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Cawangan Kedah
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Voice of Academia

Academic Series of Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah

VoA 2021
Volume 17 Issue 1

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VOICE OF ACADEMIA

Academic Series of Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah

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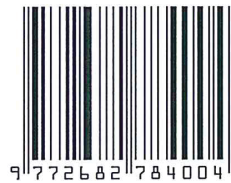
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e-ISSN: 2682-7840



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TABLE of CONTENTS

POTENSI MASJID SEBAGAI PRODUK PELANCONGAN DI MALAYSIA Azarudin Awang ¹ , Zainuddin Zakaria ² , Mohd Sabri Abdul Ghafar ³ , Noralisa Ismail ⁴ , Zuraini Jusoh ⁵	1 - 9
AN INVESTIGATION ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ICEBREAKERS IN CLASSROOMS Che Nooryohana Zulkifli ¹ , Mohamad Putera Idris ²	10 - 19
A STUDY ON AIR POLLUTION INDEX IN SABAH AND SARAWAK USING PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS AND ARTIFICIAL NEURAL NETWORK Norwaziah Mahmud ¹ , Nur Elissa Syazrina Zulkifli ² , Nur Syuhada Muhammad Pazil ³	20 - 29
CHARACTERISTIC PERFORMANCE CUSTOMER RELATION MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN MALAYSIA Muhamad Fairos Mohamad Shah	30 - 36
ILLEGAL STREET HAWKERS ISSUE FACING THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN SARAWAK: A CASE STUDY OF URBAN STREETS IN KUCHING CITY Noni Harianti Junaidi ¹ , Anisa Safiqah Othman ²	37 - 54
EMOJI & EMOTICON-RELATED LEGAL ISSUES Nor Azlina Mohd Noor ¹ , Ahmad Shamsul Abd Aziz ²	55 - 62
GRADUATES' EMPLOYABILITY: ENHANCING STUDENTS' OVERALL PERFORMANCES Fatin Adilah Razali ¹ , Shafinaz Lyana Abu Talib ² , Naqiah Awang ³	63 - 72
PLAYING E-SPORT AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES Nurul Nadiah Rasdi ¹ , Ahmad Najmie Rusli ²	73 - 80
FACTORS FOR FINANCIAL RESTATEMENTS: CASE OF PUBLIC LISTED COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA Shafinaz Lyana Abu Talib ¹ , Fatin Adilah Razali ² , Zaini Ahmad ³	81 - 96
PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND JOB STRESS ON TURNOVER INTENTION: CONCEPTUAL PAPER Roshidah Safeei	97 - 104
IS EMERGING FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET EFFICIENT? Soofiyah Aiman Sanadi ¹ , Bee-Hoong Tay ²	105 - 115
THE IMPACT OF PERFORMANCE EXPECTANCY ON PURCHASING TRAVEL PRODUCTS VIA ONLINE TRAVEL AGENTS WEBSITES: GENDER AS MODERATOR Safwan Marwin Abdul Murad ¹ , Arunnaa a/p Sivapathy ² , Annuar Aswan Mohd Nor ³	116 - 128
LOGAN MULTI-FUNCTIONAL DIGITAL CLOCK Nik Nur Aneesa Zamzurri ¹ , Norarifah Ali ² , Izza Syahida Abdul Karim ³	129 - 152
HIBAH AL-UMRA DAN HIBAH AL-RUQBA DARI PERSPEKTIF MAZHAB AL-SYAFIE Nurfahana Mohd Daud ¹ , Mohd Asyadi Redzuan ² , Dziauddin Sharif ³ , Siti Noor Ain Binti Aziz ⁴ , Mahasin Saja@Mearaj ⁵ , Aflah Isa ⁶	153 - 162
KAJIAN KONSEPTUAL TENTANG KESEDARAN BERWAKAF DALAM KALANGAN KAKITANGAN UTM CAWANGAN KEDAH Azyyati Anuar ¹ , Rohayati Hussin ² , Nurul Mazrah Manshor ³ , Noor Hidayah Kasim ⁴ , Daing Maruak Sadek ⁵	163 - 172
PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE: A CASE OF PARENTS' DECISIONS OF CHILDREN VACCINATIONS Johan Mukhlis Jan Zakri ¹ , Mohd Nazir Rabun ² , Mohamad Syafiqir Rahman Mohamad Nazir ³	173 - 192
PUBLIC INTENTION TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE IN MALAYSIA: A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY Nurul Hidayana Mohd Noor ¹ , Sharifah Hanis Syamimi Ghazali ² , Nurul Nabila Huda Abu Bakar ³	193 - 203
APLIKASI TEKNIK PEMOTONGAN LASER DALAM REKABENTUK PRODUK BATIK MERBOK Normaziana Hassan ¹ , Mas Ayu Zainal @ Ismail ² , Zaidi Yusoff ³ , Ahmad Fazlan Ahmad Zamri ⁴	204 - 218
MASALAH BERKAITAN FORMAT SURAT RASMI DALAM KALANGAN PENSYARAH BAHASA DI UiTM CPP Raja Rosila Raja Berahim ¹ , Noraziah Mohd Amin ² , Nur Afiqah Ab. Latif ³ , Noor Azli Affendy Lee ⁴ , Melati Desa ⁵ , Che Nooryohana Zulkifli ⁶ , Boon Yih Mah ⁷	219 - 231
CONFLUENCE OF COSTUME AND MAKE UP IN DEFINING COMMUNISIM VIA INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY Mohd Nor Shahizan Ali ¹ , Neesa Ameerah Mohamed Salim ² , Faryna Mohd Khalis ³	232 - 242

CONFLUENCE OF COSTUME AND MAKE UP IN DEFINING COMMUNISIM VIA INDEPENDENT DOCUMENTARY

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article history: Received July 2020 Received in revised form Aug 2020 Accepted Oct 2020 Published Jan 2021	<i>The usage of costume and make-up to convey the message of an independent documentary is seen as an added value for audiences to digest the producers' idea. Using an independent documentary 'The Last Communist (2006)' (TLC) work of Amir Muhammad, this study discusses the 'reading' of costume and make-up based on the cultural, ideology and technological narrative message. The costume and make-up are highly posed and are set in descriptive meaning to make them relevant across the globe. They represent actual places or tragedy, and they document witness, which symbolically represents moods such as 'contentment' and 'freedom'. This study implied a focus group discussion with eight informants (final year undergraduate students comprising three boys and five girls studying at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) whom have watched 'The Last Communist (2006)'. The topic of discussion is focused only on the costume and make-up. It is debatable that costume and make-up reading cannot be described adequately in formal terms only. Rather, they are considered to be visual representations of metaphorical thoughts or concepts and the changing of time and mass. The implication will then be the ability to add more natural presentation and make the independent documentary more appealing. This study suggests the selection of costume and make-up by a producer that represents cultural and technological elements and how they have affected the reading of the post-independence group, thereby making this independent documentary as a byproduct quietly injecting the historiography and the struggle of the communists</i>
Keywords: Costume and Make-up, Independent Documentary, Post-Independence Group, Reading	

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1. INTRODUCTION

Independent films or documentaries are commonly produced and directed by an individual or by a small group of people to communicate artistic expression, the independent mission, vision and passion as the content portrayed are fully controlled without any commercial purposes (Cunningham 2014). In Malaysia specifically, one of the pioneers of independent digital film-making in the independent film industry would be Amir Muhammad. According to Yeoh (2010), Amir has been producing independent films which are personalized as "essayed films" and reflects on how he re-looks at undisputed Malaysian "truths". However, Yeoh (2010) stated that Amir's work offers a "valuable record itself of the contestations and attempted reconciliations that shape notions of contemporary Malaysian identity".

This study analyses a hybrid documentary or also described as a "semi-musical documentary" directed by Amir Muhammad. TLC is not just a combination of facts and fiction, but a travel documentary essay, interspersed with specially composed songs inspired by the late Malayan Communist Party Leader Chin Peng (real name: Ong Boon Hua). Chin Peng was born in 1924 and is the last leader of the banned Communist Party of Malaya. He currently lives in Thailand since the Malaysian governments declined him to return, despite his repeated attempts and efforts to go through the courts. The documentary also interspersed with specially crafted music to bring video content, and access to some parts of the movie before the end of the Communist. Having visited more than 80 documentaries and Chin Ping-related persons, including Chan's hometown, the documentary captured interviews with residents / veterans residing in southern Thailand guerrillas. The entire documentary interspersed with Chinese, Malay, Hokkien, Cantonese, Tamil, and English. The plot of this independence documentary started from his birth to national independence to revisit the history of the figures and Communist Party of Malaya.

TLC analyzed in this study is geared towards the use of costume and make up (cultural, technology) in describing the visual narrative and symbolism. The analysis would provide an insight into the audience, particularly the post-independence group to understand the early life of Chin Peng. According to Lester (2003) and Mus Chairil (2006), the process of understanding the meaning of the message extracted from the media is a complicated process. Generally, it requires efforts from the readers to understand the messages conveyed (self-taught or 'hard-wired'). Understanding a message delivered by a medium to the audience is important because media content, including an independent documentary, in particular, can afford to leave a positive or a negative impression (Mohd. Nor Shahizan et al. 2013). In fact, the audience's common sense is also shaped and constructed by the media (Polletta and Callahan 2017).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Machin (2004), narrative storytelling means one or more events that really or incorrect by one, two or more tellers to one, two or some recipients of the story. Fludernik (2009) described the narrative as conjunctions or a discourse on the story which can be presented through various forms of media. This is because the concept of a story can be conveyed to the public through various means of communication including oral methods. The audience develop assumptions, common senses and adaptations to the content of the media in the process of meaning making (McQuail 2005; Polletta and Callahan 2017) and since the media offers multiple meanings, the meanings are constructed according to the context and culture of the audience. The original message will be through the media interpretation and construction which have denotative and connotative elements. Most of the documentary to a certain limit are ideologically charged and politically motivated (Wells 2016). However, Wells (2016) argued that this opinion is in line with Ross (2003), which discusses the role of narrative film formation based on the style, structure, and presentation of musical genres. Music (song), costume and make up can do the dialogue can't and sequence music (songs), costume and make up can do things that can't be done by the conventional narrative which makes the editing bind accordingly (Rogers 2015).

Moreover, according to Boltz et al. (1991) and Tan et al. (2007) music, costume and make up is able to change the narrative of the film. Music, costume and make up can build the audience's perception of the meaning of the movie when played simultaneously with the film scene. The music, costume and make up has a strong influence on the behavior of the viewer through the characters and objects shown on the screen, especially when the image

on the screen is neutral or ambiguous. The music, costume and make up also plays a role in stimulating the memory of the location where the film screened in (Boczkowska 2009). This view is supported by Teixeira (2014) which states that they are able to exhibit the film background aural role in the construction site more effectively. Lewis (2014) stated that cross-border production music, costume and make up identity is aligned with the rapid development of technology.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

How an individual thinks and constructs meaning is very symbolic. According to Wood (2004), the constructive process is a symbolic meaning since an individual relies on the word that appears in their mind in making meaning. Smith & Verma (2016) stated that the media has been interpreted by the audience in various ways, but criticisms towards sounds, costume and make up have yet to be established. Since this independent documentary TLC is a "semi-musical documentary" inspired by the late Malayan Communist Party Leader Chin Peng, the meaning of the audio (songs), costume and make up used in this documentary is very in depth. This is also supported by Zettl (2014) which believed that music, costume and make up has a very high value in constructing meaning specifically when the potential connotative meaning has been formed successfully. In fact, according to LaBelle (2018), sound, costume and make up used in a media can be questioned and reflected upon what it does, how it evokes, how it acts and contributes in relation to the subjectivity and social formations which are supported and troubled by the listening sense.

Barthes (1977) stated that an image can be interpreted with different meanings, assisted by the wording of the texts that represent the image. Compilation of images can carry a variety of potential meanings of 'language founded' (Griffiths 2005; Mohd. Nor Shahizan et al. 2013). Hence, this study will help in allowing viewers to see every visual phenomenon associated with the actual reality since the TLC have the 'strength' to visually describe every real situation based on the historical facts, and in some cases, it can get rid of the denotation meaning embodied in the visual presentation.

4. METHODOLOGY

Focus group interview was conducted with eight informants (final year undergraduate students from Malaysia, comprising three boys (two Malays and one Chinese) and five girls (two Malays, two Chinese and one Indian) studying at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) and has watched the independent documentary 'The Last Communist (2006)' (TLC) produced by Red Film Production which premiered at the Library Tun Seri Lanang (PTSL), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Data focus group discussions labeling the LMA (Malay male A), LMB (Malay male B) and LC (Chinese male). Meanwhile, PMA (Malay female A), PMB (Malay female B), PCA (Chinese female A), PCB (Chinese female B) and PI (Indian female). The analysis is descriptive about some interesting aspects related to cultural and technological narrative message (through costume and make-up) from an independent documentary TLC on the construction of their views (Zettl 2014). This article focuses on three assessment analysis key votes (cultural and technological) on the interpretation (reading) of the educated post-independence group of the independent documentary TLC. The evaluation is to gauge the reaction of the post-independence group informants to the narrative message (read: reading) delivered by the independent documentary.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Elements (Costume and Make-up) in the 'The Last Communist (2006)' (TLC)

The TLC documentary was documented in chronological order based on issues relating to the Communist Party of Malaya. In general, the director, interviewed citizens from all the towns that Chin Peng had traversed starting from his hometown. The interviews carried out were not all towards political matters, but were more on expressing personal views. The costumes captured during the interviews were merely the choice of the interviewee and seemed unplanned by the director. However, throughout the 90 minutes documentary, there were musical sketches which highlighted certain issues about the hardships and ideologies that Chin Peng experienced. In relation to costumes and makeup, the study analyses the costume and make up used in the documentary specifically in the musical sketches as the costumes are profoundly seen to strengthen the message. A total of six (6) musical songs and sketches were used in this documentary. Each musical sketch portrays different costumers and communicates different message to the audience. Based on the independence documentary TLC, beginning from minutes (0:04:52 to 0:05:43) there is the first song (Song 01), which is a Mandarin song that tells the story of a real romance to the last man. The costume used for this song portrays a very casual and simple look with a Chinese man wearing a shirt and no trace of make-up.



Figure 1: Costume and Make-up (Song 01)

The second song, (Song 02), which is a Malay musical sketch beginning from minutes (0:07:51 to 0:09:19) sends a message about the 'propaganda' of communism, the establishment of the communists, the vision and mission which was sung by a multicultural cast of six women wearing traditional Malaysian costumes (*Baju Kurung*, *Kebaya*, *Saree*, *CheongSam*) with very minimal touch of make-up.



Figure 2: Costume and Make-up (Song 02) – Traditional Costume

In addition, an alienated character can also be seen in Song 02 wearing a full red coverup costume as shown in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Costume and Make-up (Song 02)

For the next musical sketch (Song 03), it is about how Chin Peng had contracted Malaria and the life-threatening disease which could massacres Malaya. Throughout this musical sketch, two obvious characters were determined. The first is a character with a costume dressed in black with a mask and a weapon (symbolizes a mosquito / Malaria disease) and the other one is a play using fingers with cute facial expressions using black markers.



Figure 4: Costume and Make-up (Song 03) – Malaria Disease I



Figure 5: Costume and Make-up (Song 03) – Malaria Disease II

Based on the independence documentary TLC, beginning from minutes (00:34:37 to 00:37:23) there is a Malay song which tells the story of Malaya's agricultural and mining bounty, as well as the gratefulness of the people of Malaya people because of the raw materials (rubber and tin). Next, praised (cynical) colonial (British) who profit from these raw materials in line with costume and make up to discover the song.



Figure 6: Costume and Make-up (Song 04) – Raw Materials

The next musical sketch (Song 05), beginning from minutes (00:48:22 to 00:50:12), is a Malay song which tells about the importance of securing your identity card. As shown in Figure 7 below, the musical sketch portrays a primary school student wearing a full local school attire riding a bicycle. A primary school student is portrayed due to Regulation 3 of the National Registration Regulations 1990 (Amendment 2007) which stated that a Malaysia child who has reached the age of twelve (12) is compulsory to register for a Malaysian Identity Card.



Figure 7: Costume and Make-up (Song 05) – Malaysian Identity Card

The last musical sketch (Song 6), beginning from minutes (01:03:04 to 01:04:44) there is a Malay song which tells the story of the war and the use of the weapons. The cast is seen wearing a jungle hat, a weapon, a gigantic plastic sunglasses and multiple ear piercings.



Figure 8: Costume and Make-up (Song 06) – War & Weapon

First Assessment Analysis (Cultural)

Informants defined the relationship between history and TLC from the characteristics of the construction of race and racial unity Malaysia (based on costume and make up) through the screening of this independent documentary.

PMB: *Actually, motif is actually served to demonstrate to the public, especially to the people of Malaysia today that to achieve independence process that requires a form of struggle that requires us to sacrifice anything.*

LMB: *There are too. Typically, independence documentary aired showing typical Malay soldiers at war. There are differences with TLC documentary, this documentary shows how the communist troop took up arms against the British who occupied Malaya and the way they live, not against Malaya soldiers.*

PCB: *I watched the bombing of Hiroshima, and we can see how it got the atomic bomb was, and how large explosion occurred. It seemed that the same might not want to talk at all of the information that is presented. Shown on a multi-ethnic society in a region once inhabited by the cultural communist blended and secure.*

PCA: *Yes. About Tunku Abdul Rahman biography. This documentary is not the same, in this documentary highlights the communist troop, and in the documentary feature about the greatness of Tunku Abdul Rahman's.*

LC: *Yes. About Crush Malaysia. How the dispute between Malaysia and Indonesia. I'm not sure, but revealed about the war ... but TLC to give new input to me that there is continuity between multicultural and its own opinion about the communists.*

PMA: *Yes. But within an hour, the instant that I watched. I admitted the difference between the documentary that I watched before with the TLC that I saw on the Independence Day. TLC is not a documentary appeared normal. But the idea is pasted with justification and unbiased mainly involving multicultural.*

PI: *Yes. I saw people of all used as tools or slaves or victims of the tragedy. Westerners look like a very powerful and Asians look like subordinates. They came and occupied and tried to teach us how to do such things. Actually we too are not stupid, we already have civilization, we have government in the days of empire, we were, but they still think they are the best, and they come to teach, while the system of government of our own, we have that on our own, we have a government, we have subordinates all,*

and we kind of can life become a true civilization. Communist trying to deny the rights of the colonists, but this gives little TLC exposure outburst for us to talk about our history.

LMA: Yes, too, but see how. Cannot be denied is very boring. We also do not how much interest; with pictures all old and unattractive. The difference is obvious. If a show at RTM TV1, they will show how we can be free. How Tunku Abdul Rahman went to retrieve the independence. But when watching the TLC, can be clearly seen how Malaysia today, and where are we heading exactly?

Agenda-determination theory assumes that the media can influence public opinion in the event, it gives more attention to some of the issues and reduces attention to other issues to think about by the public (Severin & Tankard 2001). This point should not be used in production documentary TLC, because informants see more of this independent documentary narrative history of the struggle in gaining independence and the banning of Communist Party of Malaya. The informants cannot trace the question of the construction of race and racial unity of Malaysia (based on costume and make up) in the independent documentary TLC. It has been proven that this independence documentary tells the truth about communism as a person who has been fighting against the government. However, the audience perceive it as a hero defending the independence of Malaya. According to (Renee 2010), "the importance of the documentary as a technique for government propaganda, public education, and the dissemination of ideas to educate people in a variety of topics". But in this case, the historical documentary is not entirely affected overall to the audience because there are still informants who say that communism is an act of heroism and not a crime. This argument is in line with Foltz et al. (1991) and Tan et al. (2007) whom suggested that music can change the narrative of the film. The perception of the audience can be constructed when the music is played simultaneously with the scenes in the film. A particularly strong influence on the behavior of the viewer through the characters and objects are shown in every scene, especially when the image on the screen is neutral or ambiguous. The costumes embedded in the musical sketch somehow strengthens the message intended since the aim of the documentary is to engage discussion of the politics of revisiting as it is in relation to the invocation of Malayan consciousness, the country's history and the racial status of today's Malaysia (Chih-ming Wang 2015).

Second Assessment Analysis (Technology)

This statement is proved by new generation informants who told that all of them surf the Internet to obtain additional information other than the information provided by the mainstream media. This statement is supported by the opinion below:

LMA: It influences. For example, we look at ways of re-enactments, the kind where, if it arouses emotion of our technical means that very important fact. Want to explain more about what happened, about this and that ...

PMB: It is important, because for me, if we look from the short film, a wide indie also, he has not as sophisticated props and set like we saw in the mainstream, but I think the thing that plays a role as well.

PCA: Yes. To give more appreciation and understanding.

PCB: Yes. We can see from certain angles how the story was presented. We may change the story was from good to bad. Maybe we can also change the other way around ... We can see how music plays, the camera plays with around ... because sometimes we can

see, if we use music more enthusiastic, may indicate that angry, we can think of the music ,

PI: Yes. For example, if he uses music to raise mood and leave an impression. We can notice the reason usually use the same technique, have repeatedly used the stuff.

PMA: Technical also important for us to understand what they want ... What have they done ...? I mean all ...

LMB: Tech is very important to me, because of if we look at the story that technically he's kind of mediocre, we are too lazy to look at it ... But if TLC was like boring too but kind when he sorts conveys at the same time, not just people that talk about, his technical means like he wanted to say he was difficult, difficult case, meaning he shoot from above, shows a person walking, the focus at that stranger, that stranger was tired of all ... it's a technical matter.

LC: Must be important ... cynical songs appropriate to the situation will ease understanding.

From the results of focus group discussions, globalization has successfully traversed the boundaries of technology in tune with the music of the times demand. The identity of the music is in line with the rapid development of technologies that have crossed borders (Lewis 2014).. The use of the latest technology allows filmmakers to compose music in a way that is provocative, form criticism, and in line with the elements embedded and the image of the film. The latest technology that can adapt more work will perform uniqueness (Ferguson 2012). As the informants have the exposure from the point of technology, their interpretation is based on the knowledge and experience existing in each individual.

6. CONCLUSION

Results of the study justified that the use of costume and make up (cultural and technology) for an independent documentary for historical issue makes it more relatable and understandable to the informants, because informants could understand as a simple costume and make up presentation, and feel that the incident really happened. The implementation of more intuitive - cultural and technology 'traces' them interspersed with costume and makeup involved in the performance of this independent documentary. Connotative aspects (composed songs in the mound of old-fashioned propaganda films) had influenced the informants because informants were not only looking at a denotative view and configured from the beginning that Communist Party of Malaya was known as a terrorist. The agenda conveyed on each costume and make up does not need to explain to informants in advance. Informants were influenced by the costume and make up that led to the next on the second layer of meaning. This study was conducted on university students who are considered to be post-independence groups (18-25 years), but they can feel every experience that occurs at the time of emergency through the costume and make up which have the meaning implied / second layer (connotative). Likelihood of informants could not tie embody incident appreciation of the past compared with 70's births generation (post-independence aged 30 years and above) can associate with experience. In addition, today's generations are different generations, hence, there must exist a symbol, such as an 'icon' or 'rule of the country' (Gunn 2005; Kress & Leeuwen 2002; Perlmutter & Wagner 2004). This understanding can be said to that 'creating meanings for the image' is different than to 'create words to reality' (Halliday 1985; Wells 2007). The relationship between visual (costume and make up) and sound is interrelated, even though the presence of sound is seen to support the visuals (costume and

make up), yet, the role of costume and make up is also powerful as it is more evocative than an image which 'moves, shakes and touches us' yet remains mysterious (Cox & Corner 2018). This study justifies that the costume and make up used in the documentary systematically affects the viewers in relation to reading communism, and therefore proved that costume and make up do make the difference, specifically when it comes to the main visuals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are grateful to acknowledge Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Voice of Academia, UiTM Kedah for providing the precious opportunity to publish this paper. The authors also would like to thank everyone who have helped in completing this paper.

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e-ISSN: 2682-7840