaluation of the sustainability, effectiveness and benefits of the industry, for example *'The industry **has survived from the past until now** and **has helped many of our generations***.

The system of APPRECIATION is organized around three variables: reaction, composition and valuation (Martin & White 2005). Martin & White explain that,

> "With appreciation we turn to meanings construing our evaluations of 'things', especially things we make and performances we give, but also including natural phenomena – what such things are worth (how we value them). In general terms appreciation can be divided into our 'reactions' to things (do they catch our attention; do they please us?), their 'composition' (balance and complexity), and their 'value' (how innovative, authentic, timely, etc)."

As with affect and judgement, appreciation can be negatively or positively valued. Table 2 presents different types of appreciation and their examples.

Reaction: impact 'did it grab me?'	arresting, captivating, engaging ...; fascinating, exciting, moving ...; lively, dramatic, intense ...; remarkable, notable, sensational ...	dull, boring, tedious ...; dry, ascetic, uninviting ...; flat, predictable, monotonous ...; unremarkable, pedestrian ...
Reaction: quality 'did I like it?'	okay, fine, good ... lovely, beautiful, splendid ...; appealing, enchanting, welcome ...	bad, yuk, nasty ...; plain, ugly, grotesque ...; repulsive, revolting, off-putting ...
Composition: balance 'did it hang together?'	balanced, harmonious, unified, symmetrical, proportioned ...; consistent, considered, logical ...; shapely, curvaceous, willowly ...	unbalanced, discordant, irregular, uneven, flawed ...; contradictory, disorganised ...; shapeless, amorphous, distorted ...
Composition: Complexity 'was it hard to follow?'	simple, pure, elegant ...; lucid, clear, precise ...; intricate, rich, detailed, precise ...	ornate, extravagant, byzantine ...; arcane, unclear, woolly ...; plain, monolithic, simplistic ...
Valuation 'was it worthwhile?'	penetrating, profound, deep ...; innovative, original, creative ...; timely, long awaited, landmark ...; inimitable, exceptional, unique ...; authentic, real, genuine ...; valuable, priceless, worthwhile ...; appropriate, helpful, effective ...	shallow, reductive, insignificant ...; derivative, conventional, prosaic ...; dated, overdue, untimely ...; dime-a-dozen, everyday, common; fake, bogus, glitzy ...; worthless, shoddy, pricey ...; ineffective, useless, write-off ...

Table 2. Appreciation types (Martin & White 2005: 56).

The following are the abbreviations for the appreciation sub-types.

reac   'appreciation: reaction'

comp   'appreciation: composition'

val   'appreciation: valuation'

The following is an example of valuation made by one of the respondents, bold and underlined.

*The industry **has survived from the past until now** [+ val] and **has helped many of our generations** [+ val]*

It is important to note the subjectivity of Appraisal coding due to the readings of the context and the co-text in which the attitudinal lexis occurs. To determine the category of attitude, it is necessary to look at what is being appraised in the clause (who is being judged or what is being appreciated). The next section describes the respondents and the methodology used for data collection.

Data Description

This qualitative study employed a focus group interview to collect data. The data consist of five interviews that took place at Pusat Pengajian Bahasa, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor. Five interviewees who are also the third generation FELDA settlers were interviewed. The focus group interviews were conducted twice; the first one was done with two interviewees and the second with three interviewees. The interviews could not be conducted in a single session due to the students' different academic schedules. The total duration of the

interviews is 150 minutes. The 5 interviewees i.e. Farah, Aina, Liana, Atikah and Syahirah were Year Two students at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, aged 21-year old. The parameter for selection is decided as they represent different FELDA settlements in order to gain different experience and opinions from their various backgrounds.

The interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed. The transcriptions were coded and occurrences of Attitude (Affect, Judgement and Appreciation) were counted. The coding of the data reflected as closely as possible the point of view of the participants. It was based on lexical items (e.g. '*saya* _berminat_ *kalau ada peluang perkerjaan*' (*I am* _interested_ *if there are job opportunities*) rather than non-verbal communication. Therefore, laughter and other non-verbal features were not included.

The next section examines how the candidates' attitudinal meanings revealed positive and negative evaluations of various aspects of the palm oil industry.

4. Findings and Discussion

Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics Appraisal theory, in particular its system of Attitude, this article examined focus group interviews of 5 FELDA youths in which they conveyed their opinions and impressions of the local palm oil industry. The analysis of the data from the five interviews revealed 58 instances of Attitude: 8 expressions of Affect, 10 Judgements and 41 Appreciations. 60% of the Judgements were invoked and most expressions of Affect (86%) were inscribed, whereas Appreciation were largely inscribed (66%) (See Figure 1).
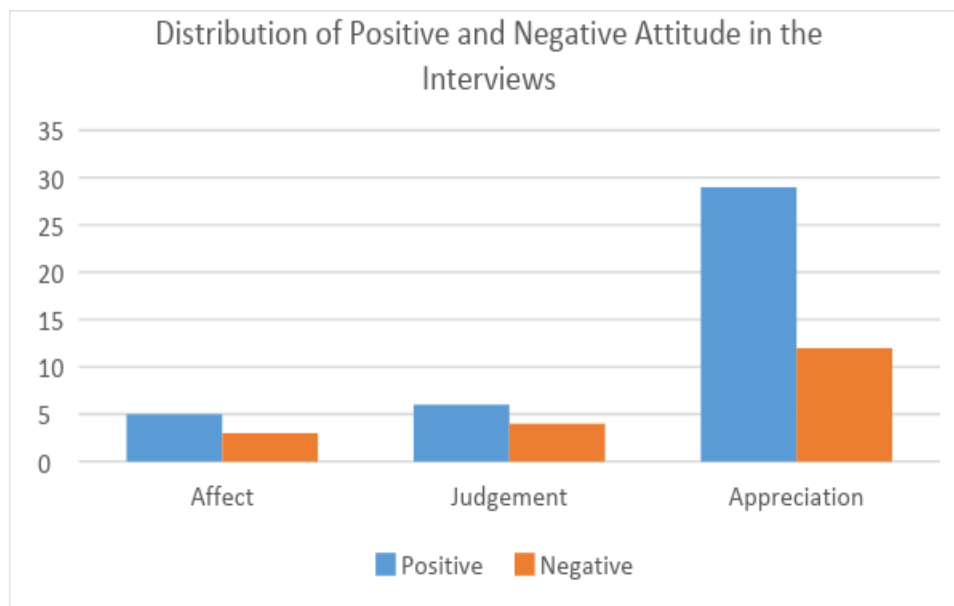

Figure 1. Distribution of Positive and Negative Attitude in the Interviews

On the whole, the interviewees conveyed more positive than negative evaluations in their responses resulting in a corpus containing 40 positive and 18 negative instances. Out of these, there were 5 expressions of positive emotion, versus 3 instances of negative feelings. Likewise, the interviewees mostly judged own and others' behaviour positively: only 4 Judgements out of 10 were negative. Finally, the subjects tended to evaluate the value of the industry positively with 29 positive Appreciations versus 12 negative. This is in line with our recent findings from a survey of 50 present FELDA employees showing highly positive attitudes towards various aspects of the industry (e.g. Siti Hamin et al 2019 & Fuzirah et al 2019).

A comparison across the interviews shows that Atikah expressed Attitudes more than any other candidate – 2 times more than Farah, Syahirah and Aina (the lowest user). Atiqah made 3-5 times more Judgements than the others and appreciated aspects and performances more often that the rest. In answering the 6 questions, all of them used different kinds of attitudinal meanings, with Atikah making the most Judgements and numerous Appreciations than the rest. Liana, on the other hand did not make any Judgement at all (see Figure 2). Their responses highlighted three areas in which the subjects' evaluations played an important role in highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the industry and its community: 1) value in relation to benefits, potential and recognition and 2) value in relation to tough working condition and low skilled jobs 3) Judgement in relation to the younger generation and their lack of interest and awareness of the industry potential. In the next section, we present detailed analyses of their responses to each question.
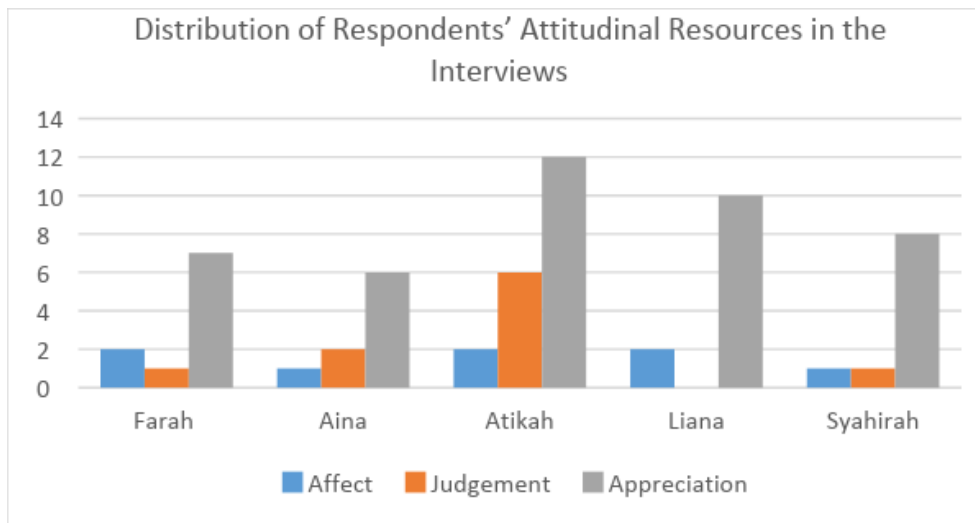

Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' Attitudinal resources in the interviews

Perceptions and Attitudes Towards the Palm Oil Industry
This section discusses the results from the interview. 6 questions in relation to different dimensions of the industry ranging from strength/weaknesses, future potential and youth engagement were answered by the respondents. They expressed their opinions and shared their experiences as a part of the FELDA community. The analysis examines how the respondents'

attitudinal meanings construct different areas of strengths and shortcomings within the industry and its community.

Question 1:
What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Palm Oil Industry?

The candidates mostly expressed positive Appreciation towards the industry in terms of Valuation (how worthwhile it is) and Affect (Interest). All five subjects expressed positive evaluation of the industry with reference to its sustainability and economic advantage to the nation and the FELDA community (11 instances). Three of them agreed that the industry has helped to contribute to and boost settlers' income, consequently allaying their fears about daily needs. For example, Liana commented that:

> "*Mesti pendapatan isi rumah tu akan bertambah. Contohnya macam kawan saya bila tibanya musim kelapa sawit dia.. keluarga dia tak perlu risau untuk macam mana nak dapat apa ni bekalan harian*"
> (The **income of the household will increase** [+ val]. My friend for example, during the palm oil season... he **does not have to worry** [+ sec] about how to get his daily needs*)

In terms of its sustainability, the following responses were given by Farah and Aina.

Farah: "*kekuatan industri kelapa sawit di Malaysia yang pertamanya kekal la daripada dulu sampai sekarang daripada generasi atuk nenek sampai la saya*"
(The strength of the palm oil industry in Malaysia… firstly, **it has been here since the past until the present** [+ val].. from my grandmother's generation until my generation)

Aina: "*Industri ini dah kekal daripada dulu sampai sekarang dan dah banyak membantu generasi kami*"
(**The industry has survived from the past until now** [+ val] and **has helped many of our generations** [+ val])

From the responses, it can be inferred that the strength of the industry is its sustainability and longevity, which has been beneficial and helpful to several generations of settlers. Additionally, Atikah also commented that palm oil is used in a variety of commercial products such as food leading to a constant demand for it. This as a result creates job opportunities for locals either in the palm oil plantations or its periphery industries.

> "*dia boleh mengeluarkan keluaran yang pelbagai terutamanya dalam makanan. kelapa sawit tu mempunyai permintaan yang tinggi untuk emm membuat sesuatu produk*"
> (**It could produce a variety of side products** [+ val] especially food. **Oil palm has a high demand in side products** [+ val])

The next part discusses Affect, specifically the feelings and preferences of the respondents with regard to their involvement in the palm oil industry.

Question 2:
What do you like and dislike about involvement in the industry?

In analyzing this question we found that the respondents expressed their likes and dislikes about being involved in the industry as a part of the FELDA community. The respondents used a

variety of positive Attitudinal resources. They expressed positive Affect in terms of happiness and satisfaction; they also alluded to positive Judgement of normality, capacity and propriety. The most frequent was the Valuation of the industry in terms of its economic benefits, job opportunities and systematic management.

In the following example, Farah implied positive Affect of happiness through positive Valuation of relationship when she said,

> "*kita akan berjumpa dengan jiran-jiran kita so suasana tu di situ juga dapat mengekalkan lagi. la menguatkan lagi silaturrahim*"
> (**We will meet our neighbors, so that will maintain and strengthen relationships** [+ val] [t, + hap])

She spoke of congeniality among the settlers, creating a friendly environment that strengthens relationships. Aina further elaborated on the topic of relationship by giving her father as an example. She commented that

> "*ayah saya seorang majikan tapi dia sangat menjaga hubungan baik dia dengan pekerja walaupun dia pekerja Indonesia.*"
> (My father is an employer but **he really takes care of his relationship with his workers** [t, + prop] even though they are Indonesians)
> "*Bonding tu adalah sangat baik dekat ladang ataupun kilang. Sampai lah hari raya pun diorang akan datang rumah dan beraya bersama*"
> (**There is a strong bond on the plantation or the factory** [+ val][t, + norm]. They would even come and visit during Eid)

Aina made two implied Judgements pertaining to her father's ethics in dealing with his employees. It can be assumed that the bond between her father and his workers is the result of his kindness and good management. As mentioned earlier, 60% of all Judgements expressed were invoked (token). This can be explained by the fact that the subjects were sharing experiences through concrete activities e.g. house visits, by drawing on their experience as the third FELDA generation. These in turn may bring about implied evaluations of skills and competencies, as can be seen in the following statement by Atikah

> "*manfaat lain…seperti peneroka menjadikan ladang tu tempat mereka menternak haiwan*"
> (Other benefits…such as settlers making the farm a place where they rear animals [t, + cap])

The resourcefulness of the settlers in making the plantation dual-purpose can be interpreted as a token of positive Judgement on their capacity as farmers.

There are frequent inscribed instances of positive Appreciation in terms of Valuation (8 instances) and Composition (1 instance). The subjects repeatedly highlighted the benefits of palm oil and how it encourages the growth of side/subsidiary industries e.g. food, cosmetics and animal rearing. This as a result helps to strengthen the economy as well as create job opportunities for locals. These claims triggered positive Affect, as shown by Liana through her

interest in working in the industry ("*Memang saya berminat kalau ada peluang perkerjaan*" (I am **interested** [+ sat] if there are job opportunities)). This resonates with a claim made by Martin (2000) which stated that socialization into a domain or field involves both an alignment with the practices involved and an affinity with the attitudes one is expected to have towards those practices.

The third question looks at the factors behind the lack of interest and engagement among the youths towards the industry.

Question 3:
What are the factors causing a lack of interest and engagement among the younger generation towards the palm oil industry?

In general, there is a lack of interest and engagement among the younger generation towards the palm oil industry. Despite the strengths previously stated, negative attitudes among the youths are attributed to the harsh physical working condition of the industry. They claimed that work in agricultural sector is burdening and tiresome (Norsida 2008). This is further supported by Walsh and Makaravy's study (2011) which reported that plantation jobs are regarded as 3D jobs (Difficult, Dirty and Dangerous) by local youths. Four negative Valuation are invoked through concrete examples. Working in the plantation means having to work under the sun in intense heat. Days are long and laborious, while income is irregular as it is subject to the total weight of the produce and market price of palm oil.

> "*Untuk bekerja dekat kilang atau ladang, dia bekerja di bawah matahari kan, panas sikit. Kalau ikutkan kerja biasa dia tujuh hingga lapan jam sahaja, tapi kalau untuk kelapa sawit ni dia kira ikut berapa biji buah kita dapat, berapa berat dia berapa, dia ikut atas satu buah berapa*"
> (To work in a factory or plantation, **one works under the sun, it is hot** [t, - val]. **Normal job is seven to eight hours, but if palm oil, it's about how many fruits we get and how much they weigh** [t, - val])

A small proportion of Judgements were made both directly and indirectly against the youth and their attitudes. Atikah evoked negative Judgement (Capacity) when she said '*pemuda kita ada banyak masalah*' (our youths are **problematic** [- cap]). Elaboration or examples of problems were not specified, but it could be inferred that problematic behaviour might be an issue among local youths. Additionally, Syahirah said that young people nowadays are choosy when it comes to job selection ('*faktor-faktor dia sebab emm pemuda zaman kini sangat memilih kerja*') (one of the factors is because youth nowadays are **choosy** [- norm] when looking for jobs).

The findings from Roslina et al (2016), Norehan (2016), Mohamad Amizi et al (2016) support this claim stating that most local youths preferred to work in manufacturing and retail sector rather than agricultural and plantation sector. This could be due to their possessing higher education and qualification, as suggested by one of the respondents below.

> '*saya rasa generasi sekarang ni terutama generasi kedua atau ketiga mereka dah mula mempunyai pendidikan jadi diorang semua berhijrah untuk menjadi lebih baik selain daripada menjadi buruh di kawasan pertanian*'

(I think the current generation, especially **the second or third generation they are more educated now** (t, + cap] so everyone is migrating to be better than being a laborer in agriculture)

Thus they seek for better, higher paying positions/jobs. This supports the findings made by Abdul Aziz & Norhlilmatun (2013) who claimed that agriculture is not viewed as an attractive alternative due to the conventional opinion that the agriculture offers low salaries and does not promise a good future for the employees. This token of positive capacity eventually leads the youths to migrate to the city.

Question 4:
How do we attract young people to be interested in the oil palm industry? (Bagaimanakah cara untuk menarik minat generasi muda melibatkan diri dalam industri kelapa sawit)
Both positive and negative tokens of Appreciation towards the industry were made through suggestions proposed by the respondents. Liana suggested giving courses to raise awareness and interest among the youths ("*hmm dia kerap melakukan kursus untuk anak-anak muda* (The industry needs to conduct courses often for the youths)). Due to the industry's tough working condition [t, - val], Syahirah suggested introducing new methods and technology for working at the plantation ("*mungkin kita kena guna kaedah baru sebab kerja-kerja tu terlalu berat kalau nak buat*" (We may have to use a new method because the work is too laborious)). This is in line with a statement made by the former Plantation Industries and Commodities Minister who urged higher learning institutions and private corporations to pool their resources to find better ways to remove oil palm fruits from the trees to the mill (The Star, 4 Feb 2017).

At the same time, Syahirah also proposed creating more admin posts for young graduates to encourage new and fresh ideas into the system, as well as offering work incentive and giving higher salary or allowance.

> "*berikan diorang minat kepada kerja pentadbiran. Jadi, diorang boleh buat kerja di pejabat jadi diorang boleh boleh bagi idea untuk melakukan apa yang lebih bagus… kena beri macam insentif ataupun faedah, macam kita naikkan dia punya gaji ke ataupun kita bagi elaun bulanan yang tinggi…*"

(Generate the youths' interest in administrative work. So, they can work in the office and propose new ideas for doing things better... Also give incentives or benefits, like raising the monthly allowance)

Farah also raised a good point when she suggested creating a tertiary program specializing in palm oil, focusing on research and infrastructure for example.

> "*mewujudkan pengkhususan yang.. ataupun jurusan yang khusus dalam bidang kelapa sawit tidak kira lah dalam.. dari segi penyelidikan ke prasarana ke dan sebagainya*"

(Creating a specialization ... or a special course in the field of oil palm. It can be in terms of research, infrastructure and so forth)

The following question asked the respondents' opinions about the government's current incentives and efforts.

Question 5:
Does the Malaysian government provide incentives that are appropriate to the efforts given in the palm oil industry?

On the whole, the five respondents evaluated the industry and the government positively through direct Appreciations. They commented that FELDA has given a lot of help to the community of settlers through financial support, scholarship and one-off financial incentive. These are seen to help relieve much of the burden of their families. The government have also provided training, courses and seminars on palm oil to the settlers.

> *"...training pulak, banyak jugak training dulu dalam bidang perindustrian ni jugak pastu diorang juga ada bagi dekat peneroka tu sendiri tentang kesedaran menjaga pokok kelapa sawit tu, macam ikut kursus atau ceramah"*

> (**A lot of training were given** [t, + val] in the field. **Courses and talks were also conducted** [t, + val] for settlers on the awareness of how to tend to the trees)

However, despite these courses and trainings, Farah revealed her negative capacity by admitting that she is uninformed about the incentives or scholarship offered by the government in boosting the industry. This she said was due to the lack of industry exposure to the community as well as promotion and incentive (invoked -ve Valuation).

> "*saya kurang mengetahui tentang insentif ataupun biasiswa ataupun apa sahaja yang dilakukan oleh pihak kerajaan Malaysia dalam membantu industri kelapa sawit…kurang banyak la maksudnya tidak banyak diberikan jadi tiada pendedahan sebetul-betulnya tentang industri kelapa sawit ni*"

> (**I don't know about any incentives or scholarships or anything done by the Malaysian government in assisting the oil palm industry** [t, - cap] ... it means that there is not much exposure about this industry)

Atikah made an indirect negative valuation of FELDA when she highlighted the conversion of FELDA scholarship into education loan ("*Tapi rasa biasiswa dulu je ada pastu sekarang ni dah dimansuhkan*" (I think **the scholarship has been abolished** [t, - val])). FELDA however, helps to settle 50% of their loan (t, + val).

Direct negative Appreciation was made by Aina through her displeasure at the high and unreasonable requirements for the scholarship. She said that it is very difficult to get sponsorship from FELDA or MPOB because they require a 4.00 CGPA or 9 As from the applicants.

> "*adalah sangat susah untuk dapatkan tajaan pendidikan daripada pihak Felda ataupun mungkin MPOB, sebab saya lihat, ketetapan ataupun requirement yang dia mintak*

adalah <u>sangat tak masuk akal</u>. Apa yang dia mintak adalah '4 flat' ataupun '9 A' sekurang-kurangnya, '9 A+'."

(It is **<u>very difficult to get a scholarship from FELDA or maybe MPOB</u>** [- val], because the provisions or **<u>requirements requested are illogical</u>** [- val]. They ask for '4 flat' or '9 A' at least, '9 A +')

The final question explores the youths' opinion about the potential of the palm oil industry in future.

Question 6:
Does the palm oil industry have good future potential?

4 respondents conveyed positive Appreciation of Valuation about the industry's potential. These youths felt that through continuous research effort and technology, the industry can further expand and boost the quality of produce, which might lead to an increase in product demand. This could create great economic potential in the future for Malaysia, as one of the biggest exporter of palm oil in the world. Consequently, this could attract more people, specifically the locals to be interested and get involved in working for the industry.

> "*potensi dalam industri kelapa sawit ni masih boleh diteruskan dengan teknologi, mungkin kita boleh lebih berkembang, pastu ada banyak pengeluaran lagi lepas tu keluarkan... keluarkan buah yang lebih bermutu jadi kita mempunyai permintaan yang banyak jadi boleh menarik balik orang untuk pandang balik industri kelapa sawit ini*"

> (**<u>Potential in the palm oil industry could increase with technology</u>** [+ val], maybe we can expand, **<u>there will be more production</u>** [+ val]... get **<u>more quality produce</u>** [+ val] so we have **<u>a lot of demand</u>** [+ val] so **<u>can generate interest among the locals to appreciate the industry</u>** [+ sat])

Liana however commented that this potential would only be realized if the industry workforce is not monopolized by foreign workers.

"*Ya kalau kelapa sawit ni tidak diambil alih oleh orang… pekerja asing*"

(Yes **<u>if oil palm is not taken over by foreign workers</u>** [t, – reac])

In the data, only 17% of the evaluation are Judgements (see Figure 1). In relation to potential, Atikah made two Judgements, direct and indirect, on two generations i.e. the youths and the first generation settlers. She explained that the first generation of settlers have gotten older and are lacking the energy to manage the plantations. Unfortunately, their children have migrated to the city, seeking livelihood options which are different from their parents'. This presents challenges to the industry's strength and sustainability. She nevertheless believed that the young generation has the Capacity (+) to protect the land through inheritance and by placing them under FELDA for management.

> "*Tapi dengan keadaan sekarang ni peneroka pun dah lanjut usia, diorang pun dah tak larat nak uruskan dan kebanyakan anak-anak FELDA pun dah berhijrah jadi saya rasa*

ini boleh diselamatkan dengan cara mereka mewarisi balik tapi diserahkan kepada FELDA untuk mengurus"

(But as **the settlers have grown older** [t, - cap], **they are not capable of managing the plantation** [- cap] and most of FELDA's children have migrated. But I think **the land can be safeguarded through inheritance but turned over to FELDA to manage** [t, + cap])

On the whole, the analysis has highlighted three areas in which the subjects' evaluations played an important role in highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the industry and its community: 1) positive Appreciation in relation to benefits, potential and recognition and 2) negative appreciation in relation to tough working condition and low skilled jobs and 3) Judgement in relation to the youths and their lack of interest and awareness of the industry's potential.

What can be concluded from the findings is the fact that the palm oil industry has helped to boost the local economy (47 + Appreciation) from the past until present and has been the main source of livelihood for settlers in 317 FELDA settlements nationwide, since FELDA was conceptualized by Tun Abdul Razak in 1956 (The Malay mail, 13 Jan 2016).

5. Conclusion

Drawing on Systemic Functional Linguistics Appraisal theory, in particular its system of Attitude, this paper presents a linguistic analysis of interpersonal meanings expressed by 5 FELDA youths towards the palm oil industry in 2 focus group interviews. An analysis of the data reveals that the respondents used different types of interpersonal resources, expressing different Attitude (both positive and negative, inscribed and invoked) when commenting on different aspects of the industry.

The analysis highlighted three areas of strengths and weaknesses of the current organization and community. The first strength involves the industry's sustainability and how it has significantly contributed to local economic growth and the alleviation of rural poverty, as well as providing significant financial and social benefits to the FELDA community. All the respondents conveyed positive valuation of the industry in terms of its continuity, stability and its role in supporting the locals, both economically and socially. As a result, they also expressed confidence in its future potential by pointing out that continuous research and technology can boost the quality of produce, leading to an increase in product demand. Consequently, they felt that this could attract more locals to be interested and get involved in the industry. Since 1917, The palm oil industry has created thousands of jobs and has done much to lift settlers out of poverty in Malaysia, consequently leading to better social well-being and health (Kushairi et al 2017). Additionally, oil palm industry has also enabled thousands of smallholder farmers to be landowners.

Despite these positive facts, only one of the respondents voiced her interest in working in the industry. The others revealed a disinterest among the younger generation, attributing this to higher education, competitive city jobs with better career growth opportunities and a lack of

encouragement from settlers parents. Another important factor behind this lack of interest stemmed from the nature of working in a palm oil factory or on the plantation. The youths believed that the job entails working for long hours under the sun. Most of the respondents stressed tough working conditions by means of negative Valuation. These evaluations were mostly invoked, because of the concrete examples given by them through experience and observation. The respondents' sentiment points to the industry's challenge in developing new and modern ways of engaging the youths with palm oil through technology and the social media. These youths need to made aware of the fact that in the last 30 years, the oil palm industry had expanded and the participants are no longer confined to settlers. Bankers, insurance companies, shipping and transportation, scientists and engineers are now part and parcel of the palm oil supply chain (The NST, 4 Feb 2017)

This study has shown how the FELDA youths connect to, and align or dis-align with, the palm oil industry. The respondents' positive and negative appreciations of the organization, the community and nature of work highlighted their experience and their understanding of what it means to be a part of the FELDA community. They connected and bonded in terms of the feelings and values that were shared in relation to various aspects of the industry. The different types of interpersonal resources used by respondents have, to a certain extent, revealed how the younger generation are negotiating different paths in order to fulfil their aspirations and also how, over the years, the palm oil industry and its community in Malaysia are exceptionally resilient and can adapt to a wide range of changes and challenges.

Acknowledgement

References

Ajzen, I. 1993. Attitude theory and the attitude-behavior relation. In *New directions in attitude measurement*. Berlin. Walter de Gruyter.

Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. 1980. *Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior*. Englewood-Cliffs, NJ. Prentice-Hall

Baker, C. 1988. Key issues in bilingualism and bilingual education. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. 1993. *The psychology of attitudes*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt

Ferdous A., Er, A.C and Halima B. 2015 Malaysian oil palm industry: Prospect and problem. *Journal of Food Agriculture and Environment*. 1313(22):143-148

Frick, M., Birkenholz, R., Gardner, H. & Matchmes, K. 1995. Rural and Urban Inner City High School Students: Knowledge and Perceptions of Agriculture. *The Journal of Agricultural Education*, 36(2), 44-53.

Fuzirah H., Kesumawati A.B & Siti Hamin S. 2019. Sikap dan Motivasi Generasi Muda terhadap Industri Minyak Kelapa Sawit. *E-Bangi Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*. Vol. 16. No.4 (1-17)

Gardner, R.C. 1985. *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London. Edward Arnold

Kushairi, A, Singh, R and Ong-Abdullah, M. 2017. The Palm Oil industry in Malaysia: Thriving with Technologies. *Journal of Oil Palm Research.* Vol. 29 (4) December 2017 p. 431 – 439

Martin, J.R. 2000. Beyond exchange: Appraisal systems in English. In S. Hunston & G. Thompson (Eds.), *Evaluation in text: Authorial stance and the construction of discourse* (pp. 142-175). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. 2003. *Working with discourse: Meaning beyond the clause*: Continuum Intl Pub Group.

Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. R. 2005. *The language of evaluation*: Palgrave Macmillan Basingstoke

McGuire, W.J. 1985. Attitudes and Attitude Change. In: Lindzey, G. and Aronson, E., Eds., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, 3rd Edition, Vol. 2, Random House, New York, 233-346.

Mohammad Amizi A, Norehan Abdullah & Jamal Ali. 2016. Perception of Local youths in Malaysia East Coast Region towards the career prospect in Oil Palm Plantation.

Norehan Abdullah, and Siti Aznor Ahmad, and Mohamad Amizi Ayob. 2016. *Labour force participation of rural youth in plantation sector of Northern Peninsular Malaysia.* Jurnal Ekonomi Malaysia, 50 (2). pp. 83-92.

Norsida Man. (2008). Persepsi Terhadap Pertanian Dalam Kalangan Belia Tani dan Keperluan Pendidikan Pertanian. J. Pembangunan Belia Malaysia, 1, pp. 99-114.

Walsh, J and Makararavy, T. (2011). *Cambodian Migrants in Thailand: Working Conditions and Issues,* Asian Social Science, 7(7), 23-29.

Roslina, K., Mohd Amizi, Norehan Abdullah, Jamal Ali, Siti Aznor Ahmad. (2016). *Job satisfaction among Malaysian Youth working in the palm oil plantation sector: Analysis of Attraction and Repulsion Factors*. Proceeding – 3rd Kuala Lumpur International Agriculture, Forestry and Plantation. May 21 - 22, 2016.

Saifuddin A. 2017. Better education for FELDA youth.
http://pnews.theedgemarkets.com/article/second-sphere-better-education-felda-youth. [Accessed 3 July 2018].

Siti Hamin S., Kesumawati A.B and Fuzirah, H. 2018. Attitudes & Motivation of the Young Generation towards the Palm Oil Industry. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Vol 10 No 1.

100th year industry: Creating value for palm oil. The NST, 4 Feb 2017. (accessed 3 April 2019)

Felda schemes a legacy of Tun Razak. The Malay Mail, 13 Jan 2016. (accessed 3 April 2019)

Malaysia Human Resource Statistic. 2013. https://www.dosm.gov.my. (accessed 5 April 2019)

Biographical note:

Kesumawati A. Bakar is a senior lecturer at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Selangor, Malaysia. She holds a PhD degree (2012) in Linguistics from the University of Sydney, Australia. Her research interests include multimodal discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, gender and identity studies. She has co-authored books and published articles in these areas.

Siti Hamin Stapa is a Professor of Applied Linguistics at the Centre of Literacy and Social Transformation, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. Her main research interest is written literacy which includes genre analysis and contrastive rhetoric. She has conducted research in the area of, genre writing, environmental literacy, multicultural and multilingual awareness among the rural school children, language and culture among the Japanese retirees in Malaysia among others.

Fuzirah Hashim is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. She has over 25 years of experience in ELT. Her areas of interests are in the field of Corpus-based Studies, Online Learning and Teaching of ESP.