



HWA CHONG INSTITUTION (HIGH SCHOOL SECTION)

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Topic: Analysis of the media's role in the 2018 Kaohsiung Mayor Elections

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Abstract

In the recently concluded November 2018 Taiwan Elections, the opposition party scored a huge upset, winning the Kaohsiung Mayorship for the first time in 33 years. Its candidate, Han Kuo-yu, used the online media circle extensively to promote his identity and won over many voters in the election. This paper will explore, using Critical Discourse Theory, the different methods that two Taiwan media outlets, namely United Daily Newspaper and Sanlih e-Television use in their attempt to change voter behaviour and increase viewership to their outlet. In addition, various aspects of the media environment will also be explored, such as the disparity in opinion polls and the pictorials used, to better give a perspective about the situation during the election campaign.

1.1 Background Information

Ever since the removal of martial law in 1987 under President Chiang Ching-Kuo, Taiwanese media has undergone a staggering period of transformation. There have been multiple media outlets founded, with many being funded or supported by companies closely related to the two main political parties in Taiwan, the current government party Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the main opposition, Kuomintang Party (KMT). As a result, several media outlets have leaned towards a certain party when conducting political reportings.

Two such outlets are United News Daily and Sanlih E-Television. Being founded by a KMT Central Committee member in 1958, it remains one of the most widely read newspapers by Taiwanese citizens. It is accessible both in print and online versions. As such, it tends to lean towards the KMT or its Pan-Blue Coalition when reporting on politics. On the other hand, Sanlih e-Television was founded by a DPP party affiliate in 1983, when the party was pushing for its survival in the still-martial law country. It occupies Channel 54 on the Taiwan Cable Network, and is a very popular television operator in Taiwanese homes. As a result, it tends to lean towards the Pan-Green Coalition or the DPP.

With the rise of social media and other online communication platforms, such avenues have become a necessity for Taiwanese Politicians to connect with the younger electorate. This became extremely important in the recent 2018 Kaohsiung Mayor elections, where the KMT put up Mr. Han Kuo-yu, a political novice for the mayor of the second-largest city in the country. Using his successes in the “air battle” of the online media, he propelled himself to victory for the first KMT mayor in 33 years.

This mayor race was one of the most speculated one by political pundits and citizens alike, and the two media outlets mentioned above certainly played a huge role as well. This paper will explore and investigate the specific methods used in their political reportings to attempt to influence voters using specific research frameworks and procedures.

1.2 Rationale

The Rationale of this research is to help readers gain a deeper insight into the specific methods that the Taiwanese media uses domestically in their political reportings. The media in Taiwan is a useful representation of how a developed country can have its election manipulated and have its election reliability and integrity compromised, due to political tensions and issues.

1.3 Research Questions

What are the methods that Taiwan media uses to create a sense of bias in political reporting?

Using those methods, how did the two media outlets frame Mr Han's campaign during the course of the election according to their political affinity?

1.4 Thesis Statement

The two media outlets employ similar strategies in reporting to attract viewership - but doing so in favour of the political parties they support.

1.5 Scope of Research/Delimitation

Based on the two media outlets UDN and Sanlih. e-Tv., this paper will explore the Kaohsiung Mayor Election from 2 specific representation techniques that the media used.

Firstly, this paper will explore the use of emotive language in reports made by those 2 outlets. The use of emotive or persuasive language towards one candidate, in the reports will certainly attract viewership by those who relate to it.

During the course of the election campaign, there has been a huge outburst of media reports on these two outlets about the two candidates' campaigns. On the days of the mass rallies, the level of dominance in this matter is so high that the outlets sometimes report for hours on end about politics alone, sometimes even disregarding other social matters aside of politics. This will also be investigated in this paper, to see whether the media bias is reflected this way.

Other aspects of media reporting that would be analysed include reporting angles, timing of publishing, and several others. These may affect people's sentiments towards the candidates as a result.

These segments will be explored using Critical Discourse Analysis, which will be further explained in Chapters 2 and 3.

1.6 Limitations

A Limitation may be the lack of online English journals about the matter. As Taiwan has a predominant language of Mandarin, most reports are made in Mandarin and similar

studies are hard to come by in English. Most of the English journals online about Taiwanese Politics are written by American authors, which lacks a grounded, domestic perspective of the matter at hand. Those journals written by local authors are mostly in Mandarin, which brings about the translation barriers mentioned below.

Another limitation may be the barriers in Translation. The media may use certain phrases in their political reporting. As a result, some phrases may be based off Mandarin dialects or informal phrases. Such phrases, when translated into English, may not retain their original meaning. As meaning may be lost through the translation process, the information may be somewhat disjointed or truncated.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk, 1993, 2008) is a research framework currently in the research field. One of the prominent researchers is Teun A. Van Dijk. In Van Dijk's work, he listed on how Critical Discourse Analysis is used in media discourse study. He wrote that "Studies of the media language similarly focused on easily observable surface structures" (p.8). Van Dijk's theory can henceforth be used in this research, and can be applied in a "Micro and Macro" (p.4) level. In the framework, there have been many examples of this theory being used in similar research, such as Roger Fowler's work on how news in British Politics is "a product shaped by political, social and cultural factors" (Fowler, 1991).

In "Exploring Van Dijk: Critical Discourse Analysis Aims" (Salma, 2016), two methods to using Critical Discourse Analysis is outlined. They are the "Micro v.s. Macro" (p.5) and "Power as Control" (p.6) methods. Such methods can be used in this research to better investigate the relations between the media and how it tries to impact the views of the people.

This research framework can be applied to this research, although it may be limited to an overly simplistic viewpoint on the matter, as used in research conducted on the "easily observable surface structures". (Wu, 2017) It is hard to connect certain cultural and social factors to this research, due to the lack of concrete study and evidence on this area done before in English.

Another CDA Framework is coined by researcher Norman Fairclough. In his paper titled "Critical Discourse Analysis" (1995), he explores discourse using three layers of assimilation: namely the textual, discursive and social levels. The textual level mainly deals with the language used, of whether there is excessive emotive language, or specific diction in the reports and text. The discursive levels concerns reporting angles, and the specific methods of presentation of the information. Quotes and selected interview angles are also explored in the media analysis part. Finally, the social level concerns larger social practices or ideologies that are a result of the media reports.

This CDA Framework by Mr Fairclough lays out a clear level and approach to using CDA in media studies, and is heavily textual-based, making it easier and more straightforward method for beginner researchers. However, it is precisely because of this

textual-approach that it has been lamented to be over-laborious and lacking in other angles of assimilation.

2.2 Existing work done on Taiwanese politics and media environment

Next, there have been many papers and journals on the political and media landscape of Taiwan done in the past. In the journal entitled "The Good, the bad and the ugly; Public Opinion Polling in Taiwan" (Willnat, Lo, Aw, 2012) it stated that "Nearly a dozen commercial TV Stations exaggerated and massaged the ballot count in their relentless battle to increase ratings and viewership statistics ". (p.8). This research has shown that research has been done in this area. Taiwanese media are already known to be using strategies and tactics to influence people's opinions through various methods. This paper will go into detail on the specific methods used in this new era of technology and new media form.

There has also been research papers done using Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse the media's role in politics. In the paper entitled " A critical discourse analysis of Teun van Dijk on the Jakarta Post Editorials" (Nurfadilah, 2017), the researcher uses Van Dijk's model of CDA to analyse the Jakarta Post's reports about Mr Joko Widodo, Indonesia's current President. The report comprehensively covers various aspects about the media and the strategies used when reporting on politics.

Hence, such methods can be used effectively in research as well as it provides a scope and research plan for similar research. However, the paper concerned lacks the use of Literary or discourse theories, making it slightly off the main focus of this research paper in particular. Nonetheless, it still provides a well-structured outline of such papers.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Based on the two outlets' reports made during the elections, I will be pulling out 2 events during the course of the Kaohsiung Mayor Election, namely the Television Debate between mayor candidates on 19 November, and Mr Han's announcement of his "Wealthy Kaohsiung" policy and vision near the end of August.

Next, 4 reports each by Sanlih e-Tv and United Daily News will be analysed, making it a total of 16 reports in total. The reports will be mainly obtained from online sources and databases, as both outlets run extensive online platforms.

They will be analysed according to Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Theoretical concept, with special attention put on the three layers of discussion: Textual, Social and Discursive Levels. Mr Fairclough's theory was chosen as it better fits the research outline that I had in mind, and his theory is easier to understand for me, a first-time researcher. After the analysis has been completed, the main highlights and common areas across the media outlets' reports will be included in the Discussion and Analysis chapter.

Chapter 4 Discussion and Analysis

The results obtained will be presented through the structuring of the three levels of analysis by Mr Fairclough.

4.1 Results of research on media reports of the election

4.1.1 Reports by Sanlih e-Television

The first event analysed in detail is the Television debate between Mr Han and Mr Chen. Both of them proposed their plans and elaborated on their visions of Kaohsiung City.

Sanlih e-Television reported the television debate using heavy diction in their reports. The reports seek to lower Mr Han's political status, by stating that he "is totally clueless" and "struggles in his vague responses" during the debate. The specific usage of words of this degree seeks to exemplify Mr Han's total lack of knowledge about the matter. On the other hand, Mr Chen is often reflected in a more positive light. In one of the reports, Mr Chen is seen to be "committed" and "contributed greatly" to the city's development during his "service" in parliament for "six years." The deliberate flash out of Mr Chen's qualities exemplify his image among the viewers that he is a better candidate than Mr Han. The opening line of the same report also refers to Mr Chen as "Legislator Chen" while in a later part, referred to Mr Han by his name without any title, despite him having held several smaller titles before. All these elements and subtle diction used in the passages and reports results in the twisting of the reader's opinion towards supporting Mr Chen.

Using Fairclough's CDA model, a second layer of detail can be analysed - using the discursive level approach. In Sanlih e-Television reports about the debate, almost all the reports that contain such emotive language or specific perspective take the form of a commentary and critical piece. The tone of such pieces of writing definitely would be more impactful and strong when used in reporting about politics and intending to shift focus towards criticising a particular candidate, when compared to factual reports.

Next, many of the reports are very unified. Firstly, in three out of the four reports analysed by the outlet, Mr Han is frequently criticised in the report, and barely any content is devoted to stating Mr Chen's strengths. This is also to create an atmosphere to bring down Mr Han's fast-rocketing popularity. It can also be observed in the perspective of the reports. All the reports are written in a comparative angle, between Mr Han and Mr Chen. The most commonly used angle is comparing the policies of Mr Han and Mr Chen. Mr Chen did propose more specific policies than that of Mr Han, and this point was greatly expanded in the reports by Sanlih. However, Mr Han's broad ideas were more

appealing to the general populace than Mr Chen's policies, and this point went neglected all along in the reports.

The last layer to be analysed is at the social level of the reports. In Fairclough's CDA Theory, the social level refers to the social trends and norms, intentions, and the social relations that came as a result of this discourse. In this context, a number of societal trends and reactions were a result of this. The reports gave a basis for a number of DPP politicians to criticise Mr Han for his lack of leadership qualities and specific policies. In response to the attacks and criticism, Mr Han launched a booklet, entailing pictorials and detailed directions on Mr Han's policies to salvage a public backlash on him. The various reports made by this media outlet can therefore be said to have indirectly resulted in these reactions and changes to the political race.

4.1.2 Reports by United Daily News Agency

Similar strategies can be seen to be adopted by the UDN Agency, with the purpose of crafting a report to attract people who support Mr Han to the reports, thus increasing viewership.

Again, diction is used in the reports as well. In reports about the same event. By referring to the televised debate as a competition, there were a number of mentions of Mr Han "living to fight another day" as "losing the debate competition does not mean he lost the election". By using an analogy of a competition, the report conveys to the reader that Mr Han cannot be labelled a failure just because he performed poorly in the election. This leads to readers being steered away from Mr Han's blunders and focusing on his strengths, such as his fresh ideas that echoed the people, and his grounded personality. Before the debate between the two candidates occurred, Mr Lai Ching-Te, Taiwan Premier (akin to the Head of Cabinet) at that time stated that Mr Han was a "political genius never seen in a hundred years" This exact quote was used as the title of one of the commentaries published. The deliberate use of the words "genius" and "in a hundred years" is an indirect hyperbolic reference to Mr Han's uniqueness and charisma displayed to the people. This interpretation of Mr Lai's comments in favour of Mr Han flashes out Mr Han's many qualities, such as intelligence and compassion to the viewers.

Mr Han has also been labelled as a nationalistic character, as seen in the many pictures of the Taiwan (Republic of China) flag being waved at his rallies. This is in contrast to the Pro-Independence government-of-that-day, which serves as a good juxtaposition image for the public. This active promotion of the image by the UDN Agency's reports seek to flush out the image to the people massively and effectively.

The second layer being analysed is the discursive approach. In UDN Agency's 4 reports that I have analysed, the report titled "Han Kuo-Yu: I feel great after the debate with Mr Chen", the report is written largely from a first-person recounting view from Mr Han himself. This enabled many of the messages to be more directly conveyed to the people, and for the impact on the people to be more profound. Mr Han's first person narration would add a degree of sincerity and truthfulness to the report in general.

Lastly, for the social level of the analysis, the portrayal of Mr Han in this consistent positive light has resulted in a high level of attractiveness towards him. Through many online polls from various agencies, Mr Han has consistently polled high in the online polls. This also could create a unique positive cycle, and it creates belief amongst his supporters that he would win the election due to the high spirits within his camp. It entices supporters of him to come out and vote, which is reflected in the opinion polls done throughout the campaign. This would further bolster confidence with his supporters, and creates a positive cycle as a result.

4.2 Analysis and Comparison of the techniques used

Technique Used	Sanlih e-Television	UDN Agency
Diction/Emotive Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Words exemplify the weaknesses of Mr Han - Wording chosen reflects Mr Han being in a politically weaker position than Mr Chen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotes Mr Han as a prospective candidate for mayor - Interprets information to Mr Han's advantage
Perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Takes events and ideas that support Mr Chen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sieves out ideas that support Mr Han and rarely mentions Mr Chen's qualities (whether positive or negative)
Pictorials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shows Mr Chen's policies in infographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Show crowds and national flags (motif of Mr Han's character)

Format of report	- Commentaries to criticise Mr Han	- First-person narration by either Mr Han himself, or people who support Mr Han
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Chapter 5 Conclusion

In Conclusion, both the UDN Agency and the Sanlih e-Television agencies use similar strategies to attract viewership for their channel by members of the political party they are allied to. Such strategies include diction, emotive language, specific forms of representation and narration in the report, selectively reporting certain aspects of an event. As a result, such strategies is an attempt to cover up one candidate’s weaknesses and elaborate on the other’s strengths.

With this, Mr Han is portrayed to be a positive and strong candidate by UDN Agency and an incompetent and incapable leader by Sanlih e-Television, according to their political affinities. This further reinforces their labels of pro-government and pro-opposition media outlets as well.

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