UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

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

CHANG PENG KEE
FBMK 2009 22
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 IN MALAYSIA

By

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 SURATKHBAR CINA TERPILIH MENGENAI ISU-ISU PENDIDIKAN DWIBAHASA DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

CHANG PENG KEE

Disember 2009

Pengerusi: Profesor Musa Abu Hassan, PhD

Fakulti: Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

mengalihkan arah tuju berita masing-masing. Pola kecenderungan berita tersebut kekal dalam jangka masa yang berbeza.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to all my lecturers in UPM, friends and relatives who made my doctoral study possible.

In particular, I wish to express my utmost gratitude to all members of the supervisory committee, namely Professor Dr. Musa Abu Hassan (chairperson), Associate Professor Dr. Ezhar Tamam, Professor Dato’ Sri Dr. Syed Arabi Idid (my mentor since I was an undergraduate student in UKM), and Dr. Lim Choon Bee. Without them, it is impossible for me to have completed this research project.

I would also like to record my sincere appreciation to all members of the examination committee, namely Dr. Zulhamri Abdullah (chairperson), Professor Dr. Md Salleh Hassan, Associate Professor Dr. Abdul Mua’ti @ Zamri Ahmad, and Professor Dr. Lars Willnat. I owe them my thanks for having allocated their very precious time and efforts to examine my scripts.

I am very grateful to have my Chung Ling High School senior Dr. Ho Nee Yong, who has been patiently proofread all my drafts from the very beginning. Likewise, thanks to my UKM colleague Dr. Fauziah Ahmad for proofreading my final writing.

To my journalist friends, I am very thankful for their kindness in allowing me and my coders to have access to their libraries. They are my Chung Ling High School senior Mr. Cheng Khee Chien, General Manager (Cultural Industrial Promotions) of
Nanyang Siang Pau Sdn Bhd; Mr. Puah You Lai (Chief Editor) and Ms. Ho Chai Yoke (Head of Business Section) of Oriental Daily Sdn Bhd; Mr. Chen Yoke Lim, Deputy Chief Editor of Sin Chew Media Corporation Bhd; and Mr. Teoh Yang Khoon, Editor-in-Chief of The China Press Bhd.

Not forgetting my three coders, Ms. Leong Shwu Fen, Ms. Lim Yoke Sim, and Ms. Luay Ciek Lek. I appreciate their hard work for collecting the data for days and nights uncomplainingly.

Last but not least, I must acknowledge the acceptance and encouragement from my family, including my mother-in-law Mdm. Ow Toong Lan. Their understandings are indeed a great booster for me to endure this hard-hitting journey. This is why my determination remains.

A big thank you to all!
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.

Members of the Examination Committee were as follows:

**Zulhamri Abdullah, PhD**
Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

**Md Salleh Hassan, PhD**
Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

**Abdul Mua’ti @ Zamri Ahmad, PhD**
Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

**Lars Willnat, PhD**
Professor
School of Journalism
Indiana University
Bloomington
United States
(External Examiner)

**BUJANG BIN KIMHUAT, PhD**
Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 12 February 2010
This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

**Musa Abu Hassan, PhD**
Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairperson)

**Ezhar Tamam, PhD**
Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

**Syed Arabi Idid, PhD**
Professor and Rector
Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia
(Member)

**Lim Choon Bee, PhD**
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

________________________________

HASANAH MOHD GHAZALI, PhD
Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 17 March 2010
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
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPROVAL</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xviii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>xix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

### I INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the problem  
2. Statement of the research problem  
3. Research questions  
4. Objectives of the study  
5. Significance of the study  
6. Scope of the study  
7. Chapter summary  

### II LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Conceptualisation of news  
2. Agenda-setting school  
3. Framing study  
   - Media frames  
   - Source frames  
   - News slants  
4. Hypotheses of the study  
5. Chapter summary  

### III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. Research design and framework  
2. Content analysis  
   - Sampling procedures  
   - Coding for content analysis  
   - Measurement of media frames  
   - Measurement of source frames  
   - Measurement of news slants  
3. Aptitude of coders and intercoder reliability  
4. Pilot study  
5. Data analysis  
6. Chapter summary
IV  RESEARCH FINDINGS
   Sources of news items 86
   Characteristics of the units of analysis 91
   Analysis of frames 98
      Test of differences in visibility of frames 100
         among daily newspapers
      Test of differences in visibility of frames 105
         among daily newspapers in two study periods
      Test of differences in visibility of frames 116
         among news sources
      Test of differences in visibility of frames 122
         among news sources in two study periods
   Establishment of source frames 135
   Analysis of news slants 136
      Test of associations between news slants 137
         and daily newspapers
      Test of associations between news slants 139
         and daily newspapers in two study periods
      Test of associations between news slants 143
         and news sources
      Test of associations between news slants 145
         and news sources in two study periods
   Coalition of news sources due to news slants 148
   Chapter summary 151

V  SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION 155
   Summary of the study 155
      Research problem 156
      Research objectives 156
      Research method 157
      Summary of research findings 158
   Discussion and conclusion 162
   Implications of the study 172
   Recommendations for future study 176
   Chapter summary 178

REFERENCES 180

APPENDICES
   A  Coding book 191
   B  Sampling frame 198
   C  Coding sheet 199

BIODATA OF STUDENT 201
**LIST OF TABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Categorisation of News Sources</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Generic Frames with Attribute Statements</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Descriptions of News Slants</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Circulations of Chinese Daily Newspapers under Study</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Explanation of High Score on Respective Frames</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Results of Intercoder Reliability</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>News Articles According to Date</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>News Articles According to Daily Newspaper</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>News Articles According to Section</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Main Source of News Before Consolidation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Main Source of News After Consolidation</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Number of News Sources in a News Article</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Paragraphs Identified in News Articles (Before Deletion for No Frame)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Units of Analysis (Gross and Nett)</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Cross-Tabulation of Daily Newspapers and News Sources</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Study Periods with News Sources for Sin Chew Daily</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Study Periods with News Sources for Nanyang Siang Pau</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Study Periods with News Sources for China Press</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Study Periods with News Sources for Guang Ming Daily</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ranking of News Sources by Daily Newspapers</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The Appearance of Attributes in Unit of Analysis</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mean Scores of the Visibility of Five Generic Frames</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
46 Post Hoc Test for Human Interest Frame by Sources (2002) 126
47 Post Hoc Test for Conflict Frame by Sources (2002) 127
48 Post Hoc Test for Morality Frame by Sources (2002) 127
49 Mean Scores of Visibility of Frames by Sources (2007) 128
50 ANOVA Table for Establishing Differences by Sources (2007) 129
51 Post Hoc Test for Responsibility Frame by Sources (2007) 130
52 Post Hoc Test for Human Interest Frame by Sources (2007) 131
53 Post Hoc Test for Conflict Frame by Sources (2007) 132
54 Post Hoc Test for Economic Frame by Sources (2007) 133
55 Frequencies of News Directions by Study Period 137
56 Cross-Tabulation of Dailies and News Directions (Whole Sample) 139
57 Cross-Tabulation of Dailies and News Directions (2002) 140
58 Cross-Tabulation of Dailies and News Directions (2007) 141
59 Cross-Tabulation of Sources and News Directions (Whole Sample) 144
60 Cross-Tabulation of Sources and News Directions (2002) 146
61 Cross-Tabulation of Sources and News Directions (2007) 147
62 Brief Description of Four Functions of Frames 174
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Integrated Process of Framing (de Vreese, 2005)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>An Overview of Framing Research (Scheufele, 2000)</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A Model of the News Framing Process (D’Angelo, 2002)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Model of News Production Process by Ericson et al. (1987)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Research Framework</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Establishing the Sources’ Predominant Frames</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Establishment of Sources’ Predominant Frames</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coalition of News Sources on the Slanting of News Directions</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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  - Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam bahasa Inggeris
(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)  - Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)
(Chinese National-type School)
SJK(T)  - Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Tamil)
(Tamil National-type School)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>Sekolah Kebangsaan (National School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPP</td>
<td>Sarawak United People’s Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCSCAM</td>
<td>United Chinese School Committees’ Association of Malaysia (Dong Zong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCSTAM</td>
<td>United Chinese School Teachers’ Association of Malaysia (Jiao Zong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMNO</td>
<td>United Malay National Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPSR</td>
<td>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Achievement Test)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 nineteen-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