Lim Beng Soon

W. Geok

A study of the Singapore identity through an analysis of media reports on a national tragedyThe
crash of flight MI 183 in December 1997

In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 158 (2002), no: 1, Leiden, 49-60

This PDF-file was downloaded from <http://www.kitlv-journals.nl>

LIM BENG SOON and WEE BEE GEOK

A Study of the Singapore Identity through an Analysis of Media Reports on a National Tragedy The Crash of Flight MI 185 in December 1997

Introduction

This paper* examines the construction and representation of a Singaporean identity in newspaper articles on the crash of SilkAir Flight MI 185 outside the southern Sumatran city of Palembang on 19 December 1997. The MI 185 crash was a major national tragedy for Singapore. The tragic loss of lives of many Singaporeans stunned the nation. Also, this was the first crash of SIA and SilkAir, the national carriers, which up to that point had had an unblemished record.

The following study of the depiction of the aftermath of the plane crash takes the form of a linguistic analysis of articles on the crash in the English-language daily, *The Straits Times*. It is the national paper of Singapore and a main source of information for many Singaporeans. The framework for analysing the language used in representing identity is derived from the works of the three linguists, Fowler (1981), Fairclough (1989), and Halliday (1994). These works have been consulted primarily because their authors start from the premise that language use is a social practice that is closely and dialectically related to social reality and ideologies. In particular, the study looked at:

1. Vocabulary (lexical choice, references to classification schemes, semantic relations, word combinations, register, use of tropes);

LIM BENG SOON is a fellow at the Universiti Sains Malaysia, where he obtained his PhD, specializing in politeness strategies. He may be reached at the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia.

WEE BEE GEOK is a teaching fellow at Nanyang Technological University who obtained her PhD from the National University of Singapore and has specialized in systemic functional linguistics and genre theory. She may be reached at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616.

* The article is a modified version of a paper presented at a conference on 'Creating Sense: Texts and Realities, Language and Knowledge', held in Singapore on 7-9 September 1998.

2. Grammatical features (transitivity, nominalization, voice, mood and modality);
3. Interpersonal features (use of personal pronouns, titles and names).

The concept of identity

How people perceive themselves or want to be perceived by others is the kind of social identity they desire. 'Social identity' essentially refers to the way one positions one's 'self' against the 'other' in the world. It is precisely the way one places one's 'self' that distinguishes one from the 'other'. With the aid of these notions of selfhood and otherness it is possible to define what the term 'identity' refers to in this paper.

Weeks (1990:88) explains that identity is about belonging, about what one has in common with some people and what differentiates one from others. People belonging to the same identity group will share the same model of reality, which may include ideologies, practices, beliefs, and perceptions of selfhood and otherness. At the same time, identity is not independent of social developments, and events dynamically, continuously and simultaneously influence identity, just as identity may affect social events and developments. As Hall (1990:222) states, identity should really be considered as 'a "production" which is never complete, always in process'. For the purposes of the present paper, identity will be taken as referring to the traits and characteristics which a particular group of people have adopted as constituting the 'self' and which they view in contrast to the traits and characteristics of other groups, constituting the 'other'. Identity in this specific case is thus examined through the positioning of the people of Singapore collectively as the 'self' against the rest of the world, in particular Indonesia, which is viewed as the 'other'.

Language and reality

How concepts of selfhood and otherness are defined, and thus ideas of identity come about, can be inferred from the kind of language that is used in particular cases. The way the 'self' and the 'other' (elements of our model of reality) are perceived affects the linguistic palette an individual uses in the representation of him- or herself to the world. The resultant picture will in turn affect the way in which the linguistic apparatus is used to represent the reality of the community. The important point to note is that language and reality are interrelated. In the same way, language and notions of selfhood and otherness are interrelated. Language not only expresses a sense of iden-

tity, but at the same time also creates and affects identity. As Dissanayake (1995:94) states, 'far from being a transparent medium which mirrors a pre-existing reality, language needs to be seen as a signifying system which inscribes ideology and which is constitutive of reality'. Language can both produce or construct, and reproduce or represent models of reality, as well as notions of identity.

The Singapore identity.

The Singapore Institute of Policy Studies in its *Singapore Ideology* of October 1988 lists seven different groups of characteristics that are held to be favourable for the identity of Singapore society. These are: mutual racial and religious respect; mutual tolerance and harmony; integrity of government; harmony between individual and communal interests; respect for the family as a basic social institution; compassion for the less fortunate; and emphasis on consensus in the solution of major problems. These characteristics combine the qualities valued most highly in Asian philosophy with the qualities most appreciated in Western philosophy. Western respect for the individual, which manifests itself in 'understanding' and 'tolerance' for others, is incorporated and anchored in Asian solidarity with the group, involving qualities like industry, thrift, honesty, learning, and self-sacrifice.

Singaporeans who figure in newspaper articles are generally viewed and presented in terms of success and achievement. So the Singaporean victims of the crash of Flight MI 185 who were mentioned in the relevant newspaper articles were described as educated, affluent individuals. Much space was devoted to underlining the skill of the pilot, Captain Tsu Way Ming, who was flying the plane when it crashed (text C9¹). He is described as a member of the 'famous Republic of Singapore Air Force aerobatics team, the Black Knights' and as 'an experienced combat pilot and flight instructor who held the rank of major in the air force'. His achievements are described in glowing terms, as in the phrases 'a member of the elite team', 'Graduated, at top of the class', and 'He added another feather to his cap'. Other victims are described in the same way. For instance, Mr Soen Lay is described as a former national swimmer (text B10) and Ms Chen Lay Nah as the hall queen during her first year at Nanyang Technological University (text C11). This is the positive picture that is painted for the benefit of readers in Singapore and the rest of the world.

Combined with their successes and achievements, Singaporeans want to be seen as people who uphold Asian values like maintaining strong family

¹ Any of the letters from A to R followed by a number refer to the newspaper articles listed in the Appendix below.

ties and showing filial piety. These are qualities intimately linked to the Singaporean 'self'. For example, air hostess Kristine Pong is described as someone who is 'very close to her sister' (text D3). The taxi driver and his family described as they visit his mother are presented as having a strong sense of filial duty.

Shared Asian values are reflected in snippets of information from personal stories gathered through interviews. Family ties, filial piety, tolerance, and respect for others figure prominently here. The story of the son-in-law who always visited his father-in-law on his return home from Jakarta represents the father-in-law as treating his son-in-law 'like my son' (text B14). This simile connotes a good relationship and strong family ties. The story of the RGS² girl who travelled to Java to see her grandmother each December (text D3) offers another example of how the value of family togetherness is inculcated in children. The story of the man who 'flew home every weekend to be with his wife' and that of the man who 'made it a point and went out (with his wife and children) to do something together on Saturdays and Sundays' again illustrate the importance of family togetherness (texts C10 and D3). The story of another man who was described as someone who 'took care of the family' and 'did not bother to settle down' suggests the value of considering one's family before oneself (text C10). The epithets describing victims as someone 'very close to my mother' or someone 'close to his family' (text D3) again underline filial piety as a valued trait. The Singaporean identity that emerges is one of a 'self' having strong ties with the group (in this case the family). The strong emotional ties involved extend beyond material things.

From the individual sketches of victims in the human-interest articles, a picture of ego-centredness slowly emerges. But this ego-centredness is protected by the support system of the group, in this case the relevant ethnic group and the nation as a whole. The Prime Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, expressed the feelings of the whole nation as follows in a speech (text K2): 'They are mourned by the *rest of us*, who sat with them in the coffeeshops, who met them in *our neighbourhoods*, who worked with them in *our offices*, who benefited from their warmth and generosity. They are mourned by the *nation*.' Ms Karen Koh, a sales co-ordinator, on seeing the general show of sympathy for the victims and their families, expressed the view that 'Singaporeans do care. We want to let the families know that they are not alone. We are behind them.' (Text L1.) Solidarity and unity are suggested by the plurality of the pronouns: *us*, *we*, *them*, *they*, *our* and *their*. The social domains of Singaporeans are clearly seen to be those of 'the coffee shop', 'the neighbourhood' and 'the office', besides the home.

² For an explanation of this and other abbreviations, see list of abbreviations at the end of this article.

The self-image of Singapore

The focus of the newspaper reports on the crash gradually shifts from the individual to the group, in this case the nation of Singapore as a whole. The interest is concentrated on the quality-assured services and support systems provided by the government of Singapore and by quasi-governmental agencies during the rescue operations. The classes of persons contributing to the Singapore identity as it emerges from the reports are the bureaucrats and the officials involved in the rescue operations.

At this level, people tend to consider the qualities of the state they live in as defining the 'self', setting their own state apart from other states as the 'other'. The prominent features relating to the concept of identity can be broadly defined as the particular attributes of one state seen in contrast to other states (the 'self' versus the 'other'), and those attributes as seen independently of other states (the 'self' alone).

An image that constantly recurs in the media coverage of the disaster is that of the superiority of the technology used or owned by Singapore. This is evident from the choice of different lexical items to describe the equipment and people involved in the rescue operations of the two different nations, Singapore and Indonesia. The words used to describe Indonesian rescue equipment, such as 'patrol boats' and 'rubber launches', are relatively general and informal when compared with the more specific and formal words used for the equipment of the Singaporean team, such as 'two *Super Pumas*, two *C130s* and one *Fokker 50*' and 'an additional *Fokker 50* aircraft' (texts A1 and C7). This difference in levels of specificity and formality suggests that the Singaporean team had more sophisticated and advanced equipment than the Indonesian one.

This positive image of the Singaporean team and its equipment is further strengthened by structural juxtaposition (text C5), whereby contrasting descriptions are given side by side. For example, after an Indonesian official admitted an earlier setback in the process of recovering the wreckage, Singapore is said to have sent three Republic of Singapore Navy vessels having 'the capability to scan for metals below the water'. Two paragraphs further down, the Singapore Armed Forces air attaché in Jakarta is described as announcing that 'We have the technology to detect it from the air as well'. The contrast between the lexical items used to describe the Indonesian army's effort and those qualifying the measures taken by Singapore suggests that the Indonesian commander may have lacked advanced equipment and was only relying on 'his men's effort' (text C5). The impression of Indonesia's lack of sophisticated equipment is strengthened in text G2, where the onomatopoeic words '*ker-thak, ker-thak, ker-thak*' are used to describe the sound made by the manual typewriters used by the Indonesians.

The differences between the descriptions of the Indonesian and the Singapore armed forces are also noteworthy. For example, the Singapore forces are formally designated as 'Republic of Singapore Navy' (text C5) and 'Republic of Singapore Air Force' (text B5), while the Indonesian forces are casually referred to as 'Indonesian *coastguard and navy*' (text C5). The formal, official tone of the references to the Singaporean defence forces is indicative of and calculated to instil in the reader a sense of superiority, discipline, and respect. The disaster has brought out the best in Singapore, which is outdoing Indonesia with its superior resources, technology, and equipment.

The texts examined also portray the Singapore authorities as figures averse to hypothesis and speculation. This aversion is suggested through modality and polarity. For example, the modality of the verb 'could' and the polarity of the negative adverb 'not' combine with the positive content of the verb 'confirm' in 'but *could not confirm* that it was from flight MI 185' (text A1) to create an impression that Singapore authorities never make unsubstantiated statements. Likewise, in 'nothing *could be ascertained* until the investigation into the crash was completed' (text I1) the modality of the verb 'could' and the negative aspect of the pronoun 'nothing' combine with the positive meaning of the verb 'ascertained' to emphasize the fact that Singapore authorities will not speak until a thorough investigation has been carried out. The use of the emphatic modal verb 'will' in 'we *will not* at this stage speculate at all' (text G1) underlines that no statements should be made until more details and more evidence become available. The phrase suggests the idea that Singapore officials want to gather facts rather than indulge in speculation, and that they are responsible and genuinely interested in finding out the truth about the crash.

By contrast, the Indonesian officials are associated with speculation. This is evident from the contrast between the descriptions of the conclusions reached by the Singaporean and by the Indonesian authorities respectively. Through the use of the affirmative, information is presented in the form of facts, whereby one element is linked to another without room being left for questioning the relationship. For example, in 'SilkAir said that the flight *was* on course' (text I1) the use of the affirmative verb 'was' stresses that it is a fact that the plane was on course and that this fact should be accepted without any reservation. Compared with this, the kinds of verb used in connection with the Indonesians denote mental processes such as 'believe' and 'sense', as in 'the chief-of-staff of the South Sumatra military command who is overseeing search operations, *believes* the pilot *sensed* that something was wrong' (text I1). The choice of these verbs makes the processes mentioned in this statement appear not only tentative but also speculative.

To enhance its positive image, Singapore is furthermore portrayed as a nation that is efficient and effective. This image of efficiency is strengthened

by the use of intensifiers and ordinals, such as 'very' and 'first' respectively in the passage in which the SAF is said to have 'responded *very* promptly' and it is stated that 'One of these maritime patrol aircraft was also the *first* to arrive above the crash site at 9.30 p.m. on Friday night' (text C7). The use of the active voice and of affirmative verbs in the description of the actions taken by the Singaporean government highlights the fact that effective procedures are being followed. For example, in 'The Republic of Singapore Air Force *sent* a Fokker 50' (text A1), the RSAF is presented as a responsible agent who is quick and efficient in helping Singaporeans in distress. The verbs used in the statements about future steps to be taken by the Singaporean authorities generally have a high modality, reflecting a high degree of definiteness, as for example in the phrases 'rescue operations *would* continue' and 'search operations *would* continue' (text C1).

Singapore's identity as a nation as it emerges from the reports may be summed up by the terms 'efficient', 'responsible' and 'effective'.

Unity in diversity

Singapore society is a multi-ethnic society. According to the 1990 census, 77.1% of the population was Chinese, 14.1% Malay, 2.1% Indian, and 2% belonged to other ethnic groups. It is a multifaceted society, embracing a diversity of social and cultural values, religions and beliefs. The Chinese majority are adherents of a variety of religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, and Taoism. The Indians are likewise followers of different religions, such as Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism. The Malays are united in a single religion, Islam, while the Eurasians are mainly Roman Catholic or Protestant. While on the one hand each ethnic group is unique in its own way, and can be seen as the 'self' vis-à-vis the 'others', on the other hand crossovers of group boundaries take place, whereby the different groups support each other, as in the case of the tragedy discussed in this paper. In the press articles examined for the purposes of this analysis, Singapore's multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature comes to the fore again and again. In recognition of this multi-religious aspect of the Singaporean national identity, prayers were read by representatives of the different faiths in the public condolence service held at the stadium (see text K7). This may represent a metaphorical emphasis of the fact that, even though the different ethnic communities are distinctive in their beliefs and rituals, they have become harmoniously welded together as a single 'self' and have assumed a single spirited identity, namely that of citizens of Singapore.

In the early days of independence, the various ethnic groups were often divided by racial conflicts. Now, however, on major occasions like those in

the wake of the plane crash of December 1997, they perform their religious rites together. This common experience of emotional events, in this case tragedy, tends to foster feelings of togetherness. All groups were said to 'pray', 'sing hymns', 'light incense and candles' and 'toss flowers' at the crash site at Palembang. The mourners were depicted as being surrounded by 'incense', 'joss sticks', 'candles', and 'rosaries'. There were colourful flowers, set off by the 'black and white' of the mourning dress and black ribbons, as testified by texts C1, C6 and K1. Despite their ethnic differences, the citizens of Singapore are able to cope with a traumatic experience in a meaningful way as a united community, for they have shared values and beliefs that cut across all boundaries between ethnic groups.

In addition to shared values, the main ethnic groups in Singapore share a common core of beliefs, such as belief in God, in fate, in a life in the hereafter, and in the power of prayer (text F1). The common belief in the existence of a god is evident from the constant references to God by representatives of all ethnic groups, as in the phrases 'every deed on this earth is monitored by God' (text F1), 'God gives us strength to face life's trials' (text F1), and 'to unite with God' (text F1). Belief in fate is evident from the use of adjectives like 'inevitable', of the nouns 'life' and 'death' in phrases like 'life and death are preordained' and 'death is a norm of life on earth', and of the nouns 'will' and 'fate' in, for example, 'the will of Allah', 'our fate has already been inscribed' and 'we cannot blame anyone [...] whatever happened is just fate'. Belief in an afterlife is testified by phrases containing the image of a journey as a metaphor for life, as 'a journey towards Allah' and 'a fragrant journey to paradise'. The afterlife itself is described as a 'resurrection', 'a stage in life', an 'incarnation', 'a turning point, not a full stop', 'painless afterlife of eternity', and a life in 'another realm' or in 'paradise' (text F1). For Christians, 'life begins in heaven'. According to Buddhist belief, a person may spend his or her next life as 'a wandering soul' in the 'world of hungry ghosts', or may find himself/herself and others like him/her 'reborn as animals', depending on their conduct in this world (text F1). The healing power of prayer has great significance for all ethnic groups. The verb 'pray' and its derivatives 'prayer(s)' and 'praying' appear time and again in the texts analysed. Examples include 'please pray for us' (text B15), 'they went out in two boats onto the river to pray, sing hymns' (text C1), 'my heart and prayers go to the family' (text F1), 'offer prayers to show we are thinking of them' (text F1), 'offer prayers for the peace of the souls of the victims' (text F1), 'help by praying and worshipping in the temple' (text F1), 'we come to pray for the others' (text K4), 'what touched me was the prayers at the end' (text K4), 'members of the family gathered to say afternoon prayers' (text K5), 'our religion tells us it is up to us who live to pray for her soul' (text K5), and 'Prayers for the dead' (text J1). The prayers read by the representatives of the various faiths poignantly convey a

sense of closure of a distressing period for a community steeped in individual customs and traditions yet united by shared values, beliefs and attitudes.

Conclusion

The analysis of newspaper articles on the crash of flight MI 185 in December 1997, focusing on linguistic features such as lexical choice and transitivity and modality of verbs, brought out three salient features of the Singaporean self-image. These are: (1) confidence in the superiority of the state's technological as well as human resources; (2) emphasis on accuracy and precision, and (3) faith in the state's praiseworthy efficiency and effectiveness in the search and rescue/recovery operation. Singapore as the 'self' was portrayed in positive terms in *The Straits Times*. The consistent use of affirmative verbs reinforced this positive image and made it into an established fact, embraced and shared with little reservation but with a great deal of pride by all Singaporeans.

Another point to be made about Singapore's self-image relates to the community's multi-ethnic character. Though a multi-ethnic society, the different ethnic groups that make up this society are not homogeneous but are marked by internal differences as well. The fact of these differences should be underscored, as it shows that the Singaporean identity is in fact a multifaceted phenomenon at every level. Even so, because these different ethnic groups all share in the sense of Singaporeanness, they do have certain values and beliefs in common, such as the values of filial piety, respect for and tolerance of others and the importance of family ties, and the belief in fate, in God, in an afterlife and in the power of prayer. Particular choices of words and combinations of words and references to specific classification schemes testify to the existence of these common notions underpinning a sense of general solidarity and mutual trust.

In conclusion it can be said that the Singaporean identity emerged especially distinctly in the aftermath of the MI 185 crash. In the newspaper reports on this, Singapore is portrayed as a country that is powerful, superior, effective, efficient and united. These are qualities of special importance when a nation is trying to come to terms with a great loss and its leaders have to reassure its citizens that they are in control of the situation. The image that emerges from all these articles may be a fractured one, as each of the different ethnic groups comprising the population has its own individual character. Nevertheless, because these groups also have shared beliefs and values, there is a sense of mutual trust and solidarity as well. In short, the analysis shows that the Singaporean identity is dynamically affected and at the same time re-created by the prevalent notions of the 'self' and the 'other'.

ABBREVIATIONS USED

MRT	Mass Rapid Transit
NTU	Nanyang Technological University
RGS	Raffles Girls' School
RSAF	Republic of Singapore Air Force
SAF	Singapore Armed Forces
SIA	Singapore Airlines

REFERENCES

- Census, 1990, *Singapore Census of Population 1990; Statistical Release 1, Demographic Characteristics*. Singapore: SNP.
- Dissanayake, Wimal, 1995, 'The "Triple Knot" and post-Colonial Creative Writing in English', in: Edwin Thumboo and Thiru Kandiah (eds), *The Writer as Historical Witness; Studies in Commonwealth Literature*, pp. 93-105. Singapore: Singapore University Press.
- Fairclough, Norman, 1989, *Language and Power*. London: Longman.
- Fowler, Roger, 1981, *Literature as Social Discourse; The Practice of Linguistic Criticism*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational.
- Hall, Stuart, 1990, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', in: Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity; Community, Culture, Difference*, pp. 222-37. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Halliday, M.A.K., 1994, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold. [Second Edition.]
- Weeks, Jeffery, 1990, 'The Values of Difference', in: Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity; Community, Culture, Difference*, pp. 88-100. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Appendix

Titles of articles from *The Straits Times* on the crash

<i>Text number</i>	<i>Title of article</i>	<i>Date</i>
A1	104 feared dead in SilkAir jet crash in Indonesia	20 December 1997
A2	Very puzzling says minister	20 December 1997
A3	Tension-filled hours, then bad news	20 December 1997
B1	Victims' bodies are trapped inside wreckage	21 December 1997
B2	24 hours later, mystery over crash remains	21 December 1997
B3	PM sends deepest sympathies	21 December 1997
B4	Life will be reaffirmed in the fellowship of shared grief	21 December 1997
B5	S'pore, Indonesia to spare no effort	21 December 1997
B6	Main body of plane found lodged in river bed	21 December 1997
B7	Fairfield Methodist devastated by loss of another 3 teachers	21 December 1997
B8	Ex-model Bonny on way to US to spend Christmas	21 December 1997
B9	Man's joy over second grandson turns to tears	21 December 1997
B10	Businessman had survived 1991 Singapore Airlines hijack	21 December 1997
B11	He pleaded to be on doomed flight	21 December 1997
B12	US architect who cancelled booking vowed to live more fully	21 December 1997
B13	Tears flow and tempers flare as relatives, friends keep a long vigil	21 December 1997
B14	Son-in-law failed to show up for dinner on Friday	21 December 1997
B15	He switched to SilkAir flight only weeks ago	21 December 1997
C1	Hopes for survivors fade	22 December 1997
C2	SilkAir girl was familiar face to MRT commuters	22 December 1997
C3	Suharto conveys condolences	22 December 1997
C4	Sad day for Singaporeans says Tony Tan	22 December 1997
C5	Search and rescue efforts move to mouth of River Musi	22 December 1997
C6	S'poreans at the river of no hope ...	22 December 1997
C7	SAF has responded very promptly says Dr Tan	22 December 1997
C8	Too early to talk about compensation	22 December 1997
C9	High flier	22 December 1997
C10	Five electrical engineers on fateful flight	22 December 1997
C11	She was Hall Queen in first year at NTU	22 December 1997
C12	A photo to remember	22 December 1997
C13	Five in family were on board flight	22 December 1997
C14	Readers call to express grief, sympathy and encouragement	22 December 1997
C15	A clean bill of health for plane only 10 days before	22 December 1997

D1	Searchers homing in on black box	23 December 1997
D2	No evidence of mechanical failure	23 December 1997
D3	Air stewardess had always wanted to fly; Kiwi officer joined SilkAir last year; Manager had bad feeling and bought travel insurance; Family visited granny every year; Indonesian girl, 12, was very eager to start at RGS	23 December 1997
D4	Mah meets relatives, thanks Indonesians	23 December 1997
E1	Dhana apologises to families of crash victims	24 December 1997
E2	We'll try our best to improve, Dhanabalan assures relatives	24 December 1997
E3	What our readers say	24 December 1997
E4	Passport of pilot found as land search starts	24 December 1997
F1	Faith in the face of tragedy	25 December 1997
F2	Three airplane seats found 2 km from crash site	25 December 1997
F3	PM's Christmas message	25 December 1997
G1	S'poreans to mourn crash victims on Tuesday	27 December 1997
G2	Every item tells a story	27 December 1997
G3	Grieving families abandon hope and place obituaries	27 December 1997
G4	Some victims' personal items found from river are missing say relatives	27 December 1997
G5	Forensic team facing a difficult task	27 December 1997
H1	One black box of SilkAir jet found	28 December 1997
H2	Black box may not solve entire mystery	28 December 1997
I1	Several theories on what caused the crash	29 December 1997
J1	Prayers for the dead	30 December 1997
J2	Service today is one way 'for S'poreans to share grief'	30 December 1997
K1	The nation mourns	31 December 1997
K2	Let us live tomorrow bravely	31 December 1997
K3	Hearing his daughter's name, he wept	31 December 1997
K4	I needed to know others cared too	31 December 1997
K5	What a gesture of sympathy	31 December 1997
K6	Touched by the tragedy	31 December 1997
K7	I share your grief	31 December 1997
L1	Tony Tan to visit crash site today	1 January 1998
L2	Dredging of Musi River begins today	1 January 1998
L3	Each and every one a precious asset	1 January 1998
L4	Mass burial site for victims may be decided this week	1 January 1998
M1	3 truckloads of debris recovered	2 January 1998
M2	Large pieces of wreckage unlikely, says official	2 January 1998
N1	No gunpowder on body parts	5 January 1998
O1	Three passengers identified from ring, hair and fingerprint	6 January 1998
P1	Mass burial for victims on Jan 19 in Palembang	7 January 1998
Q1	SilkAir jet lost part of its tail before crashing	10 January 1998
R1	Search and recovery operations wound up	15 January 1998
R2	SilkAir crash: Earth-in-urn request to be met	15 January 1998