

# Underrepresenting “Their” Side of the Story: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Online English Headlines and Leads of News on the Karen Minority

**NATALIE YUNCHALARD**

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Thailand*

**PIYAPORN PUNKASIRIKUL\***

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University, Thailand*

**Corresponding author email: [ppiyaporn@kku.ac.th](mailto:ppiyaporn@kku.ac.th)**

<b>Article information</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<p><b>Article history:</b>            Received: 30 Jul 2022            Accepted: 21 Jul 2023            Available online: 9 Aug 2023</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>            Critical discourse analysis            Karen minority            Newsworthiness            Representation            Transitivity analysis</p>	<p><i>This study aimed to determine the representational strategies used to portray Karen people and the roles ascribed to them in English-language news. It was conducted primarily to provide an update on the representation of the Karen in online English news reports in the year 2021. This study, which differs from other previous studies in both the fields of language studies and social sciences, employed Fairclough’s (1995) critical discourse analysis, van Leeuwen’s (2008) representation of social actors, Halliday’s (1994) transitivity analysis, Harcup and O’Neill’s (2016) newsworthiness, and the notion of othering to analyze linguistic and discursive features of headlines and leads of news articles categorized as hard news, published online throughout January 2021 – December 2021 by Bangkok Post, which is one of the leading English newspapers in Thailand. The results revealed that Karen people were rarely given a voice in the headlines and leads while information from the government or state sources largely dominated the headlines and leads. Thus, the status quo in which negative stereotypes related to the Karen minority which have persisted for over 20 years has been maintained. These stereotypes exclude the Karen by placing them as the out-group, which perpetuates social order and inequality. The findings provide insights that could benefit Thai society since the government has been aiming at embracing ethnic diversity as well as implications for language instructors.</i></p>

## INTRODUCTION

Representation is, according to Hall (1997), the act of “using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people” (p. 15). However, it entails a complex process of producing meaning through the use of language (Hall, 1997). In particular, the news media engages in this meaning-producing process all the time when it reports on news related to certain events or people. Fowler (1991) argues that news is a representation of the world through a system of signs and symbols, which is known as language. Language, as explained by Fowler (1991), is a semiotic code which imposes a structure of social

and economic values on any subject that is represented; thus, news discourse is considered a value-laden representation instead of a value-free reflection of reality.

Over twenty years has passed since the publication of Hongladarom (2000), which studied the representations of two ethnic minorities, the Hmong and the Karen, in the front-page news and opinion pieces of Thai-language newspapers as well as television discourse in the year 1998. In relation to the Karen people in particular, Hongladarom (2000) stated that positive images of them such as being environmental conservationists and people with a strong sense of community and their rights did surface in the media during that time; however, Hongladarom (2000) concluded that newspaper reports on hill tribe minorities, including the Karen, were generally racist towards them and represented them as a threat. Some negative images of the Karen include them being agents of deforestation and causing problems in general (Hongladarom, 2000), which are images linked to what Hares (2009, pp. 384-385) described as “the hill tribe problem”. Additionally, stories about ethnic minorities such as immigrants, refugees, and indigenous peoples frequently make headlines and become topics of discussion in Thailand. It has been observed over the past few years that members of Karen communities have often appeared in the news, both through traditional broadcast media (i.e., television) and online channels. Moreover, there have been both negative and positive news related to the Karen in recent years. Negative news reports have associated the Karen with criminal acts (e.g., poaching or forest encroachment) or tragedies (e.g., being displaced or falling victim to violence and oppression) or going against state interests, while positive news stories have associated the Karen with activism. Some examples of headlines include “Karen poacher jailed, officials who hired him let off lightly” (2019), “Karen war refugees lose homes in incidental fires” (2019), “Karen soldiers hunt wildlife in Kanchanaburi forest” (2019), “Karen worker killed at Samut Sakhon temple” (2019), “Evicted Karen protest Thailand’s push to make Kaeng Krachan World Heritage Site” (2019), “Karen seek rights over land usage” (2020) and “Displaced Karen demand land back” (2021).

As in the recent case in February 2021, a group of ethnic Karen villagers from the Bang Kloi community in Phetchaburi and their supporters who protested outside the Thai Government House in order to call for justice concerning their land rights made the headlines and sparked the #Saveบางกลอย (#SaveBangKloi) movement on social media (“Bang Kloi Karen Pressure ‘Thamanat-Varawut’”, 2021; “Displaced Karen,” 2021; “Protest at Government House,” 2021). This conflict between the Bang Kloi Karen and state authorities did not occur for the first time, but has been ongoing ever since the area known as *Jai Paen Din* was declared a national park in 1981 (“Protest at Government House”, 2021; “The Conflict of Bang Kloi”, 2021). Although the Karen villagers had lived in the forest long before it became a national park, they were forcibly removed from *Jai Paen Din* in 1996, and again in 2011, when park officials set fire to their homes and belongings (“The Conflict of Bang Kloi”, 2021). Not only that, but news of refugees, consisting of Karen people from the Kayin state, fleeing the conflict involving civilians, supported by the Karen National Union (KNU), and the Myanmar military government to seek shelter in Thailand also made headlines (“Stranded Refugees,” 2021; “Karen Migrate,” 2021). This prompted the researchers of the present study to conduct an updated analysis of the representation of Karen people, but this time the data derives from online news articles written in English and excludes opinion articles altogether.

In Thailand, there was considerable media coverage of events related to the Karen minority which occurred in the year 2021 (see for example: “Bang Kloi Community,” 2021; “Bang Kloi Karens Released,” 2021; Kovavisarach, 2021). There was even one article from Channel News Asia, which is based in Singapore, that reported on the situation (Promchertchoo, 2021). However, most of the English-language news reporting on these events were published by *Bangkok Post*, one of Thailand’s prominent English news publications with 230,000 page views on average on its website (Bangkok Post, 2019). Presumably, news readers in Thailand are at least somewhat affected by journalists’ representations of the Karen (including indigenous people, migrants, and refugees) since the media has been shown to have the power of shaping public opinion (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b). Van Dijk (1986) asserts that the headline and lead paragraph, which form the news summary, contain the most important macrostructure of the news story and play a vital role in the reader’s interpretation and recall of a news event. In line with this, a more up-to-date study conducted by Gabielkov et al. (2016) revealed that most people share articles on social media after only reading the headline without actually even clicking on the link to read the full story. Therefore, the researchers chose to conduct a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of headlines and leads of *Bangkok Post* news articles on Karen-related events. CDA studies of media discourse are conducted to uncover and interpret the hidden ideologies and power-relations hidden in the language used in the media primarily to promote critical media literacy among the public, especially since information provided by media organizations is being rapidly consumed and perhaps taken for granted in today’s digital era. Furthermore, O’Halloran (2011) states that one of the main objectives of conducting CDA research is to reveal the way certain social groups or minorities are dominated and misrepresented through language use, which is precisely what the present study aims to do.

Thus, the research questions in the present study are as follows:

1. What are the representational strategies used to represent Karen people in English-language news headlines and leads in Thailand’s online news reports?
2. What are the roles ascribed to Karen participants in English-language news headlines and leads in Thailand’s online news reports?

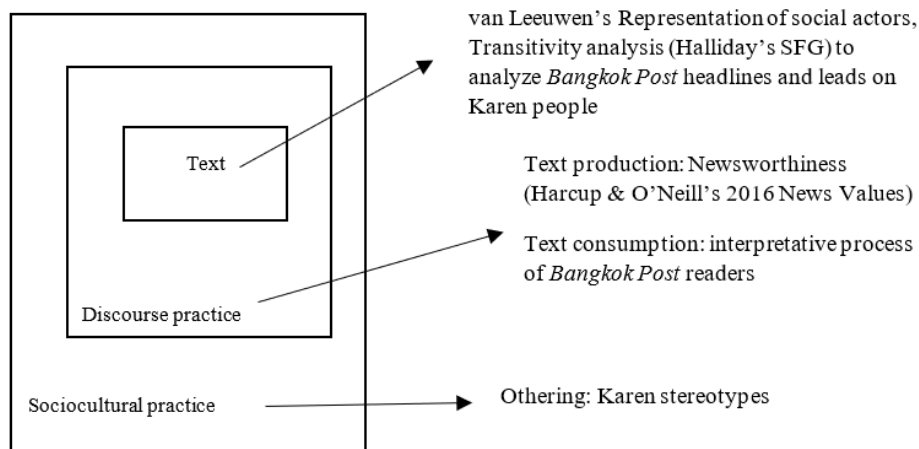
The findings of the present study could benefit society considering that the Thai government has been aiming at more inclusive policies that embrace ethnic diversity within the nation-state. Thailand was one of the 48 countries to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and on January 28, 2003, it became a State Party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which took effect on February 27, 2003. Therefore, based on the assumption that news discourse reflects and shapes reality, the researchers hope to raise the public’s awareness of how the Karen are being portrayed in the news in more recent years to evaluate how far the *Bangkok Post*, which is a leading news publication in Thailand, has come in eliminating discrimination and alienation of one of the largest minority groups in the country. Furthermore, the findings of this study could also contribute towards English language education by promoting critical media literacy among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Thailand, particularly English majors in university. Through critical pedagogies and critical analysis, students receive the opportunity to explore structures of oppression as they learn to deconstruct media and formulate their own opinions

based on several perspectives on matters that concern them and the public (Harding, 2004; Kellner & Share, 2005). The present study focuses on the representation of a marginalized group, the Karen, and deconstructs the language used in news reports, thus reaffirming the importance of critical media literacy.

## Theoretical frameworks

### 1. Fairclough's CDA model

The present study employs Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which is one of the most influential frameworks available in the field, to guide the analysis. The three dimensions of a particular communicative event that Fairclough (1995b) discusses include (1) text, (2) discourse practice, and (3) sociocultural practice. When one conducts critical analysis of a certain communicative event using this particular model, one must consider the relationships between these three dimensions of that event. The first dimension, text, involves written or spoken texts, or spoken and visual texts. Next, discourse practice refers to the production and consumption processes of a particular text. Thirdly, sociocultural practice is concerned with the social and cultural backdrop or happenings which a communicative event is contained within. The dimensions of text, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice are interconnected in a way that all three of them shape one another. While this three-dimensional framework of CDA provides a general basis for conducting analysis, researchers are still required to select the appropriate analytical tool for their CDA research. The present study applies van Leeuwen's (2008) representation of social actors and Halliday's (1994) transitivity analysis to the textual dimension, whereas the notion of newsworthiness is applied to discursive practice and the notion of othering is applied to sociocultural practice as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1** Analytical framework adapted from Fairclough's CDA model (1995b)

### 2. Representation of social actors

Van Leeuwen's (2008) representation of social actors is concerned with the strategies used in representing individuals or groups as well as the ideological implications that result from such

representational strategies. Moreover, van Leeuwen's framework is used by analysts to articulate the social actors' roles constructed in clauses within particular texts through socio-semantic processes or categories, namely exclusion and inclusion, instead of relying on grammatical systems (Bernard, 2018). Van Leeuwen argues that participants in a clause can either be omitted (i.e., excluded) for ideological purposes, or they could be mentioned (i.e., included) in clauses for ideological purposes as well. The complex processes of exclusion and inclusion can be accomplished by writers through a variety of mechanisms in van Leeuwen's social actor network (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 52). There are altogether two subtypes of exclusion, which are suppression and backgrounding. Inclusion, on the other hand, comprises numerous socio-semantic subcategories, such as genericization and specification, personalization and impersonalization, and so on (see Table 1).

### **3. Transitivity analysis**

Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is a theory that takes the view that grammar is a resource for creating meaning through wording since language is a resource for making meaning. The unit of analysis in SFG is the 'clause' rather than the 'sentence', and there are altogether three distinct semantic structures (i.e., meta-functions) which combine to create a single wording: interpersonal, ideational, and textual meta-functions. The present work applies transitivity analysis, which is part of the ideational meta-function in Halliday's (1994) SFG, to analyze news headlines and leads from English-language news reports on the Karen. Clauses are broken down into participants, processes, and circumstances to illustrate who does what to whom and how. There are altogether six process types (see Table 2): material, verbal, relational, mental, behavioral, and existential (Halliday, 1994). Transitivity analysis allows the researchers to discover how journalists represent the actions of clause participants (as in who does what to whom) as well as power-relations in a clause structure (Flowerdew, 2013; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

### **4. Newsworthiness**

Discourse practice involves the processes of text production and text consumption. Text production and consumption are processes that both comprise institutional practices and routines. In the present study, the researchers mainly focused on analysis of text production in terms of the newsworthiness of stories surrounding Karen people; in other words, the values that news reporters possibly look for in news events so as to select and report them. This study employs the modern, up-to-date set of news values proposed by Harcup and O'Neill (2016) to analyze discursive practice in terms of text production in particular. In their 2016 study, Harcup and O'Neill conducted a content analysis of news stories published across 10 UK newspapers resulting in a set of 15 news values. According to them, a news story is generally required to meet at least one or preferably more of the following news values in order to be published:

1. It is generated as an outcome of exclusive interviews, surveys, and so forth (i.e., Exclusivity)
2. It contains negativity like death, injuries, defeat, or loss (i.e., Bad News)

3. It contains conflict such as controversial issues, strikes, insurrections, and war (i.e., Conflict)
4. It contains surprising or contrasting elements (i.e., Surprise)
5. It contains eye-catching images, infographics, videos or attractive audio (i.e., Audio-Visuals)
6. It has a high tendency to generate shares and comments on social networking platforms such as Facebook or Twitter (i.e., Shareability)
7. It concerns sex, the entertainment industry, sport, lighter human interest, animals, or provides possibilities for humor or wit within headlines or lists (i.e., Entertainment)
8. It contains dramatic stories such as accidents, rescues, escapes or court cases (i.e., Drama)
9. It concerns subjects that are already being discussed in the news (i.e., Follow-Up)
10. It is about powerful people, organizations, institutions, or companies (i.e., The Power Elite)
11. It concerns individuals or groups that are viewed as influential with or relate to a particular audience in terms of history and/or culture (i.e., Relevance)
12. It is deemed substantial enough, either in terms of the number of people involved or the potential influence it could have, or contains a certain level of extremity in behavior or occurrence (i.e., Magnitude)
13. It concerns famous people (i.e., Celebrity)
14. It contains positivity like breakthroughs or cures for diseases (i.e., Good News)
15. It appropriately fits the news organization's own ideological and/or commercial agenda, or forms part of a particular campaign (i.e., News Organization's Agenda) (Harcup & O'Neill, 2016, p. 13).

## 5. Othering

Othering is a process, mainly created through discourse, which involves an imbalanced relationship between a dominant in-group (i.e., the Self or Us) and a dominated outgroup (i.e., the Other or Them) in which the in-group has the power to impose the value of its identity and to diminish the values of others which it perceives as different or undesirable (Crang, 1998; Brons, 2015; Staszak, 2009). Individuals only become part of an out-group due to their opposing qualities to that of the Self or the in-group, and 'They' are only coherent as a group due to their group's lack of identity, which is largely based on oversimplified stereotypes constructed by the in-group to ascribe to Them (Staszak, 2009). Stereotypes serve to maintain social and symbolic order (Hall, 1997); thus, they are reproduced in news to maintain the status quo.

News reports from Thai-owned newspapers, such as the *Bangkok Post*, would provide insights into how the dominant in-group (the majority being Thais) perceives the Karen as well as how journalists construct the meaning of 'Karen' through language in news reports. It is important to recognize that although the *Bangkok Post* is a Thai-owned newspaper and that its Thai journalists wrote the articles used in the present study, this does not suggest that the *Bangkok Post* alone represents the view of all Thais, but rather, it is the view of one person (the journalist) or one institution (*Bangkok Post*). In particular, these articles would only represent the thought processes, or the perceptions, of the journalist and editors who contributed to them, which



were in turn influenced by their societal background and upbringing. Thus, the researchers wish to clarify that the stance of just one newspaper cannot entirely apply to the thought processes of all Thais; however, it may reflect one way of perceiving the Karen people as well as influencing the perceptions of its readership.

## METHODOLOGY AND DATA

### Data collection

First of all, the *Bangkok Post* was selected due to the fact that (1) it's the oldest and one of the major English-language news publication in Thailand and (2) it reported on events related to the Karen minority more often than other major English-language news outlets in Thailand in 2021; therefore, it alone provided enough data for analysis. News articles reporting on stories related to the Karen published online throughout January to December 2021 by the *Bangkok Post* that fall into the category of 'news' and not 'feature stories' or opinion pieces (Op-Ed) constitute the data in the study since the researchers are only interested in analyzing hard news. Hard news is timely and covers urgent or major issues that impact the public (Patterson, 2000), thereby excluding human interest stories, entertainment, sport and lifestyle stories which are considered soft news (Bell, 1991). Online news was selected because it has become one of the most popular ways of consuming the news media in the modern era in Southeast Asia (von Kameke, 2022). English news was selected since Hongladarom (2000) already analyzed Thai language news and if Thai language news was selected, some of the meaning could be lost in translation. Additionally, Hongladarom (2000) found that in Thai language news, the racism towards ethnic minorities was more obvious; therefore, she suggested that analyzing English news related to the subject could yield different results. The data is restricted to only the linguistic material taken from the headlines and leads (i.e., the first paragraph immediately following the headline) of the *Bangkok Post* news articles under the sections of 'Thailand', 'General', and 'Politics', while images were excluded as images were not always provided by the *Bangkok Post* for every Karen news story. Due to the headlines and leads being the most important part as they contain the story's macrostructure and is crucial to the reader's interpretation and recall (van Dijk, 1986), along with the knowledge that most people share articles on social media based on what is seen in the headline rather than reading the full article (Gabiolkov et al., 2016), the researchers only focused on analyzing the headlines and leads. The time period spanning January to December 2021 was selected because events surrounding the Karen during that time drew widespread media interest as mentioned in the introduction and public attention as observed through searching "#SaveBangKloi" on Twitter.

The criteria for selecting headlines and leads of news articles to be included in the analysis were as follows:

1. The headline, sub-headline and/or lead contain the word 'Karen' (Karen as in the tribal minority and not as in the first name of a person, e.g., Karen Jones)
2. The headline, sub-headline and/or lead does not directly use the word 'Karen' but mentions the name of a Karen individual or community instead (e.g, Billy Porlajee, the name of an activist and ethnic Karen)

3. The headline, sub-headline and/or lead does not directly use the word ‘Karen’ but refers to the Karen by using the name of a Karen-populated location (e.g., *Omkoï* and *Bang Kloï*, which are names of villages populated by Karen).

The headline (as well as any sub-headlines) and/or lead paragraph had to meet at least one of the above criteria to be selected for analysis. Consequently, the number of selected news articles came to be 64 in total (see Appendix F).

## Data analysis

Data analysis of the present study is divided into four stages: text, discursive practice, sociocultural practice, and the interrelationship among all the three dimensions. Textual analysis comprises two sub-stages: the analysis of the representation of social actors and the analysis of action or transitivity analysis. Previous studies have also combined these two frameworks to analyze the representation of people or participants in a clause as well as the representation of their actions. For example, Ninpanit (2020) used these two frameworks to study the representation of Thai transgenders in news headlines and Power et al. (2020) used the same two frameworks in analyzing the representation of women in business magazines.

### 1. Representational strategies for the representation of social actors

Since van Leeuwen’s (2008) inventory comprises a wide array of strategies, it is impossible for the present research to cover all of them in the analysis, which is why a concise version containing only some of van Leeuwen’s representational strategies used in Machin and Mayr (2012) is used as a framework, which includes the following: Personalization, Impersonalization, Individualization, Collectivization, Specification, Genericization, Nomination, Functionalization, Use of Honorifics, Objectivation, Anonymization, Aggregation, Pronoun vs. Noun “Us” & “Them”, and Suppression (see Table 1 below). The analysis primarily focused on the clauses which were related to the Karen or those that mentioned Karen participants. Also, if the Karen participant was represented through exclusion strategies within a clause, then that clause was also analyzed.

**Table 1**  
**List of van Leeuwen’s representational strategies (Machin & Mayr, 2012, pp. 77-85)**

No.	Representational Strategy	Description
1.	Personalization/	Used to depict social actors as human (e.g., Professor John Smith)
	Impersonalization	Used to depict social actors as a non-human entity or institution (e.g., the university)
2.	Individualization/	Used to depict social actors as individuals
	Collectivization	Used to depict social actors as a group
3.	Specification/	Used to specify social actors individually (e.g., A man, Mazar Hussein,...)
	Genericization	Used to depict social actors as part of a generic class or type (e.g., Muslim man)



No.	Representational Strategy	Description
4.	Nomination /	Used to depict social actors by who they are (i.e., their name)
	Functionalization	Used to depict social actors by what they do (role or job title)
5.	Use of honorifics	Used to imply a degree of seniority or to imply a respected role
6.	Objectivation	Used to depict social actors as an object or reduce them to a certain feature (e.g., physical appearance like “the beauty”)
7.	Anonymization	Used to conceal the identity of social actors
8.	Aggregation	Used to quantify social actors, thus treating them as statistics
9.	Pronoun vs. Noun: ‘Us’ & ‘Them’	Used to divide ‘us’ from ‘them’ regarding a particular idea
10.	Exclusion: Suppression	Used to conceal the responsible agent of an action in a clause or clause complex completely

## 2. Transitivity analysis for the representation of action

The headlines and leads that constitute the data of this study were broken down into clauses, and each of them was analyzed into process, participants, and circumstances. Participants are presented as nominal groups in a clause, whereas circumstances describe where, when, and how something occurs through prepositional phrases and adverbial clauses. Processes are conveyed as verbs and verbal groups, and there are altogether six process types as follows: Material (i.e., doing), Mental (i.e., sensing), Relational (i.e., being or having), Verbal (i.e., saying), Behavioral (i.e., physiological and psychological human behavior), and Existential (i.e., existing) (Halliday, 1994).

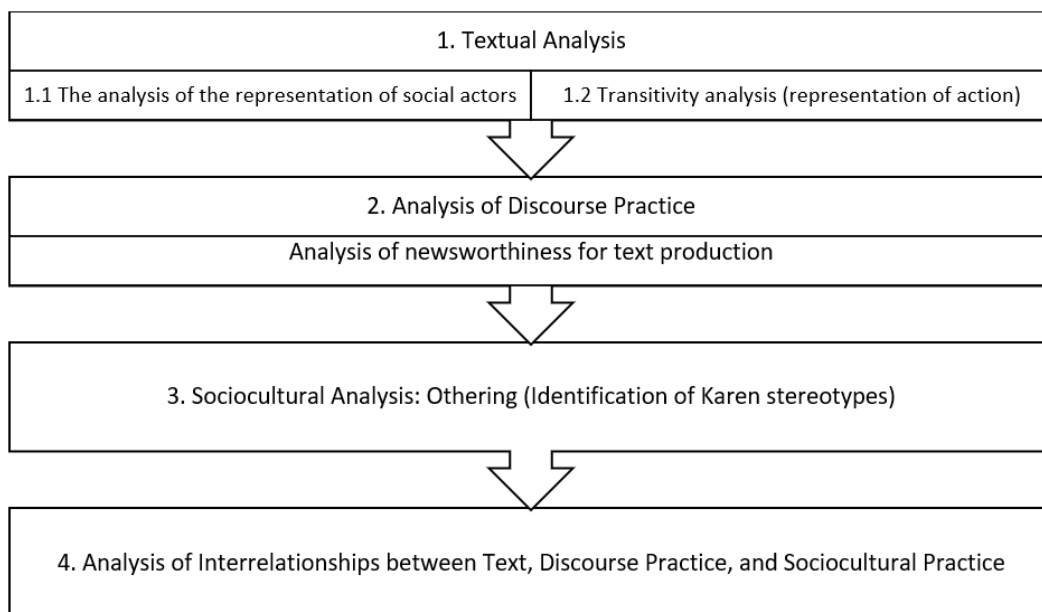
**Table 2**  
**Transitivity process types (Halliday, 1994)**

No.	Process Type	Description
1.	Material	Verbs of doing (e.g., fall down)
2.	Mental	Verbs of sensing (e.g., realize)
3.	Relational	Verbs of being or having (e.g., is frightened)
4.	Verbal	Verbs of saying (e.g., said)
5.	Behavioral	Verbs of physiological and psychological behavior (e.g., smile)
6.	Existential	Verbs of existing, (typically starting with ‘there is/are’ e.g., there was a storm)

## 3. Analyses of discursive practice and sociocultural practice

For the second stage - analysis of discourse practice - this study applies Harcup and O’Neill’s (2016) news values to analyze text production. As for sociocultural analysis, the notion of othering is applied, and stereotypes of Karen people, both negative and positive, are explored within the third stage of CDA. Afterwards, the analysis in the final stage will cover the

interconnectedness of text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice.



**Figure 2** Stages of data analysis

#### 4. Inter-rater reliability

It has been acknowledged that CDA as a methodology has been criticized for having the tendency to be overly subjective since the analysis is driven largely (or in part) by the analyst's own political stance (Widdowson, 2004). Therefore, to reduce subjectivity, the present study used an intercoder and calculated the reliability agreement point for the two stages of textual analysis through percent agreement. For the analysis of the representation of social actors, the percent agreement was at 75%, while the agreement level for the analysis of the representation of action was at 92% (see Appendix A). The acceptable agreement level for the present study is 0.75 (75%) since this level of agreement is generally deemed satisfactory (Graham et al., 2012; Stemler, 2004).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings discussed within this section are presented according to the framework used in this study. For textual analysis, the results for the representation of social actors are presented first, followed by the results of transitivity analysis to determine the roles ascribed to Karen participants. Next, for the analysis of discourse practice, the results for the analysis of text production which focuses on newsworthiness is presented. Afterwards, for the analysis of sociocultural practice, the findings related to the analysis of Karen stereotypes which contribute to their othering is provided. Finally, the interrelationship among all three dimensions is analyzed and discussed.

## 1. Textual analysis: Representation of Karen social actors

The following are the results of the analysis of the representational strategies used in portraying Karen social actors in accordance with van Leeuwen's (2008) framework in the first sub-stage of textual analysis. Table 3 shows the number of occurrences and percentage of each representational strategy used to represent Karen people in the corpus of headlines and leads obtained from the 64 news articles. As seen in the table, an example is given for each representational strategy. The representational strategies used to portray any social actor that were not the Karen were excluded from the data shown in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**The number of occurrences and percentage of representational strategies and their examples**

Representational Strategy	Number	%	Examples
Collectivization	41	34.45	Platform for <u>indigenous communities</u> key to keeping World Heritage status, writes Pratch Rujivanarom ("Plea to Give", 2021)
Genericization	28	23.53	<u>Karen</u> to oppose Kaeng Krachan world heritage bid ("Karen to Oppose", 2021)
Impersonalization	7	5.88	<u>Bang Kloi dispute</u> with park officials deepens ("Four Karen Villagers Arrested", 2021)
Objectivation	3	2.52	Myanmar's military carried out more airstrikes on a <u>rebel-controlled area</u> near the Thai border ("Myanmar Airstrikes Displace", 2021)
Functionalization	6	5.04	The Save Bang Kloi Coalition yesterday filed a petition with the National Human Rights Commission demanding an investigation into how a <u>Karen rights activist</u> contracted Covid-19 while imprisoned ("Health Fears", 2021).
Aggregation	26	21.85	<u>Hundreds</u> flee to Thailand as Myanmar junta clashes with rebel group ("Hundreds Flee", 2021)
Suppression	5	4.20	Unesco has added the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex in Western Thailand to the World Heritage List hours after a <u>protest against it was held</u> in Bangkok ("Kaeng Krachan Added", 2021).
Nomination	3	2.52	The Department of Special Investigation (DSI) is moving quickly to respond to a request by prosecutors to provide more information on the 2014 killing of <u>Karen activist Porlajee "Billy" Rakchongcharoen</u> ("DSI Digging", 2021).
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>	

As illustrated in Table 3, the number of occurrences of representational strategies used to represent Karen social actors were 119 in total. A total of 8 representational strategies were identified. Out of all 8 strategies, collectivization occurred the most throughout the corpus (41 occurrences), followed by genericization (28 occurrences), aggregation (26 occurrences), and so on. What is interesting is that although Karen social actors were mainly represented through inclusion strategies (except for the 5 times they were excluded from the clause through suppression), they were mostly represented as a group or class through collectivization, genericization, or aggregation, whereas nomination, which represents social actors by who they are (similar to other strategies such as specification and individualization), was only used 3 times in the summary of news reports throughout 2021 to represent Karen social actors.

The frequent use of collectivization and genericization could lead to the creation and reinforcement of a common image or different stereotypes of Karen people since they are mostly represented as a group or classified by their ethnicity while rarely being represented as individuals or by their names like the other more powerful or influential people mentioned in the media such as government officials or politicians. Additionally, constantly identifying people of Karen ethnicity by the term 'Karen' is understood as an unavoidable and common journalistic practice. It is also possible that people might become invisible and distraught as a result of omissions and a lack of inclusion of their race, which would also apply to their ethnicity. Aggregation, which was also frequently used to represent Karen social actors, treats people as numbers or statistics rather than human beings (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 83). In the example of aggregation provided in Table 3, Karen participants (who were refugees) are quantified through use of the term 'hundreds'—without even using a noun behind it. Quantifying Karen refugees by using such a non-specific figure such as 'hundreds' implies a great number, and thus it becomes open to interpretation. For instance, it could possibly imply that their arrival would be a great burden in terms of resources and disease on Thailand since these refugees are fleeing across the border from Myanmar in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Impersonalization represents people as non-human entities or as institutions or organizations (unlike personalization which portrays people as humans and shares similarities to specification or nomination strategies). It was found that Karen participants were impersonalized 7 times in the corpus of news texts. In the example provided for this strategy, the use of 'Bang Kloi dispute' combines two non-human terms 'Bang Kloi', the name of a village, and 'dispute' to refer to the Karen villagers of Bang Kloi, who are supposedly the cause of the dispute between them and the park officials (who are personalized in the same clause). In other words, they, the Karen villagers, are identified as the dispute, which is a non-human thing. Additionally, this could have been a form of suppression had the name of the village, which acts similarly to an organization's name, was omitted. Other than impersonalization, objectivation, which occurred 3 times, also represents people as non-human things, or rather features. In the example of objectivation provided in Table 3, 'rebel-controlled area', which is a place or geographical location, was mentioned as the target of an airstrike carried out by the Myanmar military. The writer could have used a term with human qualities such as 'villagers' in this clause, but instead chose not to. Moreover, it is important to mention that van Leeuwen (2008, p. 53) indeed suggests that when representing social actors, more than one strategy can be used at the same time; therefore, while some may argue that this could be a form of impersonalization or as any other category, which is possible, the researchers classified this as a form of objectivation as it uses a geographical feature (a participle adjective + noun "area"). Finally, functionalization, which portrays people by what they do, was used 6 times to represent Karen individuals or people associated with the Karen ethnic minority (often acting in defense for a Karen community and in opposition to the state). Repeated use of this strategy to portray someone could reduce them to that role and "dehumanize" the social actor (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 81). In the example provided for functionalization in Table 3, the writer used 'Karen rights activist', thus representing that person by their role as an activist while not mentioning their name as that particular information was probably viewed as unimportant or irrelevant unlike the names of more prominent people who are almost always named in the headlines or lead paragraphs or given voice to by the media.

Overall, the analysis of representational strategies used to portray Karen social actors has revealed a tendency for news writers to collectivize and genericize Karen people, which could lead to the reinforcement of common images or stereotypes of the Karen, while aggregation was also used to represent the Karen, which dehumanizes them by treating them as numbers and possibly emphasizes the intensity of the burden they may cause by using statistical evidence to prove this claim. Furthermore, instead of specifying or nominating a Karen individual or Karen activist, news practitioners of the *Bangkok Post* were inclined to employ functionalization, which portrays Karen or activists by what they do rather than who they are, thus distancing readers from them, whereas people and organizations from the government's side were specified.

## 2. Textual analysis: Representation of action

Transitivity analysis was conducted in the second sub-stage of textual analysis to determine the representation of actions or roles of Karen participants in clause structures. Table 4 displays the number and percentage of transitivity processes found in the corpus of headline and leads of the 64 online *Bangkok Post* news articles published in 2021. The headlines and lead paragraphs of these news articles were broken down into altogether 253 clauses. The researchers were able to detect altogether five transitivity processes: material, verbal, relational, mental, and existential. No behavioral processes were detected. Moreover, unlike Table 3 in the previous stage, the data in Table 4 contains all the clauses instead of just the ones that mention Karen participants so as to determine the actions of all participants that may be directed towards the Karen as well as the action of Karen participants towards others. Two examples are provided for each transitivity process type.

As seen in Table 4, the number of material clauses (167) far outruns that of other clauses and accounts for 66.01% of the data. In general, it was found that either the Karen were depicted as the goal of material processes; that is, they are usually the receivers of the actions of others (e.g., authorities) or their roles in material clauses were passivated rather than activated, which means that they may be depicted as the actor, but their actions were influenced by something or someone else. In the first example material clause, the passive voice is used and the process is "nabbed", while the agent responsible for the action of nabbing (i.e., capturing or arresting) the Karen forest dwellers was omitted from this clause. In fact, the Karen were found to be the goal of the processes of either being or not being arrested six times in the corpus of news headlines and leads published by *Bangkok Post* throughout 2021, which could potentially portray a negative or problematic image of Karen people living in Thailand. However, in the second example, Karen participants were depicted as active agents of the process of opposing the state's interest in getting a national park onto the World Heritage List. This overtly portrays the Karen participants as acting against the state. Additionally, Karen participants, usually in association with Karen rights groups, were represented as the active doers of the material process of demanding their rights from the government. To illustrate just how the Karen are portrayed in material clauses, which make up most of the data, Table 5 presents the total number of clauses which present Karen participants as the 'doer' as well as those that present Karen participants as the 'done-to' or goal of a material process. Example clauses are given for both types of material clauses. Also, there were material clauses in which Karen participants

were not clearly portrayed as either the doer (actor) or the done-to (goal or beneficiary), and the total number of these clauses and an example are given in Table 5 as well.

Verbal processes, which occurred 53 times, concerns verbs of saying, telling, reporting, and so on. Most of the time, the sayers were usually politicians, government/state officials, authorities, or experts. For instance, in the first example verbal clause given in Table 4 for verbal clauses, 'experts' are the sayer, while the process is the word 'say'. What the experts said ("Environmental conservation must go...") is the verbiage in this clause. Rarely were Karen participants depicted as the sayers in verbal clauses. The second example shows this rare instance where Karen people are the sayers of the verbal process of 'have urged...to'. At first, one may argue that 'urge' resembles a material action (i.e., a verb of doing) rather than a verbal process, but in this case, the Karen people are shown to have urged someone (the UN's cultural body) to do something (not consider the government's proposal), which would be similar to the use of the phrase 'tell someone to do something' (telling is considered a verbal process).

**Table 4**  
**The number and percentage of transitivity processes and their examples**

Process Type	Number of Clauses	%	Example Clause(s)
Material	167	66.01	Karen forest dwellers <u>nabbed</u> ("Karen Forest Dwellers", 2021)  Karen to <u>oppose</u> Kaeng Krachan world heritage bid ("Karen to Oppose", 2021)
Verbal	53	20.95	Environmental conservation must go hand in hand with the protection of local indigenous communities' rights in Thailand's newly inscribed natural World Heritage site, the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex, experts <u>say</u> ("Plea to Give", 2021)  Karen people living in Bang Kloy village in Phetchaburi's Kaeng Krachan district <u>have urged</u> the UN's cultural body not to consider the government's proposal to register Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex as a new world heritage site ("Karen to Oppose", 2021).
Relational	17	6.72	Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon <u>was</u> confident on Monday that the Save Bang Kloi movement...will go home on Tuesday after reaching an agreement ("DPM Poised", 2021).  Platform for indigenous communities <u>(is)key</u> to keeping World Heritage status, writes Pratch Rujivanarom ("Plea to Give", 2021)
Mental	12	4.74	Health <u>fears</u> growing for held activist ("Health Fears", 2021)  Karen <u>fear</u> Kaeng Krachan's World Heritage listing ends their hopes ("Karen Fear", 2021)



Process Type	Number of Clauses	%	Example Clause(s)
Existential	4	1.58	There <u>were</u> no reports of casualties ("Huge Fire", 2021)  (There <u>will be</u> ) 'No arrests' over Bang Kloi rally ("No Arrests", 2021)
Behavioral	0	0	-
<b>Total</b>	253	100	

**Table 5**  
Role of Karen participants in material clauses

Material Clause Type	Number of Clauses	Example
Clauses in which Karen are the actor	62	Karen refugees <u>fleeing</u> the violence in Myanmar ("Army Delivers", 2021)
Clauses in which Karen are the goal	35	56 fleeing Karen refugees <u>sent</u> home ("56 Fleeing Karen", 2021)
Clauses in which Karen are neither the actor nor goal	70	The government <u>launched</u> a dialogue to resolve the ongoing land dispute with the indigenous forest dwellers ("Four Karen Villagers Arrested", 2021).
<b>Total</b>	167	

Importantly, since officials from the government were mostly depicted as sayers in the clause, news regarding Karen-related matters is largely reported from the state or government's point of view. According to Machin and Mayr (2012), people or institutions with the most power are perhaps those who are given the most voice in the media. This reflects that *Bangkok Post* treats information from the government and authorities as important information worthy of being placed on the top of the inverted pyramid structure of a news report, whereas the less important information from less important sources, generally in opposition to the government such as activists and Karen people, are only sometimes or rarely cited in the headlines and leads, or it is mentioned somewhere else in the article, indicating a lower degree of importance. This is perhaps due to the reason that names of famous politicians would attract more viewers than the name of activists.

Table 6 displays the number of times each source of information that is associated with the government was cited in the news summary of the 64 news reports on Karen-related matters published on *Bangkok Post*'s website throughout 2021. On the other hand, Table 7 shows the number of times each source of information that is not associated with the government or are in opposition to it was cited. The information from these sources had to be written in the form of a direct quotation or in the form of reported speech to be counted.

**Table 6**

**Sources of information associated with the government and state institutions in *Bangkok Post* headlines and leads reporting on matters related to the Karen minority throughout 2021**

Source of Information	Number of Times Cited or Quoted
The Prime Minister	6
Other Government Leaders/Officials (individual names or titles)	8
State Institutions / Ministries / The Government / Authorities	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

**Table 7**

**Sources of information disassociated with the government/state institutions and in favor of Karen people in *Bangkok Post* headlines and leads reporting on matters related to the Karen minority throughout 2021**

Source of Information	Number of Times Cited or Quoted
Prominent Organization	1
Member of Parliament (Oppositional Party)	1
Karen Activists / Advocacy Groups	6
Karen Villagers / Karen Protesters / Karen People (plural, group or community)	1
Karen Individual (Villager/ Refugee / Ordinary Person)	1
Human Rights Lawyer	1
Experts	1
Karen National Union / Ethnic Rebel Group / A Representative from the Rebel Group	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

As seen in Tables 6 and 7, information from sources associated with the government and state were cited 27 times, while information from sources disassociated with the government and state were cited only 13 times, meaning that the former was cited twice as many times as the latter all throughout the year. The sources that were cited the most were the state institutions/prominent organizations/ministries/the government/authorities, followed by individual government leaders and the prime minister, respectively. Therefore, the fact that government and state sources were allowed to have more voice in the news summary, comprising of the headline and lead which play important roles in shaping the reader's understanding and recall of a certain news event (van Dijk, 1986), demonstrates the reinforcement of power structures within Thai society.

Relational clauses are also worth mentioning. Relational processes, which involve the verbs of being and having, occurred 17 times. This particular type of transitivity process can be used as a way of presenting what could be considered an opinion as a fact instead (Machin & Mayr, 2012). For instance, in the first example of a relational clause presented in Table 4, the carrier of the clause is Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwon, while the process is 'was' and the attribute is the adjective 'confident'. The Deputy Prime Minister's opinion here in this case is that the government will be able to reach an agreement with the protesters and Karen villagers, who had formed the Save Bang Kloi movement, and that the protesters will return home and

stop protesting (without input from the protester's side). However, it resembles a fact since the Deputy Prime Minister appeared confident about it. This could serve to protect the government's image since it conveys how confident the government and its strong leaders are in being able to resolve issues. In the second relational clause given as an example, the opinion of a *Bangkok Post* environmental journalist is presented as a fact, but it is less obvious since the verb 'be' is missing from the front of the word 'key' (meaning 'important'). Here, the newspaper is speaking out for the indigenous communities, while also appealing to the government's interest in preserving the World Heritage status of a national park. This almost resembles the headline of an opinion piece, but it was indeed listed under 'General' and not under 'Opinion' on the news website.

### 3. Analysis of discourse practice: Newsworthiness

Table 8 displays the results of the analysis of newsworthiness of news related to the Karen people. It provides a list of 13 of Harcup and O'Neill's 15 news values and shows the number of times each of the news values was identified in the headlines and leads reporting on Karen-related matters and its percentage, as well as examples that feature each news value taken from the data (see Appendix F for all 64 articles). Although Harcup and O'Neill provide 15 news values in their list, the researchers of the present study use all but two: shareability and audio-visuals. This is because it was difficult to measure the tendency to generate social media shares of all news stories. The *Bangkok Post* website does provide an option for readers to share the news story to various platforms such as Facebook and Line, so everything it publishes can be shared—it is just too challenging of a task to find the exact number of shares for each news article across every social media application and compare them. Also, since this study is primarily studying linguistic material in the headline and lead paragraph, the researchers decided not to consider the news value of audio-visuals, seeing that it is irrelevant to the scope of study. It is reminded that one news story may contain more than one news value.

**Table 8**  
The results of the analysis of newsworthiness of news related to the Karen people

News Value	Times Identified	%	Example
1. Exclusivity	3	2.07	DNP surveys growing Karen population ("DNP Surveys", 2021)
2. Bad News	11	7.59	Fire roars through Karen refugee camp ("Fire Roars", 2021)
3. Conflict	47	32.41	A civic group protested in front of the Natural Resources and Environment Ministry building on Friday as part of a campaign to pressure the government to resettle ethnic Karen villagers displaced from the Kaeng Krachan National Park in Phetchaburi over a decade ago ("Displaced Karen", 2021)
4. Surprise	0	0	-
5. Entertainment	0	0	-

News Value	Times Identified	%	Example
1. Drama	3	2.07	Former park chief says anti-graft agency has never checked the facts on the ground ("Chaiwat Hits Back", 2021)
2. Follow-Up	25	17.24	Varawut insists progress being made in settling Bang Kloi land issues ("Varawut Insists", 2021)  This is a follow-up story as it reports on progress being made since the first time a previous article reported on said land issues with a headline that reads "Karen Call for Forest Land for Farming" (2021), which was published in February. The example used above was published later on in March.
3. The Power Elite	31	21.38	Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha says outsiders are masterminding the Bang Kloi Karen villagers movement ("Outsiders Are behind", 2021)
4. Relevance	4	2.76	An ethnic minority MP has urged the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to drop a forest encroachment case against Bang Kloi villagers ("MP Calls for", 2021)
5. Magnitude	13	8.97	Thousands flee to Thailand as clashes resume ("Thousands Flee to Thailand", 2021)
6. Celebrity	1	0.69	A controversy over a YouTube video which showed the fundraising effort and solar cell donation by net idol Pimrypie, or Pimradaporn Benjawattanapat, has shed light on the relatively unknown village of Ban Mae Kerb ("Ban Mae Kerb", 2021)
7. Good News	7	4.83	Army delivers donated aid to fleeing Karen ("Army Delivers", 2021)
8. News Organization's Agenda	0	0	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>≈100</b>	

The three most common news values shared among the 64 *Bangkok Post* news articles reporting on Karen-related matters throughout the year 2021 were the news values of conflict (32.41%), the power elite (21.38%), and follow-up (17.24%). Interestingly, the news value of good news was identified in 7 news stories (4.83%), while bad news was identified in 11 news stories (7.59%). The fact that events featuring elements of conflict and bad news were reported more often than good news related to the Karen people reflects either that not many good things happened in relation to the Karen people or that very few good things related to them were selected by the news publication to be reported to the public. Additionally, when anything that counts as good news gets reported, it is usually about the Karen receiving help from the army or government, meaning that they are in constant need of help or that they are often involved in unfortunate situations and must rely on the help of others. The power elites (e.g., prominent organizations, government leaders, and politicians) were also frequently mentioned

in the headlines and leads of the news articles reporting on Karen-related matters, and since they are the influential and powerful people/institutions in society, stories involving them are considered newsworthy and are therefore frequently selected and reported to the public.

#### **4. Sociocultural analysis: Othering and stereotyping of Karen people**

Since the analysis of newsworthiness revealed that stories about Karen people that got published were ones mainly involving conflict, the frequent use of genericization, as well as collectivization, could potentially lead to negative stereotypes of Karen people that are linked to the “hill tribe problem” (Hares, 2009) being reproduced over and over again in hard news. In the present study, traces of Karen stereotypes were found in the headlines and leads of hard news published on the *Bangkok Post*’s website throughout the year 2021. A total of five stereotypes were identified: (1) Karen as destroyers of natural resources, (2) Karen as problematic people involved in conflicts against the state, (3) Karen as victims of aggression and disasters, (4) Karen as a large burden, and (5) Karen as advocates for their community’s rights. Two of these are connected to the “hill tribe problem”, which include the Karen as destroyers of natural resources and the Karen as problematic people involved in conflicts against the state, which also correspond to Hongladarom (2000), who stated that negative images of the Karen were them being agents of deforestation and a general threat to the nation-state. For examples of Karen stereotypes found in the summaries of the 64 news reports, see Appendix E.

Thus, four out of five of the stereotypes of Karen people found in this study are negative, with the exception of (5), and serve to maintain social and symbolic order as they set up a symbolic boundary between the in-group (‘us’) and out-group (‘them’) of Thai society, which preserves the status quo (Hall, 1997). However, the Karen people as well as rights activists are trying to make a change in society as it is evident in some of these news reports, and from the help of positive news stories that portray positive images of them, the Karen people could possibly rid themselves from the oversimplified stereotypes of them being agents of deforestation and problematic people by ascribing to themselves a positive, autonomous identity to replace their lack of identity. Nevertheless, they would require more voice and help from the more powerful people and institutions in Thai society, starting with the media.

#### **5. Interrelationships among text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice**

According to Fairclough’s (1995b) theory, sociocultural practice governs discourse practice which shapes the text itself, and in turn the text continues to shape sociocultural practice, which then continues to shape discourse practice, and the process continues. In the analysis of sociocultural contexts of the present study, it was found that Thai policies which affect indigenous Karen people as well as Karen refugees and migrants were implemented to exclude them from having the same rights as Thai citizens based on assumptions that they were a threat to the nation-state and its interests (Bhruksasri, 1989; Clarke, 2001), thus causing the dominant in-group to hold negative opinions towards them, which further leads to the creation of Karen stereotypes that are linked to the “hill tribe problem” (Hares, 2009). Moreover, these policies, especially those that deprive Karen people of their rights to access natural resources, have caused tension and conflict between the Karen people and state authorities. These

conflicts, which happen on a regular or continual basis, then get selected and reported in the news. In other words, the sociocultural practices influence discourse practice in terms of the production of the text. As a result, stories involving conflict and illegal activities related to the Karen are frequently reported, and as seen in the analysis of text production, news involving the power elites and their perspective on the conflict between Karen people and authorities are the ones that get reported the most or receive highest priority in the headlines and lead paragraphs. Target readers of the *Bangkok Post* are therefore mainly exposed to the state or government's side of the conflict, which is reported in hard news, and which appears factual to the readers. In the text itself, the Karen minority are mainly depicted as a collective group or generic class, thus creating a common representation among them, and thus reinforcing the stereotypes ascribed to them by the dominant in-group. They are also aggregated and treated as statistics, as well as functionalized, so as to further distance readers from them. The Karen are reported in the text as demanding natural resources from the government in material clauses, and are also reported as the goals or receivers of punishment when they engage in activities that go against the state's policies. The headlines and leads analyzed in this study, which were mainly about the Karen opposing the state's interests or crossing the border into Thailand adding to the state's burdens could affect readers in different ways depending on their respective social experiences and background (van Dijk, 2009). Not only that, the headlines and leads in this study preserve the status quo by depicting government leaders, organizations, and state authorities as the sayers in verbal clauses, conveying mainly the government's side of a matter concerning Karen people. Sometimes the opinions of the power elites get reported through relational processes, thus presenting their opinions to appear as facts to the readers (e.g., "DPM Poised," 2021; "Outsiders are Behind," 2021). The text, therefore, reinforces the status quo and favors those in power, while it also reproduces Karen stereotypes that are mostly negative and connected to the "hill tribe problem", which in turn shapes the sociocultural practices that have persisted since the implementation of policies that exclude ethnic minorities and treats them as the 'Other'.

## CONCLUSION

As a final conclusion, the headlines and leads of news articles published throughout the year 2021 on the *Bangkok Post's* website mainly reinforced old, negative images of the Karen minority that have been around since the 1960s when the government viewed ethnic minorities as a problem rather than creating positive images of them. The reinforcement of Karen stereotypes linked to old and outdated views were accomplished through underrepresenting the Karen people's side of the story while giving more voice and priority to the power elite by specifying who they are and what they have to say about a certain matter concerning the Karen in the news summary (i.e., the headline and leads). Thus, the results of this study are in line with Yoko (2006), who found that Karen culture has been re-written and carefully selected by the state to be presented to tourists while the Karen people are in no position of authority to take charge of representing their own way of life. Yoko (2006) mentioned that the state-promoted image of the Karen depicted the Karen as "peace-loving, elephant-loving, nature-loving, forest-dwelling, non-aggressive, easily satisfied, self-sufficient, and backward" (pp. 406-407), which was an image forced upon them to adopt. In the present study, the articles



published by the *Bangkok Post* promoted the state narrative by citing primarily government and state sources in the headlines and leads of hard news stories related to matters concerning the Karen, whereas Karen people or activists themselves hardly received the opportunity to control the narrative or how they were being represented to newsreaders. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Wirojchoochut (2021), who stated that the Thai government exercises dominant power through young-adult fiction about Karen people intended for young Thai readers, which further marginalizes the Karen to maintain power structures within society. In Wirojchoochut's (2021) study, the Karen storybook characters were portrayed as people who faced economic hardships and lived in rural areas far from the center of power, reinforcing their low socioeconomic status and indicating a scarcity of agency. Agency, according to Wirojchoochut (2021), is needed to challenge oppressive practices. Similar to how the storybook characters had limited agency, the Karen participants in the headlines and leads in the present study were often depicted as people with limited agency in material clauses by being presented as either the passivated actor or the goal of a material process. Contrary to what Hongladarom (2000) believed regarding the *Bangkok Post* serving as a mouthpiece for ethnic minorities in some of its reports, this study concludes that mainly negative stereotypes have persisted in the headlines and leads of hard news published in English by the *Bangkok Post*. It is possible that hard news could create a stronger impact on the perceptions of readers since it would be regarded as facts due to its neutrality and timeliness unlike opinion articles which are obviously subjective and non-urgent. Similar to Hongladarom (2000), the results of the present study detected negative representations of Karen people in the news, but the racism directed towards them is less blatant in English-language news. Nevertheless, results may have differed had the researchers also analyzed English opinion articles published by the same news publication or if they had analyzed the entire article. Alternatively, the dataset of future research could include both hard and soft news to conduct a comparison of ideologies within each genre of news, or further research can be done by extending the timeframe from one year to several years.

All in all, the findings were able to reveal the way that Karen people are represented in Thailand's English-language news, which uses language that appears neutral; therefore, this study promotes critical media literacy among the Thai public in the Information Age where news is consumed rapidly and potentially taken for granted. EFL instructors in university can apply this to their classroom, for example, by designing lessons that revolve around social issues and having students use critical discourse analysis to analyze their selected text. This study also acknowledges the need for more inclusive policies toward ethnic minorities so as to lessen or prevent tension and conflict between ethnic communities and state authorities, whose perceptions of tribal people have remained negative due to stringent forest policies that view indigenous people as an enemy as well as a lack of policies that protect the legal status of refugees (Bhruksasri, 1989; Clarke, 2001; Hares, 2009). Most importantly, if the aim is to achieve an equal society truly free from racism, discrimination, and alienation against members of ethnic groups, then there needs to be a shift in media portrayals of ethnic minorities by justifying their actions and prioritizing their voice and side of the story in the headlines and leads, since this would reshape the public's perception of them.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study deals with one aspect of the first author's thesis entitled "The representation of Karen people in English news headlines and leads: A critical discourse analysis of Thailand's online English-language news reports". The authors, therefore, would like to thank all examiners in the thesis proposal defense for their valuable and constructive comments.

## THE AUTHORS

**Natalie Yunchalard** graduated with a B.A. in Business English (First Class Honours) from Khon Kaen University and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in English at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Khon Kaen University. Her research interests mainly cover critical discourse analysis and media discourse.

[nataliey@kkumail.com](mailto:nataliey@kkumail.com)

**Piyaporn Punksirikul**, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor in the English Language Department at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Khon Kaen University. Her areas of expertise are in linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and multimodal critical discourse analysis.

[piyaporn@kku.ac.th](mailto:piyaporn@kku.ac.th)

## REFERENCES

- Army delivers donated aid to fleeing Karen. (2021, April 6). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2095447/army-delivers-donated-aid-to-fleeing-karen>
- Bang Kloi community continue to face rights issues despite MOU. (2021, December 17). *Prachatai English*. <https://prachataienglish.com/node/9610>
- Bang Kloi Karens released with condition. (2021, March 8). *TNAMCOT*. <https://tna.mcot.net/english-news/line-today-english-news-650831>
- Bangkok Post. (2017). *Audience & insight*. Bangkok Post Online Media Info. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/mediainfo/audience-insight>
- Bangkok Post. (2019). *Bangkok post*. Bangkok Post Public Company Limited. Retrieved April 10, 2022, from <https://www.bangkokpost.co.th/business/newspaper/bangkokpost>
- Ban Mae Kerb not on official registries. (2021, January 18). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2052691/ban-mae-kerb-not-on-official-registries>
- Bell, A. (1991). *The language of news media*. Blackwell.
- Bernard, T. (2018). The discursive representation of social actors in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) and integrated annual (IA) reports of two South African mining companies. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines*, 10(1), 81-97.
- Bhruksasri, W. (1989). Government policy: Highland ethnic minorities. In J. McKinnon & B. Vienne (Eds.), *Hill tribes today: Problems in change* (pp. 5-31). White Lotus-Orstom.
- Brons, L. (2015). Othering, an analysis. *Transcience*, 6(1), 69-90.
- Chaiwat hits back at PACC over Kaeng Krachan burning. (2021, February 26). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2075147/chaiwat-hits-back-at-pacc-over-kaeng-krachan-burning>
- Clarke, G. (2001). From ethnocide to ethnodevelopment? Ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia. *Third World Quarterly*, 22(3), 413-436. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590120061688>

- Crang, M. (1998). *Cultural geography*. Routledge.
- Displaced Karen demand land back. (2021, February 6). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2063419/displaced-karen-demand-land-back>
- DNP surveys growing Karen population. (2021, March 7). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2079447/dnp-surveys-growing-karen-population>
- DPM poised to reach deal with Karen protesters. (2021, March 16). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2084095/dpm-poised-to-reach-deal-with-karen-protesters>
- DSI digging up details of Billy case. (2021, September 30). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2189871/dsi-digging-up-details-of-billy-case>
- Evicted Karen protest Thailand's push to make Kaeng Krachan World Heritage Site. (2019, July 4). *The Nation Thailand*. <https://www.nationthailand.com/in-focus/30372307>
- 56 fleeing Karen refugees sent home. (2021, April 1). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2092803/56-fleeing-karen-refugees-sent-home>
- Fairclough, N. (1995a). *Critical discourse analysis*. Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1995b). *Media discourse*. Edward Arnold.
- Fire roars through Karen refugee camp. (2021, February 10). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2065799/fire-roars-through-karen-refugee-camp>
- Flowerdew, J. (2013). *Discourse in English language education*. Routledge.
- Four Karen villagers arrested for 'poaching'. (2021, February 22). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2072579/four-karen-villagers-arrested-for-poaching>
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news: Discourse and ideology in the press*. Routledge.
- Gabrielkov, M., Ramachandran, A., Chaintreau, A., & Legout, A. (2016). Social clicks: What and who gets read on Twitter? *ACM SIGMETRICS Performance Evaluation Review*, 44(1), 179–192. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2964791.2901462>
- Graham, M., Milanowski, A., & Miller, J. (2012). *Measuring and promoting inter-rater agreement of teacher and principal performance ratings*. Center for Educator Compensation Reform.
- Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Edward Arnold.
- Harcup, T., & O'Neill, D. (2016). What is news?. *Journalism Studies*, 18(12), 1470–1488. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670x.2016.1150193>
- Harding, S. (Ed.). (2004). *Feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies*. Routledge.
- Hares, M. (2009). Forest conflict in Thailand: Northern minorities in focus. *Environmental Management*, 43, 381–395. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-008-9239-7>
- Hongladarom, K. (2000). Competing discourses on hill tribes: Media representation of ethnic minorities in Thailand. *MANUSYA: Journal of Humanities*, 3(1), 1–19.
- Health fears growing for held activist. (2021, September 3). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2175507/health-fears-growing-for-held-activist>
- Huge fire hits Karen camp. (2021, February 11). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2066091/huge-fire-hits-karen-camp>
- Hundreds flee to Thailand as Myanmar junta clashes with rebel group. (2021, December 16). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2233083/hundreds-flee-to-thailand-as-myanmar-junta-clashes-with-rebel-group>
- Kaeng Krachan added to world heritage list. (2021, July 26). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2155099/kaeng-krachan-added-to-world-heritage-list>

- Karen fear Kaeng Krachan's World Heritage listing ends their hopes. (2021, October 8). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2194723/karen-fear-kaeng-krachans-world-heritage-listing-ends-their-hopes>
- Karen forest dwellers nabbed. (2021, March 6). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2079095/karen-forest-dwellers-nabbed>
- Karen migrate: 62 organizations plead Thailand to help refugees while the army remains neutral by sending supplies to Karen. (2021, April 5). *BBC News Thai*. <https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-56639660>
- Karen poacher jailed, officials who hired him let off lightly. (2019, March 6). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1640320/karen-poacher-jailed-officials-who-hired-him-let-off-lightly>
- Karen seek rights over land usage. (2020, August 28). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1975807/karen-seek-rights-over-land-usage>
- Karen soldiers hunt wildlife in Kanchanaburi forest. (2019, May 23). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1682624/karen-soldiers-hunt-wildlife-in-kanchanaburi-forest>
- Karen to oppose Kaeng Krachan world heritage bid. (2021, July 22). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2152727/karen-to-oppose-kaeng-krachan-world-heritage-bid>
- Karen war refugees lose homes in incidental fires. (2019, April 28). *The Nation Thailand*. <https://www.nationthailand.com/in-focus/30368480>
- Karen worker killed at Samut Sakhon temple. (2019, May 23). *The Nation Thailand*. <https://www.nationthailand.com/news/30369869>
- Kariang Bang Kloi jee 'Thamanat-Varawut' sen bantuek kor toklong mai khomkhu kookkarm poei mai ma nai 1 chuamong jor yok radup [Bang Kloi Karen pressure 'Thamanat-Varawut' to sign agreement to not intimidate, if not done within an hour protests will escalate]. (2021, February 16). Matichon Online. [https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news\\_2580746](https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news_2580746)
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2005). Toward critical media literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 26(3), 369-386. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300500200169>
- Kovavisarach, C. (2021, March 3). Bang Kloi and the myth of the homogenized nation-state. *Thai Enquirer*. <https://www.thaienquirer.com/24854/bang-kloi-and-the-myth-of-the-homogenized-nation-state/>
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. SAGE Publications.
- MP calls for Karen protection. (2021, May 28). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2122719/mp-calls-for-karen-protection>
- Myanmar airstrikes displace more people. (2021, December 24). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2237391/myanmar-airstrikes-displace-more-people>
- Ninpanit, S. (2020). Critical discourse analysis of English news headlines on Thai transgender individuals from Thai and international websites. *The New English Teacher*, 14(2), 42-63.
- 'No arrests' over Bang Kloi rally. (2021, February 16). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2068807/no-arrests-over-bang-kloi-rally>
- O'Halloran, K. (2011). Critical discourse analysis. In J. Simpson (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 445-459). Routledge.
- Outsiders are behind Karen villager movement: PM. (2021, March 18). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2085323/outside-are-behind-karen-villager-movement-pm>
- Patterson, T. E. (2000). *Doing well and doing good: How soft news are shrinking the news audience and weakening democracy*. Harvard University Press.
- Plea to give Karen a say in Kaeng Krachan forest. (2021, August 30). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2173171/plea-to-give-karen-a-say-in-kaeng-krachan-forest>
- Pom kudyaeng Ban Bang Kloi [The conflict of Bang Kloi village]. (2021, February 23). *Thai PBS*. <https://www.thaipbs.or.th/news/content/301781>

- Power, K., Rak, L., & Kim, M. (2020). Women in business media: A critical discourse analysis of representations of women in Forbes, Fortune and Bloomberg Businessweek. *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines*, 11(2), 1-26.
- Promchertchoo, P. (2021, May 22). Fearing starvation, Thailand's ethnic Karens of Bang Kloi seek return to ancestral land. CNA. <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/thailand-bangkloi-ethnic-karens-seek-return-to-ancestral-land-1393731>
- Protest at Government House calls for justice for indigenous Karen community. (2021, February 19). *Prachatai English*. <https://prachatai.com/english/node/9077>
- Staszak, J. F. (2009). Other/otherness. In N. Thrift & R. Kitchin (Eds.), *International encyclopedia of human geography* (pp. 4032-4036). Elsevier.
- Stemler, S. E. (2004). A comparison of consensus, consistency, and measurement approaches to estimating interrater reliability. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 94. <http://pareonline.net/getvn.asp?v=9&n=4>
- Stranded refugees need urgent aid. (2021, May 31). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2124179/stranded-refugees-need-urgent-aid>
- Thousands flee to Thailand as clashes resume. (2021, December 17). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2233691/thousands-flee-to-thailand-as-clashes-resume>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1986). News schemata. In S. Greenbaum & C. R. Cooper (Eds.), *Studying writing: Linguistic approaches* (pp. 155-186). SAGE.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2001). Critical discourse analysis. In D. Tannen, D. Schiffrin & H. Hamilton (Eds.), *Handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 352-371). Blackwell.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). Methods of critical discourse analysis. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Critical discourse studies: A sociocognitive approach* (pp. 62-85). SAGE.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford University Press.
- Varawut insists progress being made in settling Bang Kloi land issues. (2021, March 16). *Bangkok Post*. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2084603/varawut-insists-progress-being-made-in-settling-bang-kloi-land-issues>
- Von Kameke, L. (2022, October 12). *SEA: Most used media for news consumption 2022*. Statista. <https://tinyurl.com/3x7z84yy>
- Widdowson, H.G. (2004). *Text, context, pretext: Critical issues in discourse analysis*. Blackwell.
- Wirojchoochut, M. (2021). Representations of power relations in Thai preadolescent realistic fiction about Karen people. *Journal of Children's Literature*, 47(1), 111-118.
- Yoko, H. (2006). Negotiating ethnic representation between self and other: The case of Karen and eco-tourism in Thailand. *Southeast Asian Studies*, 44(3), 385-409.



## **APPENDICES**

Please refer to the following link to view all the appendices of this study:  
<https://tinyurl.com/2benvjs4>