

## English in the Media

### Unit 5: Letters to the Editor

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# Unit Objectives

In this unit, you will learn:

- express agreement or disagreement on various issues
- distinguish fact from opinion
- identify the newspapers' views on various issues
- express their opinions and views in writing a letter to the editor



# Facts or Opinion

- **Facts – the truth, referenced information which cannot be changed**
- **Opinions – personal views/judgements on an issue.**



# Facts or Opinion

- 1. Malaysia is one of the leading exporters of petroleum in the world.**
- 2. It seems that UNIMAS students tend to sleep in class.**
- 3. According to Adams (2012), poor English proficiency can affect students' chance of getting a job.**
- 4. Every year, almost 5000 people died of diabetes.**



# Letters to the Editor vs Editorials

**They are both:**

- **expressions of opinion on a topical subject**
- **persuasive texts, with the aim to express views to a wider public.**
- **may contain facts as well as opinions or views of the writer.**



# Letters to the Editor vs Editorials

Editorial	Letter to the Editor
An article that presents the newspaper's opinion	Letters written by readers who wants to comment on articles published
Types: Staff editorials, Signed editorials, Op-Ed (reflective)	Types: To newspaper or To magazine
<b>Purpose:</b> To persuade, to explain or interpret, To criticize or praise.	

# Letters to the Editor vs Editorials

**THE MALAYSIAN Insider**  
Thursday, 09 May 2013 Last Update: 02:21pm

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## Of change, promises and uncertainty — Chuah Kee Man

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APRIL 28, 2013

APRIL 28 — Change, like sunshine, can be a friend or a foe, a blessing or a curse, a dawn or a dusk. — William Arthur Ward

Change, shift, transformation or whatever equivalent terms that you want to add to the list, is indeed the celebrated word in the Malaysian political landscape now. The roar for change is louder than ever. It is so loud that the

**RECENT** MALAYSIA BUSINESS BAHASA

- Ex-exco man to be named Penang Speaker
- Khalid gets PAS, DAP backing to remain as Selangor MB
- MCA, Gerakan men back Utusan, say Najib should be disappointed with Chinese
- Group voters according to age not race, PAS tells EC
- DAP calls for 'one-man, one-vote' polls reforms

[Grid of fashion items with a -33% discount tag]

# Structure of Letters to the Editor

## Introduction

Reference to previous article + issue + stance

## Body

Explain your opinion. Give evidence for your opinion – at least 3 points.

## Conclusion

Restate opinion + Suggestion + Punch Line (optional)

Name,  
Place





# Structure of Letters to the Editor

- Giving your stance on a issue (your agreement/disagreement) – Indirect way

- I **share the same opinion with you** regarding the issue of bringing back English schools....

Agree

- What you have mentioned in your article **is not appropriate** and I think it is better to....

Disagree



# Structure of Letters to the Editor

- After giving your stance, provide at least 2 points why you say so (agree/disagree).
- Your points should be
  - Straightforward and relevant
  - Backed-up by examples or factual case (e.g. reports or statistics)
  - Persuasive (try to persuade people to think about the issue)



# Structure of Letters to the Editor

- In Letter to the Editor, the conclusion is usually very short.
- Your conclusion should have
  - Restate your stance/opinion
  - Give a suggestion
  - Punch line/closing remarks (**Optional**)
- After the conclusion, don't forget to "sign off". – put your name and place.



# Language of Letters to the Editor

- **Present tense (unless refer to the past)**
- **persuasive language (to persuade)**
- **subjective language (sometimes emotive)**
- **mix of formal and informal language**
- **thinking verbs (e.g. believe, puzzle, like)**
- **modal verbs (e.g. may, could, will)**
- **relating verbs (e.g. is/are, has/have)**



# Persuasive Language

## The **7** common techniques:

- **Attacks**
- **Emotive Appeals**
- **Rhetorical question**
- **Inclusive pronouns**
- **Exaggeration**
- **Emphasis**
- **Evidence**

# Persuasive Language

## Attacks (Personal Attack)

- **attempt to belittle or embarrass or just plain insult an opponent**
- **make your opposition seem less credible**

# Persuasive Language

## Attacks (Personal Attack)

### ■ Example:

There's **no point listening to** Senator Lim's proposal to introduce higher tax on cars. He **is an art graduate**, and **cannot even understand basic economics.**



# Persuasive Language

## Emotive Appeals

- aim to engage people's feelings, not logic or reason
- manipulate a reader to feel a certain way



# Persuasive Language

## Emotive Appeals

### ■ Example:

After 56 years of independence, we still have citizens who are **living without home** and **begging** on the streets. **They are dying because** of our **poor governance!**



# Persuasive Language

## Rhetorical Questions

- Questions which doesn't require an answer
- merely to reinforce a point



# Persuasive Language

## Rhetorical Questions

- **Example:**

**How much longer must our people endure this injustice?**



# Persuasive Language

## Inclusive Pronouns

- **directly address the reader, either personally or as a member of a shared group**
- **Usually using “we”, “us”, “you”, “our”**



# Persuasive Language

## Inclusive Pronouns

- Example:

**We**, as the citizen of Malaysia, should embrace the spirit of togetherness and unity. It is **our** responsibility to be the driving force of 1Malaysia.



# Persuasive Language

## Exaggeration/hyperbole

- **overblown language in order to make the issue seem more important or urgent.**
- **Usually “bombastic” (high-sounding) adjectives are used.**

# Persuasive Language

## Exaggeration/hyperbole

### ■ Example:

Councils are **losing the war** against **rampant** vandals.



# Persuasive Language

## Emphasis

- **Repetition of words or ideas to attract reader's attentions.**
- **Also uses “list of three” – related words/ideas which are listed in the order of three.**





# Persuasive Language

## Emphasis

### ■ Examples:

Yes, **we can**, to opportunity and prosperity. Yes, **we can** heal this nation. Yes, **we can** repair this world. Yes, **we can**.

This task requires **determination, guts** and **willpower**.



# Persuasive Language

## Evidence

- **Involves three types of evidence:**
  - ✓ **Anecdotal –real life events, true story**
  - ✓ **Expert Opinion**
  - ✓ **Statistical – survey/research**

# Persuasive Language

## Evidence

- Example of anecdotal evidence

I can tell you that, **as a single mother of two**, I received very little in the way of financial support.



# Persuasive Language

## Evidence

- **Example of expert opinion**

**My stand on the issue of exposed underwear is supported by fashion designer Ruby Reed....**

# Persuasive Language

## Evidence

- Example of statistical evidence

A **recent survey** found that **90% of students** favoured no school uniforms at all.



# You Try!

**Which technique is used for the following statements?**

- **No one should trust him, because of his past records as a criminal.**
- **It's time to change our mentality, way of thinking and reasoning.**
- **The world will come to its absolute end if corruptions is not stopped.**



# You Try!

**Which technique is used for the following statements?**

- **45% of men cheated on their first date and 56% of their girl friend knew it.**
- **If you care about your children's success, and do not want them to suffer in the future, then you need to invest in their education.**

