



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**COMPARISON OF MEDIA AND SOURCE FRAMING IN SELECTED
CHINESE NEWSPAPER STORIES ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION
ISSUES IN MALAYSIA**

**CHANG PENG KEE
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**COMPARISON OF MEDIA AND SOURCE FRAMING IN SELECTED
CHINESE NEWSPAPER STORIES ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION ISSUES
IN MALAYSIA**

By

CHANG PENG KEE

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

December 2009



DEDICATION

to

my beloved late mother Mdm. Lim Gek Hiang (demised 10 October 2006),

my dearest wife Tan Joon Ling

and our three lovely children, who are the products of this educational issue of teaching and learning of mathematics and science subjects in English and Mandarin for all Chinese primary schools in Malaysia:

Yun Yao (1st batch: 2003-2008)

Yun Xun (2nd batch: 2004-2009)

Zi Yi (3rd batch: 2005-2010)



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**COMPARISON OF MEDIA AND SOURCE FRAMING IN SELECTED
CHINESE NEWSPAPER STORIES ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION ISSUES
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CHANG PENG KEE

December 2009

Chairperson: Professor Musa Abu Hassan, PhD

Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication

Framing study is getting more popular among the communication scholars. Many studies have been conducted to examine the frame building from the outlook of media framing rather than source framing. The role of news sources as an external factor in the frame-building process has thus far very much been neglected. The scrutiny of news sources – government, ruling political parties, education movement and interest groups, opposing political parties, general public, and editorial – for their predominant generic frames is believed to have made significant contribution to the school of framing study. This empirical research aims at comparing the framing of news stories by both newspapers and news sources. In addition, these two communication elements are to ascertain their relationships with news slants. Content analysis will be employed to meet the above research objectives. Five Chinese daily newspapers that are available at the research location are selected and their coverage on the educational issue of teaching and learning of mathematics and



science subjects in two languages is chosen as it is thought to be relevant to the Malaysian Chinese community. Two significant events in this bilingual educational issue have been identified, i.e. the first announcement of using English as the medium of instruction for these two subjects by the then Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 2002 and the announcement of retaining the examination format for 2008 Primary School Achievement Test by the then Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in 2007. The sampling procedure applies a three-week period after the abovementioned announcements by the country premiers. All paragraphs pertaining to the issue during the study periods are taken into scrutiny. A total of 2,374 units of analysis have been measured for the visibility of five predetermined generic frames. Source frames have been ascertained to emerge by means of favourable frame prominently portrayed by various news sources, who act as frame sponsors in building the news stories. The findings of this research profoundly claim that source frames do exist and they have more impact than media frames. Sources of information initiate and promote a certain frame in the news while media workers depend on the situation to quote the sources with both objective and subjective judgements for newsworthiness. In other words, the existence of frames in any news story is indeed crafted by sources while the media workers just process and get them printed on paper. In addition, the research results reveal that news sources are found to coalesce by way of slanting their news directions. This pattern of news slants is maintained throughout different periods.

Abstrak tesis yang telah dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERBANDINGAN PEMBINGKAIAN MEDIA DAN SUMBER DALAM
BERITA SURATKHABAR CINA TERPILIH MENGENAI ISU-ISU
PENDIDIKAN DWIBAHASA DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Kajian pmbingkaian semakin mendapat perhatian sarjana komunikasi. Banyak penyelidikan telah dilaksanakan untuk meneliti pembinaan bingkai dari aspek pmbingkaian media lebih daripada pmbingkaian sumber. Peranan sumber berita sebagai salah satu faktor luaran dalam proses pembinaan bingkai didapati kurang diberi perhatian. Penelitian sumber berita – kerajaan, parti pemerintah, gerakan pendidik dan kumpulan berminat, parti pembangkang, rakyat umum, dan pihak pengarang – dengan pengesanan bingkai-bingkai umum yang mereka kuasai dipercayai telah memberi sumbangan yang signifikan kepada pengetahuan kajian pmbingkaian. Kajian bersifat empirikal ini bertujuan untuk membanding pmbingkaian berita oleh kedua-dua suratkhobar dan sumber berita. Selain itu, elemen-elemen komunikasi tersebut turut diambil untuk mengenalpasti hubungan mereka dengan kecenderungan berita. Kaedah analisis kandungan digunakan demi menepati objektif kajian. Lima akhbar harian bahasa Cina yang didapati di kawasan

kajian dengan membuat liputan isu pengajaran dan pembelajaran sains dan matematik dalam dwibahasa telah dipilih kerana kerelevanannya dengan masyarakat Cina Malaysia. Dalam pada itu, dua peristiwa yang signifikan telah dikenalpasti iaitu pengumuman kali pertama mengenai penggunaan Bahasa Inggeris untuk mengajar kedua-dua subjek tersebut oleh mantan Perdana Menteri Mahathir Mohamad pada 2002 dan pengumuman mengekalkan format peperiksaan untuk Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah 2008 oleh mantan Perdana Menteri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi pada 2007. Persampelan mengambil jangka masa tiga minggu selepas kedua-dua pengumuman yang dibuat oleh kedua-dua mantan Perdana Menteri. Setiap perenggan yang berkaitan dengan isu ini dalam jangka masa yang ditetapkan telah diambilkira untuk penelitian selanjutnya. Terdapat sejumlah 2,374 unit analisis dikenalpasti untuk pengukuran penonjolan lima bingkai umum yang ditetapkan terlebih awal. Bingkai sumber telah diwujudkan dengan cara menonjolkan bingkai yang masing-masing memihak kepada sumber berita tertentu. Dalam pada itu, sumber berita merupakan penaja bingkai dalam proses pembinaan bingkai berita yang akan mendatangkan faedah kepada mereka. Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa bingkai sumber memang wujud dan memberi kesan yang lebih besar daripada bingkai media. Sumber berita memulakan bingkai tertentu serta mempromosinya, manakala pekerja media bergantung kepada situasi untuk memetik dari sumber dengan mengguna kedua-dua penilaian objektif dan subjektif agar dapat menentukan nilai-nilai berita. Dengan kata lain, kemunculan bingkai-bingkai dalam mana-mana berita adalah satu hasil seni sumber berita dan pekerja media hanya memproses dan menjadikan berita dicetak dalam akhbar. Selain itu, sumber didapati bercantum dan berkelompok dengan cara

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 17 December 2009 to conduct the final examination of Chang Peng Kee on his thesis entitled "Comparison of Media and Source Framing in Selected Chinese Newspaper Stories on Bilingual Education Issues in Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

CHANG PENG KEE

Date: 10 February 2010

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BN	-	Barisan Nasional
DAP	-	Democratic Action Party
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
ISA	-	Internal Security Act
LDP	-	Liberal Democratic Party-Sabah
MCA	-	Malaysian Chinese Association
MIC	-	Malaysian Indian Congress
NGO	-	Non-governmental organisation
PAS	-	Parti Islam Se Malaysia
PGRM	-	Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia
PKR	-	Parti Keadilan Rakyat
POL	-	Pupils' Own Language
PPP	-	People's Progressive Party
PPSMI	-	<i>Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam bahasa Inggeris</i> (Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English language)
PTA	-	Parents and Teachers' Association
S46	-	Parti Semangat 46
SAPP	-	Sabah Progressive Party
SJK(C)	-	<i>Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)</i> (Chinese National-type School)
SJK(T)	-	<i>Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)</i> (Tamil National-type School)



SK	-	<i>Sekolah Kebangsaan</i> (National School)
SUPP	-	Sarawak United People's Party
UCSCAM	-	United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (Dong Zong)
UCSTAM	-	United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia (Jiao Zong)
UMNO	-	United Malay National Organisation
UPSR	-	<i>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah</i> (Primary School Achievement Test)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter serves to outline the problem of the present study on identifying the media frames and the source frames from the frame-building process of news coverage on a contemporary bilingual educational issue happened in Malaysia. It also sets forth the context, scope and objectives which are to be attained by the researcher.

Background of the problem

Ever since the mass media were invented more than a century ago, communication scholars have been constantly striving for the understanding of media effects. In the early stage of the development of mass communication theory in the late nineteenth-century, there were two contradictory views on the roles played by media. One was the optimistic view of elevating the quality of human life while the other was the pessimistic view of looking at media as the destroyer of social orders. The Mass Society Theory with its philosophy of powerful effects emerged then to explain the impacts and the meanings of media intrusion to the mass society and the mass culture. The proponents of this media theory believed in the persuasive effects of media in promoting homogeneity in society. However, there were scholars who claimed that the media would be deemed as an extremely effective tool, either for good or for bad, in dictating the behaviours of the so-called passive audience.



The powerful impact of media was questioned by many social scientists in the communication schools. Paul Lazarsfeld as cited in Baran & Davis (2003) propagated the scientific perspective on mass communication with the assertion of conducting thoroughly designed research to ascertain the media influence with the measurement of its magnitude. The scientific perspective eventually played an important part in the development of the mass communication theory. The studies conducted since the 1950s were mostly following this scientific approach. Consequently, the limited effects paradigm was the outcome of this domain following the discovery of an active audience in media consumption. Later in the 1970s, the Agenda Setting Theory was founded to explain the media pervasiveness rather than the media persuasiveness.

From the time when McCombs & Shaw (1972) originated the Agenda Setting Theory with their 1968 Chapel Hill study on the United States presidential election, the limited media effects paradigm has gained popularity in the communication schools. As discovered by Weaver (2007), the Framing Theory became more popular since 1990s. The growth of the framing studies has since escalated more than two folds as compared to a decade ago. Currently, framing is believed to be the most universally applied research approach in the field of communication science (Bryant & Miron, 2004).

Framing in communication, according to Reese (2001, p. 7), “refers to the way events and issues are organised and made sense of, especially by media, media



professionals, and their audiences.” According to Van Gorp (2007), the origins of the framing concept lie in the fields of anthropology and cognitive psychology before being adopted by other disciplines. With regard to its applicability to our daily life, sociologist Erving Goffman is often credited with introducing the framing approach in social and economic studies for decision-making (see Carragee & Roefs, 2004; Endres, 2004; Scheff, 2005; Simon & Xenos, 2000). In his classical work on framing, Goffman (1974) elaborates on how new information could be successfully processed by people in applying human interpretive schemata to organise information and interpret it meaningfully.

Frames, be they published on media or submerged in human mind, are thus the cognitive shortcuts that people employ to understand the complex world. Frames help journalists to describe and explain the happenings of an event and thereon audience interprets them in order to understand their remotest world. They help people to organise the multifaceted occurrences into simple, consistent, and understandable categories. In other words, framing involves both constructing the interpretive frames and then representing them to others in mediated communication processes. Framing Theory in this respect is regarded as having potentially strong media effects (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Framing studies in communication are often seen as lacking the clarity of terminology and thereby requiring the comprehensive nature of the manifestation as suggested by D’Angelo (2002) and Scheufele (1999, 2000). This vagueness in reifying the concept could be the reason why framing study was more popular than agenda setting and priming in the past decade (Weaver, 2007).



According to Scheufele (2000), McCombs has earlier attempted to apply the Framing Theory in order to expand and develop the existing Agenda Setting Theory. In a paper presented at Chicago in August 1997, McCombs as quoted by Scheufele (2000, pp. 297-298) further defines that framing is “the selection of a restricted number of thematically related attributes for inclusion on the media agenda when a particular object is discussed.” His argument is that framing together with priming should be adopted into the family of agenda-setting paradigm and be regarded as the second-level agenda setting.

Although there are efforts to absorb these two approaches under a broad concept of agenda setting, Scheufele (2000) believes that the integration of agenda setting, priming, and framing into a single model is inappropriate. The attempts to combine them as one entity have largely ignored the differences among the theoretical premises of these three models. Despite some similarities, framing is indeed a distinctive by-product of the agenda-setting model. Scheufele (2000, p. 309) asserts that agenda setting and priming are based “on the notion of attitude accessibility,” while framing assumes that “subtle changes in the wording of the description of a situation might affect how audience members interpret this situation.”

As guest editors of the special edition of *Journal of Communication* that reified framing, agenda setting, and priming, Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007) say that the emergence of these three models signifies a paradigm shift in political-communication research. Agenda setting emphasises the transfer of news salience

