



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**REPRESENTATION OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN MALAYSIAN
MAINSTREAM ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS**

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FBMK 2011 55

**REPRESENTATION OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN MALAYSIAN
MAINSTREAM ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS**

By

SIM CHEW SIONG

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

December 2011

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

**REPRESENTATION OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN MALAYSIAN
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December 2011

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Foreign workers in Malaysia are generally treated negatively by the Malaysian media. They are being represented as threats to public order by way of linking them to criminal activities in news headlines. This negative representation results in stereotyping, which in turn leads to prejudice. Manifestations of this prejudice against foreign workers include being perceived negatively by the public, and worse, being physically abused and/or mistreated by their employers—despite their positive contributions to the Malaysian economy, and accounting for, according to former Inspector-General of Police Musa Hassan, only two per cent of the national crime rate in 2006. Thus, this study aims, in some measure, to negate the power of the media to shape public opinion on the issue of foreign workers, by way of revealing the techniques used by media producers to achieve the desired reading of their media texts.

This study utilises Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which states that texts function ideologically and politically in relation to their context. This study will analyse the techniques of grammar and vocabulary usage employed in news reports of foreign workers, to discover the ways in which Malaysian mainstream English newspapers are similar or dissimilar in their general stance on foreign workers. Sample news articles from the three most circulated English newspapers in Malaysia, namely the *New Straits Times* (including the *Sunday Times*), *The Star* (including the *Sunday Star*) and *TheSun*, from 2003 to 2010 will be analysed. In particular, sentence structures and ideologically charged words—insofar as they make readers perceive foreign workers in the manner desired by media producers—will be examined in this study.

This study finds that through the passivation of sentence structure, representation of actors or doers, as well as the use of embedded ideologically charged words, and an *us versus them* binary opposition, the *New Strait Times* and *The Star* consistently attempt to represent foreign workers (as a whole) as a threat to public security, local employment, and public health by way of representing foreign workers as criminals, employment opportunists and as disease carriers. At the same time, these two newspapers also highlight the efficiency of the ruling authorities in dealing with the 'threat': the police are described as being effective in their handling of foreign workers who enter the country illegally, while the Home Ministry is represented as humane in their repeated acts of leniency towards them. In other words, the study finds that these two newspapers share the same ideological stance of building a positive image of authority figures *at the expense* of foreign workers.

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

**PEMAPARAN PEKERJA ASING DI SURATKHBAR ARUS PERDANA
BERBAHASA INGGERIS MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Disember 2011

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Pekerja asing di Malaysia secara amnya dilayan secara negatif oleh media Malaysia. Mereka dipaparkan sebagai ancaman keselamatan awam dalam tajuk utama berita dengan cara dihubungkan dengan aktiviti jenayah. Pemaparan negatif ini mengakibatkan stereotaip terhadap pekerja asing yang kemudiannya menjurus kepada prejudis. Manifestasi prejudis ini, pekerja asing dilayan buruk secara fizikal dan didera oleh majikan. Orang awam pula bertanggapan negatif terhadap mereka, biarpun golongan ini menyumbang kepada ekonomi Malaysia. Lebih-lebih lagi pada tahun 2006, Ketua Polis Negara ketika itu, Musa Hassan, mengatakan bahawa angka jenayah yang dilakukan oleh pekerja asing hanyalah dua peratus. Oleh yang sedemikian, kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengurangkan kuasa pengaruh media dalam membentuk pendapat umum berkenaan isu pekerja asing dengan cara mendedahkan teknik-teknik wacana yang digunakan oleh pengeluar media untuk membuat orang awam membaca teks media

sebagaimana yang dikehendaki pengeluar media.

Kajian ini menggunakan teori Analisis Wacana Kritis (CDA) Norman Fairclough yang menyatakan teks berfungsi secara ideologi serta politik mengikut konteksnya. Teori ini menggunakan teknik-teknik tata bahasa dan perbendaharaan kata sepertimana yang dicadang teori untuk cuba mempelajari bagaimana suratkhobar arus perdana berbahasa Inggeris di Malaysia serupa atau berbeza dalam pendirian am mereka terhadap pekerja asing menerusi laporan berita pekerja asing. Sampel petikan berita dari tiga suratkhobar berbahasa Inggeris dengan langganan harian terbesar di Malaysia yakni, *New Straits Times* (termasuk edisi Ahadnya: *Sunday Times*), *The Star* (termasuk edisi Ahadnya: *Sunday Star*) dan *TheSun* dari tahun 2003 ke 2010 akan dianalisa. Sampel artikel berita akan dipecahkan ke dalam ayat untuk cuba mempelajari bagaimana struktur ayat dan perkataan berideologi digunakan untuk menyimpang pengguna media untuk melihat-nilai pekerja asing sepertimana yang dihendaki oleh pengeluar media.

Kajian ini mendapati menerusi pembentukan ayat pasif, pemaparan aktor atau pelaku, penggunaan perkataan berideologi dan teknik oposisi binary (binary opposition) *kita melawan mereka*, *New Straits Times* and *The Star* secara konsisten cuba menggambarkan pekerja asing (secara keseluruhan) sebagai ancaman terhadap keselamatan awam, peluang pekerjaan tempatan dan kesihatan awam dengan cara melabelkan mereka sebagai penjenayah, oportunist pekerjaan dan pembawa penyakit berjangkit. Pada masa yang sama, kedua-dua suratkhobar menyerlahkan keberkesanan dan efisiensi kerajaan pemerintah dalam menangani “ancaman” tersebut: Pihak polis dipaparkan sebagai efektif dalam menangani isu-isu pekerja asing yang masuk ke

Malaysia secara haram sementara Kementerian Dalam Negeri dipaparkan sebagai berperikemanusiaan dengan berulang kali berlembut dengan pekerja asing yang masuk ke Negara ini secara haram. Dalam kata lain, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa kedua-dua suratkhbar ini berkongsi pendirian ideologi dalam membina imej positif pihak berkuasa atau kerajaan pemerintah dengan pekerja asing menjadi *mangsa*.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my thesis supervisory committee chairperson Associate Professor Dr. Washima Che Dan and members Associate Professor Dr. Mardziah Hayati Abdullah and Associate Professor Dr. Noritah Omar for their assistance, guidance, advice and suggestions throughout the duration this study.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who have always encouraged and supported me. Credit is also going out to everyone who had either directly or indirectly contributed to the completion of this thesis.



Approval

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

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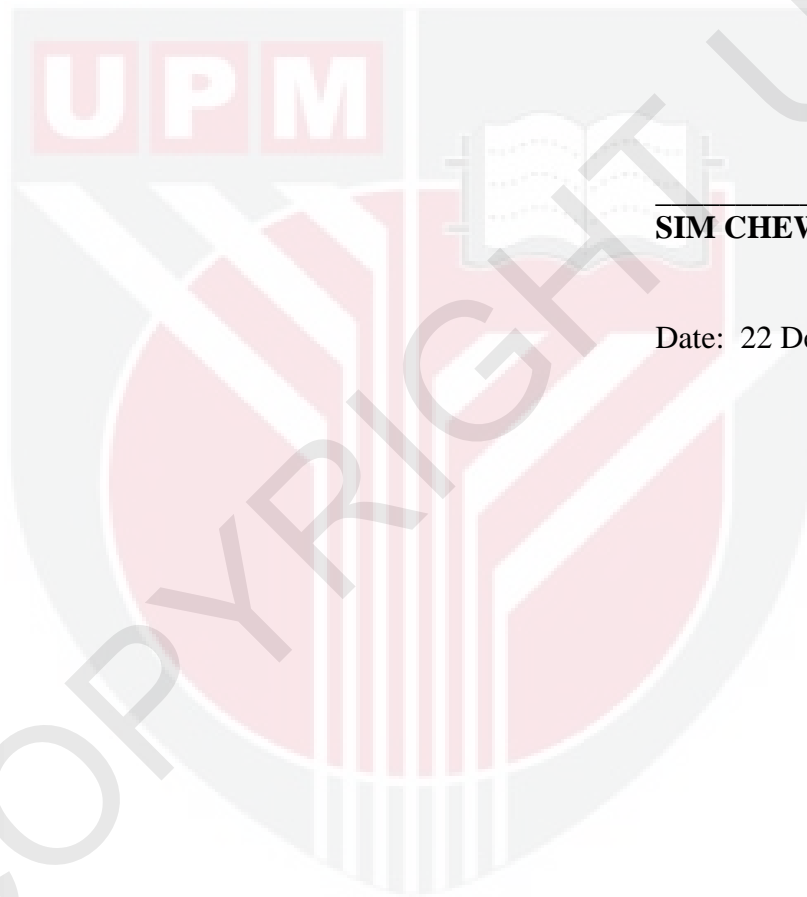
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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously, and is not concurrently, submitted for any other degree at Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.



SIM CHEW SIONG

Date: 22 December 2011

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