INVESTIGATING NEWS FRAMING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MEDIA COVERAGE ON CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION ISSUES IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract
This study examines how the Malay and Chinese language newspapers in Malaysia portray the issue of Teaching and Learning Science and Mathematics in English. Comparison was made between the two different language newspapers particularly in terms of framing by analyzing their coverage on two major incidents related to the issue – rally against the policy of Teaching and Learning Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI), and the announcement of the Upholding the Malay Language, Strengthening Command of English policy (MBMMBI). This study uses the five generic frames developed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) as the basis of comparison. The five frames are responsibility, conflict, moral, economic consequences and human interest frame. The results suggest a congruency in the two different language newspapers reporting, which mainly emphasize the 'conflict' nature of the issue. However, a major difference in frame choice observed between the Malay and Chinese language newspapers in their reports of MBMMBI. While the prior significantly reduced the intensity of conflict frame in its reports on MBMMBI as compared to PPSMI, the latter maintain the same level of intensity for both the events.

Keywords: *English language education, mother tongue education, media framing, globalization.*

MENYIASAT FRAMING BERITA: KAJIAN PERBANDINGAN LIPUTAN MEDIA ISU - ISU PENDIDIKAN KONTEMPORARI DI MALAYSIA

Abstrak

Kajian ini mengkaji bagaimana akhbar bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Cina di Malaysia menggambarkan isu Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Matematik dan Sains dalam bahasa Inggeris. Perbandingan dibuat antara akhbar dalam kedua-dua bahasa tersebut, terutamanya dari segi pembingkaian dengan menganalisis liputan masing-masing bagi dua insiden utama yang berkaitan dengan isu tersebut iaitu perhimpunan menentang dasar Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris (PPSMI) dan pengumuman Memartabatkan Bahasa Melayu, Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris (MBMMBI). Kajian ini menggunakan lima bingkai generik yang dikemukakan oleh Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) sebagai asas perbandingan. Lima bingkai tersebut adalah bingkai tanggungjawab, konflik, moral, kesan ekonomi dan kepentingan manusia. Hasil kajian mendapati keselarasan penggunaan bingkai dalam laporan akhbar bahasa Melayu dan bahasa Cina, dimana kebanyakannya menekankan sifat 'konflik' isu tersebut. Walaubagaimanapun, dalam laporan insiden MBMMBI, perbezaan yang agak ketara dalam pemilihan bingkai diperhatikan di antara kedua-dua jenis akhbar itu. Sementara itu akhbar bahasa Melayu dengan nyatanya mengurangkan tahap pemunculan bingkai konflik bagi peristiwa MBMMBI apabila dibandingkan dengan PPSMI, manakala akhbar bahasa Cina mengekalkan tahap pemunculan bingkai konflik yang sama untuk kedua-dua peristiwa tersebut.

Kata kunci: *pendidikan bahasa Inggeris, pendidikan bahasa ibunda, pembingkaian media, globalisasi.*

Introduction

The issue of deteriorating standard of English in this country has been constantly highlighted in the media by recruiting firms, corporate, educators, politicians and even the general public. While some quarters argue that the standard of English in this country has gone down the proverbial drain, some concern about the status and development of mother tongue.

In a news report published in *The Star* (September 19, 2011), employers at the Malaysia Career and Training Fair 2011 voiced out their concern about the unsatisfactory level of English of university graduates. As noticed by corporations who joined the fair, though they observed certain level of improvement compared to previous years, graduates were still not proficient in English. This is not only affecting their aims to hire the right candidates, the employment opportunity of the fresh graduates is also in vain. To put this problem into a bigger perspective, incompetency of our graduates to communicate confidently in English, to a certain extent, could jeopardize the country's competitiveness in the long run and especially in the globalization era.

As pointed out in his article, *The Star* group editor-in-chief, Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai opined that, "situation can only become worse as most Malay parents send their children to national schools, which seem to be evolving into Malay-Islamic entities, while the Chinese, believing that a strong foundation in Mandarin is important, prefer their vernacular schools, at least for primary education." (On The Beat, *The Star*, Sept 25,2011).

While some quarters from different ethnic groups are at their wits' end against the government's move to strengthen English teaching component in our education system, as in the case of PPSMI, former prime minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad urged the people to be farsighted and look at the policy as a way to keep Malaysians abreast with knowledge in all disciplines. As he said, "it's not a question of lack of nationalism…In fact, it is the true nationalists who want their people to possess more knowledge not just being able to speak Malay," said Mahathir (*The Star*, Sept 25, 2011).

The debate of PPSMI (Teaching and Learning Science and Mathematics in English) goes on as one of the hottest debate topics in Malaysia ever since its announcement in 2002. Even though its reversal was made public in 2009 and replaced with a more favorable policy – MBMMBI (Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia, Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris, or in English, Upholding the Malay Language, Strengthening Command of English) – the issue of improving English proficiency continues to prey on the people's minds. The worries of the people, especially the Malay and the Chinese communities, are well reflected in their ethnic newspapers.

The roles of newspapers that represent the Malay and Chinese ethnics, in this sense, are explicable as their readerships are drawn from these communities. It is interesting to note that, while these ethnic media play the role of being the mouthpiece of the particular community, at the same time, they have to satisfy a set of expectations put forth by the government, especially being the 'bridge' between the authority and the people. Observing the above two responsibilities, the way different ethnic media come to portray a similar educational issue will be different.

As noted by many media scholars (e.g., Biagi 2005; Dominick 2007; McCombs 2004; Tuchman 1978; Shoemaker, Vos & Rees 2008), news, to certain extent, is

the reflection of journalist's perception. The appearance of a news item in media has been described by Reese (2007, p.149) as "active forces of order that bracket out certain happening via routinised, legitimised and institutionalised structure that favour certain ways of seeing". In addition to the newsroom routines, cultural aspect can be added to the list as another factor that has impact on news framing (Beaudoin 2005).

Taking into account the media of different ethnic groups being bound by their own particular cultural elements, it is worth exploring how these ethnic media frame the contemporary education issues in Malaysia – in this study, these issues are specifically referring to the abolishment of PPSMI and the introduction of MBMMBI.

The Issue: PPSMI & MBMMBI

In 2002, government announced its decision to implement the policy of teaching and learning Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMI). Though the enforcement of the policy officially took place in year 2003, it has been constantly inviting flaks from ethnic based NGOs like Dong Jiao Zhong (DJZ) and *Gerakan Memansuhkan PPSMI* (GMP) over the years, as they perceived the move will disturb the younger generation's learning process of the two subjects, and more importantly, it will impinge on the opportunity to pick up their mother tongue. Their struggle to have the policy reversed, however, unheard till after the 2008 General Election.

In 2009, the mounting discontent of the ethnic based NGOs over the issue had brought about a mass demonstration in Kuala Lumpur. Led by the GMP, the mass rally was launched on March 7, 2009, in an attempt to hand in a memorandum to the King, requesting His Majesty's interference. Though the government did not immediately react to their struggle to abbolish PPSMI, the rally had directly or indirectly resulted in the government's decision later to "replace" PPSMI with "Upholding Bahasa Malaysia, Strengthening English language" policy (MBMMBI). On July 8, 2009, the Deputy Prime Minister-cum-Education Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, made public the government's determination to revert the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English to Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin or Tamil. To facilitate the use of Bahasa Malaysia as medium of instruction at the secondary level, huge allocation of funds will be put in place to translate English technical reference books into the language. As Muhyiddin said, "it was part of the measures being planned to ensure that there would be enough technical reference materials in the national language."

The reversal of PPSMI at the primary level did not surprise many though, the government's move to include secondary schools in the plan, however, have disturbed many parents as they expect their children could pick up English and learn scientific terms in the language during their secondary. Despite qualms shown by the public over this reversal, government said its decision to replace PPSMI with MBMMBI is final. Muhyiddin in his press statement dated July 8,

2009 explained that the government, however, would not rush for the replacement. Instead, the ministry has worked out a schedule to have the policy implemented in stages to guarantee a 'soft landing' for our students and pupils.

According to the Education Ministry, implementation of MBMMBI will only begin in year 2012 starting with Standard 1 and Standard 4 pupils at the primary level, and Form 1, Form 4 students at the secondary level. The reversal, however, does not include Form 6 and Matriculation students. To cushion the impact of PPSMI reversal on students academic performance, teaching and examination of the two subjects will be done in dual language, that is in both Bahasa Malaysia and English, till the last cohort of PPSMI ends in year 2014.

The ministry indicated that the decision to replace PPSMI with MBMMBI was based on the results of an extensive study, and hence it was a careful decision the government had made. In the ministry's 2008 study, the authority found that only a very small number of teachers were fully conversed in English during their teaching of the two subjects. The problem was further complicated with the fact that majority of the Mathematics and Science teachers were not proficient in English befitting the proverb that says, 'blind leading the blind, both shall fall into the ditch'. This had caused a plunge in the students' performance for the two subjects. According to the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study 2007, although Malaysian students dropped only a spot to 21 in the Science subject ranking as compared to year 2003, they suffered a fall of 10 spots from 2003's rank at 10 to 20 in the 2007 Mathematics subject ranking.

Considering both the above facts and the ethnic based NGOs' outcry, government made up its mind to scrap PPSMI and put up a more favorable MBMMBI, which will have the two subjects taught in Bahasa Malaysia, or Mandarin and Tamil for the Chinese and Tamil schools respectively. Extra hours will also be chipped in for the English class in order to have our students longer exposed to the language.

The scrap of PPSMI, however, prompted the former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, also the initiator of PPSMI in year 2003, to instigate a poll on his *Chedet.blog* to gauge public reaction to the government decision. As of July 11, 2009, a total of 59,734 respondents reacted to his questions with 85% showed their disapproval to the government's move to revert the teaching of Mathematics and Science to Bahasa Malaysia. Prior to the former PM's online poll, the nation's top English daily, *The Star*, had also conducted an online survey on the issue with a total of 85.4% of 790 respondents said that they were in favour of Maths and Science being taught in English compared with only 14.3% who chose their mother tongue.

The Malay ethnic based NGO, *Jaringan Melayu Malaysia* (JMM), has also joined the rank recently to put up another survey on PPSMI. As reported in *The Star* (September 6, 2011), although JMM's constitution highlighted its role to uphold Bahasa Malaysia as the national language, its survey results found that 54% of the respondents nationwide, including parents from rural areas, preferred

PPSMI to be retained. This survey was not without argument, as the deputy education minister, Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi, pointed out that the survey results were inaccurate as the study only looked at the parents' preference over PPSMI without assessing the effectiveness of the policy in improving students' academic performance.

Framing and Media Content

Unlike media agenda setting that stresses on how to make an issue appeared more salient than the others before the mass audiences, framing studies focus on answering one simple question - "how to think about an issue?". Simply put, framing is concerned with the presentation of media contents and with such premeditated organization of information, it aims to lead the audiences' evaluative perception on a particular issue.

As pointed out in Entman's (1993, p.52) classic explanation of framing, "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." Tankard et al. (in Reese, 2003) further describe the information organization process as in four stages – selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration.

Reese (in Gamson, 1989, 1992) concurred that framing studies in a more sociological approach attempt to explore the question "how issues are constructed, discourse structured, and meanings developed?" These structured messages, as Lorio and Huxman (in Reese, 2003) point out, affect human cognitive processing, and the ultimate meaning of a textual description is derived through the interaction between audience schemata and the text. In other words, the media frames designed by the actors in the newsroom (journalists and editors) have impact on its audiences through various reasoning approaches.

Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) link the influence power of framing to its "applicability effect". As the they explain, "the outcome of a message that suggests connection between two concepts such that, after exposure to the message, audiences accept that they are connected" (p.15). In order to ensure the connection taking place, the scholars propose that sufficient constructs (relevant background information) must be supplied to the target audience as the means to resonate the news frames with the audience schemas. While in the concept of second level agenda setting developed by McCombs (2004), the scholar credits the influence powers of framing to its affective attributes. These attributes deal with the tone of media presentation in evaluating an issue (e.g., negative, positive, or neutral).

From the discussion above, the process of news framing can be divided into two parts – organizing information and accessing its influence power. As de Vreese (2005) and Scheufele and Tewkbury (2007) put it, the prior is frame-building and the latter is frame-setting. Frame-building, also referred as a "macro-construct"

by Shoemaker and Reese (1996), is where journalists and other communicators are occupied with the tasks of presenting information in a way that resonates with their audiences' schema. While frame-setting is regarded as the "micro-construct" that focuses on the manner media audiences using media contents and its influences on them as they form impressions.

In this study, the aim is to investigate the prominent frames constructed by the Malay and Chinese language newspapers on their coverage of the education issue. The study proposes the following research questions.

> Q1: What are the prominent frames constructed by the different language media to inform public about the education issues in general?
> Q2: What are the prominent frames used to portray both the issues of PPSMI and MBMMBI specifically by the newspapers?
> Q3: What are the prominent frames used by the different language media respectively to portray both the issues of PPSMI and MBMMBI?

Methodology

A content analysis of newspaper texts is employed in this study to examine the prominent frames put up by different ethnic newspapers in the reporting of contemporary education issues. Three coders were engaged and trained to perform coding on the selected ethnic newspapers. The training sessions for coders were deemed necessary to make sure they are familiarized with the coding tools, coding procedures and also the issues of the study. To ensure the coders share the understanding of the researchers in the identification of items and frames, several inter-coding reliability tests are performed on them and subsequently measured using Holsti's (1969) agreement index. The test results obtained are above .70, surpassing the baseline for data reliability.

Relevant news article is identified based on a set of criteria that focus on the relevant wordings appeared in the headline, sub-headline, pix caption, and the first three paragraphs of the news report that either directly or indirectly refer to the issue of PPSMI or MBMMBI. In this study, the paragraphs contained in the relevant articles are taken as units of analysis for study. In total, there are four newspapers being selected for the study based on either their representativeness or their circulation. These chosen four newspapers are, *Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian*, *Sin Chew* Daily and *Nanyang Siang Pau*.

This study has a predetermined item collection period based on the occurrence of two significant events with the first on March 8, 2009 one day after the mass rally against PPSMI took place; and the second on July 9 the same year, a day after Muhyiddin announced the implementation of MBMMBI. The item collection period for each of the event lasted for two days, or in total, this study has a four-day item collection period.

In terms of framing analysis, this study employed the generic-frame measurements that were developed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000, p.95). Although framing has been used by many scholars to examine media contents,

it comes as no surprise that they are still very far from solving the conceptual problems in the definition of "frame" (Entman et al 2008). Some researchers interpret the frames from the issue-specific perspectives (e.g., Norris, 1995), while others measure the frames in the generic manners (e.g., Borah, 2008; Chang et al., 2010; Hallahan, 1999; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Generic frames as defined by Entman et al (2008), they transcend thematic limitations and can be used in various issues and context analysis. Below are the five generic frames formulated by Semetko & Valkenburg.

- Responsibility frame: This frame highlights the government's (or an individual's or a group's) responsibility and ability in solving the particular problem.

- Conflict frame: As its name suggests, this frame pays close attention on the conflict elements of the particular issue, for instance, argument between two parties.

- Morality frame: Within this frame, issues are examined through the morality lens by relating it to moral values or religious teachings.

- Economic consequences frame: This frame reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country.

- Human interest frame: This frame focuses on elements that could trigger an emotional impact on its readers.

To measure the visibility of frames contained in a unit of analysis, 18 attribute statements from Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) and Valkenburg, Semetko, & de Vreese (1999) corresponding to the five generic frames are adopted. Coders are instructed to mark "yes" if they find the attribute statement on the whole applied to the unit of analysis under study. Otherwise, "no" is marked. Each "yes" carries 1 score, while "no" contributes nothing to the score board. The accumulated score for a particular frame is then averaged according to the numbers of attribute statements it has. The final score ranging from "0" to "1" will indicate the level of visibility of the frame, with "0" points toward non-visibility and "1" full visibility.

Research Finding: The Salient Frames

A total of 302 news reports with 2,054 units of analysis were identified for the two significant events that occurred in March and July 2009 respectively. A simple comparison between the two events revealed that more news coverage were given to the announcement of MBMMBI. This event contributed 69% of the total unit of analysis, while the demonstration against PPSMI made up the remaining 31%. Comparison in terms of newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia* was the biggest contributor where it took up 31.1 % of the total unit of analysis. This followed by *Sin Chew Daily* (26.5%), *Nanyang Siang Pau* (23.7%), and *Berita*

Harian, with a record of 18.7%, was placed at the bottom of the list.

As tabulated in Table 1, the overall observed mean scores of frame visibility indicates that Conflict frame was being highlighted the most in the reporting of contemporary education issues (M = .2546, $s.d.$=.229), followed by the Human Interest frame which recorded an M = .2016 ($s.d.$=.143) at the second place, and Responsibility frame (M =.1957, $s.d.$=.149) was the third most favourable frame used to cover the issues. As the overall mean scores reveal, ethnic media were least to highlight Morality frames (M =.0102, $s.d.$=.066) and Economic Consequences frames (M =.0083, $s.d.$=.069) in their reporting on education.

Table 1: Mean Scores of Frame Visibility

	Conflict	Human Interest	Responsibility	Morality	Economics	N
(A) Media						
Utusan Malaysia	.2346 (.242)	.1652 (.144)	.1575 (.152)	.0078 (.051)	.0052 (.062)	638
Sin Chew Daily	.2477 (.217)	.2081 (.125)	.2303 (.154)	.0104 (.071)	.0049 (.049)	545
Nanyang	.2772 (.222)	.2246 (.151)	.2146 (.133)	.0075 (.050)	.0151 (.089)	487
Berita Harian	.2691 (.228)	.2234 (.144)	.1862 (.142)	.0174 (.095)	.0095 (.074)	384
(B) Event						
PPSMI	.3035 (.255)	.2465 (.162)	.1856 (.157)	.0194 (.098)	.0005 (.013)	637
MBMMBI	.2327 (.212)	.1814 (.129)	.2002 (.145)	.0061 (.045)	.0118 (.082)	1417
(C) Media*Event						
UM*PPSMI	.3116 (.265)	.2121 (.155)	.1477 (.153)	.0078 (.050)	.0000 (.000)	215
UM*MBMMBI	.1954 (.219)	.1414 (.133)	.1625 (.152)	.0079 (.051)	.0079 (.076)	423
SC*PPSMI	.2749 (.246)	.2555 (.147)	.2354 (.205)	.0389 (.134)	.0000 (.000)	137
SC*MBMMBI	.2386 (.206)	.1922 (.113)	.2286 (.132)	.0008 (.017)	.0065 (.057)	408
NY*PPSMI	.2811 (.243)	.2940 (.163)	.2033 (.119)	.0060 (.045)	.0020 (.026)	166
NY*MBMMBI	.2752 (.211)	.1888 (.131)	.2204 (.139)	.0083 (.052)	.0218 (.108)	321
BH*PPSMI	.3529 (.258)	.2319 (.173)	.1723 (.129)	.0364 (.149)	.0000 (.000)	119

BH*MBMMBI	.2314 (.203)	.2196 (.129)	.1925 (.145)	.0088 (.054)	.0138 (.088)	265
Overall	.2546 (.229)	.2016 (.143)	.1957 (.149)	.0102 (.066)	.0083 (.069)	2054

Note: Values in parentheses represent standard deviations.

To further explore the findings of this study, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) is applied in verifying significant differences of frames portrayed by ethnic media and also during the two different significant events. The values of the analysis are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2: Test of Mean Differences

Frames		SS	Df	MS	F	P
Conflict	*Media	.409	3	.136	2.692	.045
	**Events	2.059	1	2.059	40.701	.000
	**Interaction	1.087	3	.362	7.160	.000
	Error	103.499	2046	.051		
Human Interest	**Media	1.204	3	.041	21.375	.000
	**Events	1.661	1	1.661	88.485	.000
	**Interaction	.049	3	.136	7.252	.000
	Error	38.418	2046	.019		
Responsibility	**Media	1.635	3	.545	25.449	.000
	Events	.054	1	.054	2.515	.113
	Interaction	.046	3	.015	.712	.545
	Error	43.806	2046	.021		
Morality	**Media	.080	3	.027	6.208	.000
	**Events	.105	1	.105	24.559	.000
	**Interaction	.132	3	.044	10.283	.000
	Error	8.769	2046	.044		
Economics	Media	.021	3	.007	1.474	.220
	**Events	.061	1	.061	12.867	.000
	Interaction	.012	3	.004	.875	.453
	Error	9.641	2046	.005		

Note: * indicates significant at 95% confident level, and ** indicates significant at 99% confident level.

There are four frames out of the five that haveregistered with significant differences in the F tests for frame visibility by media. They are, as shown in Table 2, the Conflict frame [F (3, 2046) = 2.692, p = .045], Human Interest frame

[F (3, 2046) = 21.375, p = .000], Responsibility frame [F (3, 2046) = 25.449, p = .000], and Morality frame [F (3, 2046) = 6.208, p = .000]. As for the analysis by events, the F test again recorded another four frames with significant differences. These include the Conflict frame [F (1, 2046) = 40.701, p = .000], Human Interest frame [F (1, 2046) =88.485, p = .000], Morality frame [F (1, 2046) = 24.559, p = .000] and Economic Consequences frame [F (1, 2046) = 12.867, p = .000]. Meanwhile, the interaction between media and events produces significant differences for only three frames. The attained F test results reveal that only Conflict frame [F (3, 2046) = 7.160, p = .000], Human Interest frame [F (3, 2046) = 7.252, p = .000], and Morality frame [F (3, 2046) = 10.28, p = .000] are on the list.

On closer examination, the Conflict frame, *Nanyang Siang Pau* (M = .2772) and *Berita Harian* (M = .2691) were most prompted to show up the "clash" factors in the education issues. Relatively, *Sin Chew Daily* (M = .2477) and *Utusan Malaysia* (.2346) tended to be more moderate in highlighting the conflict frame. In terms of events, ethnic media were most interested to portray the mass demonstration against PPSMI using the conflict frame (M = .3035). While in the reporting of MBMMBI (M = .2327), the ethnic media's inclination to stress on its conflict aspect was far behind to that in the demonstration issue. From the interaction of both, *Berita Harian* is found to highlight the conflict frame the most on the demonstration coverage (M = .3529), and *Utusan Malaysia*, as compared to the others, was least interested in the conflict frame when it comes to reporting the MBMMBI issue (M = .1954).

The F tests have ascertained significant differences for all the three aspects in comparison on Human Interest frame. In terms of ethnic media, *Nanyang Siang Pau* (M = .2246) and *Berita Harian* (M = .2234) top the list. This shows the two media, comparatively, had a higher interest in the emotional aspect of the issue reporting. While *Sin Chew Daily* (M = .2081) acquires a moderate position on the list, *Utusan Malaysia* (M = .1652) is found least interested in the sentimental elements in its reporting about the education issues. In general, the demonstration against PPSMI was most highlighted on its human interest aspect (M = .2465) as compared to MBMMBI with only M = .1814. *Nanyang Siang Pau*, in particular, had accentuated the Human Interest frame the most in its reporting on the demonstration issue (M = .2940). With M = .1414 on the MBMMBI reporting, *Utusan Malaysia* is placed at the bottom of the list indicating that the daily was not attentive to the human interest frame for the issue.

The Responsibility frame is placed as the third most favourable frame overall though, the F tests showed significant differences as observed on its comparison among the media. In that sense, *Sin Chew Daily* (M = .2303), as compared to the others, had the highest interest to focus attention on the accountability of government in solving the problems. *Nanyang Siang Pau* (M = .2146) is placed at the second spot showing moderate intention in highlighting the Responsibility frame of the issues. *Berita Harian* (M = .1862) and *Utusan Malaysia* (M = .1575),

on the other hand, had relatively lack of interest in discussing the government's responsibility on the education issues.

Besides Conflict and Human Interest frame, Morality frame is another news frame that observes significant difference on all its three components in comparison. As compared to the other ethnic media understudy, *Berita Harian* (M = .0174) is found highlighting the Morality frame the most. *Sin Chew Daily* (M = .0104) is moderately positioned on the list, while *Utusan Malaysia* (M = .0078) and *Nanyang Siang Pau* (M = .0075) are found relatively not interested in portraying the education issues using Morality frame. In terms of events, the demonstration against PPSMI received far higher treatment using the Morality frame (M = .0194) as compared to the MBMMBI issue (M = .0061). Specifically, *Berita Harian* had highlighted the Morality frame the most in its demonstration reporting (M = .0364), and with M = .0008, *Sin Chew Daily* was least interested to touch on the morality aspect on its MBMMBI reporting.

Although there are no significant differences observed in its media and interaction components, Economic Consequences frame registered a significant difference in the effects of events. As shown in the Section B of Table 1, ethnic media tended to bring to light the economic aspect of education issue in their MBMMBI reporting (M = .0118), and was inclined to play down the frame in their demonstration reporting (M = .0005).

Conclusion

From the above discussion on frame portrayal, this study has identified the prominent frames constructed by different ethnic media to inform the public about contemporary education issues. This study has its scope of study locked on the two significant events, the demonstration against PPSMI and the announcement of MBMMBI that took place in 2009. The content analysis not only shows that the latter received more coverage, the ethnic media also covered the two issues quite differently in terms of framing.

In addressing the most prominent frame used by ethnic media, the researchers found that conflict frame was most highlighted by the ethnic media in their reporting, while economic consequences frame was the least used. Conflict frame used predominantly shows the purpose of the ethnic newspapers in order to advocate and uphold the interest of their community. This finding is in line with the communicative objectives in framing stated by Pan & Kosicki (1993).

Comparison between the coverage of the two significant events above mentioned, shows that although ethnic newspapers used conflict frame in both events, it was significantly lower during the announcement of MBMMBI. This suggest that the ethnic media were downplaying the conflict frame during the announcement of MBMMBI. This reflects positively on the ethnic media in this nation, suggest that the ethnic media do work along with the government during policy implementation. During the demonstration period, human interest and morality frame was significantly higher than during the announcement of

MBMMBI.

Among the ethnic newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian* highly portrayed the conflict frame during the demonstration period. However, during the announcement of MBMMBI, conflict frame by these two newspapers dropped significantly. *Sin Chew* and *Nanyang Siang Pau*, however, remained consistent with their usage of conflict frame in both periods. It is also to be noted that all ethnic newspapers under study used economic consequences frame during the announcement of MBMMBI, indicating their concern about the impact of MBMMBI on the nation's economy. All the ethnic newspapers highlighted the human interest frame more during the demonstration period except for *Berita Harian* which showed no preference of human interest frame in both period.

All in all, this research has given a clearer understanding of the ethnic newspapers reporting on contemporary education issues using the five generic frames by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000). The differences of interest and the upholding the rights of the community served by the ethnic newspapers can be seen from the frames used. The researchers see more areas to be explored in terms of framing effects, and suggest that future research should take in Tamil newspapers and English newspapers to make the study more inclusive.

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