

Descriptive Writing Patterns Still Relevant in Political News Reporting in Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper discusses the journalist writing patterns from the perspective of a journalist in presenting information primarily in political issue. The discussion is divided according to the research questions arising from previous studies such as relevance of conventional news writing, use of the concept in interpretive writing and perspective on political news reporters. Some scholars are still doing research to understand the concept of interpretive especially in the writing of journalists in conveying information to the public on an issue and is associated with several descriptive concepts in retaining the old way of outright to report any issues with using the concept 5W1H. Definition pattern interpretive report led to analyze, evaluate, and explain the development, and not just to limit the mere fact. While the old pattern is defined as a reporter writing a descriptive report, in which the journalist clearly explained the events, where journalists had to stick to the facts and left the speculation and interpretation to the reader. However, the pattern writing is often associated with the role of journalists in framing an issue in their news reporting, particularly issues relating to politics. In-depth interviews conducted against five journalists for writing a pattern phenomenon and their role in the delivery of election information in the news. The study found that the patterns of conventional writing are still used by the issues to be conveyed. Even journalists try to analyze political news presented by issues that can attract audiences without leading to any particular political party.

Keywords: Journalism, interpretive, descriptive, writing patterns, Framing

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Introduction

Every day a variety of activities, events in various aspects such as political, social, economic occur in Malaysia documented in the form of news media whether print or electronic media. But not all activities or events is a news (Fleming, Hemmingway, Moore, & Welford, 2004; Lippmann, 2006).

Mansor Ahmad (1986) define news in the context in Malaysia as reports on current issues right, odd, important, and interesting, as well as the opinions and ideas that attract audiences. While Chamil (2008) believes the news is a report that is based on the fact (a fact, not fiction or fable), and attract new audiences to read, listen and watch. However, in the world of news writing only journalist is a presenter of information to the public. According to Tuchman and Gaye (1978) only an individual professionals working in the media can determine the selection, collection and dissemination of news.

This proves that the media and professionals such as journalists play an important role in the pattern of news journalism, especially television and the newspaper. Maras (2013) believes, when discussing professions in journalism often it is associated with a profession related to objectivity. Objectivity in journalism is considered strong and dominant in determining the identity of the professional journalists, especially in the United States and it is associated with the pattern of coverage that focus pattern interpretive writing in journalism. According to Maras (2013), initially objectivity within the profession of journalism is to remove the passive, judgmental, and emotional in reporting the news and he believes in the form of interpretive reporting be more active in the criticism, fair and thorough.

Communication scholars, Patterson (2000a, 2000b, 2000c), Salgado and Stromback (2011) debate on the perspectives that should be emphasized in news reporting by mainstream media growing. Writing good news should not merely describe a series of events on the other hand, the news should outline a different perspective by explaining the background, interpret and evaluate the importance of the consequences of what might happen in the future (Erik, 2011). According to him, generally in the pattern of journalistic approach to news coverage of the needs of a message sender of politicians, interest groups of priority beneficiaries or the listener or the audience. But the opposite occurs when the pattern changed from descriptive writing to interpretive.

The changes to the content and journalistic approach occur in prioritizing the needs of the audience. With this change to the news report it becomes in the form of storytelling. Robinson and Sheehan (1983) stated that news must have structure and conflict, problem and resolution, rising action, beginning, middle and end in news reporting. For news selection criteria, selection based on the timelines, importance, sensational, conflict, and identity in the pattern of news coverage itself (Meilby, 1996).

News Writing Pattern From Global to Local

Writing patterns play an important role in putting the role of journalists in a position when writing news. At first the news focus on pattern descriptive writing style in which journalists put themselves in the role of observer (Patterson, 2000b). Duties as

a reporter in the pattern writing descriptive report and describe the events and it is beneficial to journalists in providing information to the public (Erik, 2011).

Globally, the pattern of coverage changed since the 1930s began in the United States. This is due to downturn in 1930, which had a profound impact on the world media in the United States (Bondi, Harris-Fain dan Hipp 1995). Scholars often refer to the revolution of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in 1933 where they encourage the press to focus on the aspects of space and explanations and encouraged the character of interpretive news (Forde, 2007; Landers, 2005; Schudson, 1978).

Starting in 1980 in the United States, most news reports have turned to writing interpretive pattern (Hallin, 1992). Journalists gradually using interpretive writing pattern arise from a change in the pattern of this writing more independent approach used in writing their news: the news explaining what has happened and explain why it has happened (Erik 2011).

In the pattern writing interpretive role of journalists as analysts (Patterson, 2000b). In order for the newspaper to become the preferred choice of audiences, the press should show interesting patterns in delivering news issues not only depend on the events that have been displayed on electronic media such as television or heard on the radio about a particular issue. Local phenomena in Malaysia, the changes happen since 1997. According to Mohd Zuwairi Mat Saad, Normah Mustaffa, Abdul Latiff Ahmad, & Badrul Redzuan Abu Hassan (2016) mainstream newspaper in Malaysia shift from descriptive to mixed between two writing patterns especially in election news frame.

Changes in the direction of the news reports that focus coverage pattern style of writing interpretive journalism has shown that the reality began to report the issue to the audience rather than to focus on how news makers (politicians, interested groups or people) see the news. This change also means that the control over the news turned out of the hands of newsmakers (politicians, interested groups or persons) themselves into the hands of journalists (Erik, 2011). According to Stromback (2008) 'Political logic' is gradually replaced by 'media logic', this means that the media needs to be formed with the main thing and the way in which political communication played by politicians, protected by the media, and understood by the people.

However the journalist who reported the issue of reality with interpretive style still hold on to the information content based on the facts. Salgado and Stromback (2011) interpretive of writing style or exceed conceptualized opposite style of writing descriptive, factual or journalistic sources; journalism requires greater control over news content and sound journalism is more important, including the comments outright by journalists; bring a stronger emphasis on the theme chosen by the journalists; and focuses on the why and the purpose and set aside the who, when, what, where and how.

This shows that the pattern of interpretive writing, journalists entering the element analyze, explain and assess for any information to be conveyed to the audience not to rely on the concept of who, when, what, where and how alone. To maintain market news, media reporters had to analyze, interpret and explain information or information in the pattern of reporting that will be presented to the audience. In recent years with the advent of internet news reports that almost contemporaneous with the

news itself - requires the need for the print media to dig more deeply about an issue when delivering information to the public (Erik, 2011). New media, especially the Internet is very different from other traditional media. This is because the internet can provide a source of political information and expression of the political environment (Dahlgren, 2000; White, 1997).

Thus, the pattern of writing as a subject by focusing on the election news. It is because of election news has distinctive patterns compared to other news that restricts how journalists write in conveying information to the audience. Message elections delivered through various media forms, has become an important topic to study and compare the different roles played by various media in their coverage of the candidates and issues and in delivering a message related to options great (Flowers, Haynes, dan Crespin 2003).

Past studies of the western countries showed reporters have been using a new pattern in the writing of their interpretive pattern whether journalists conscious or not. The understanding of this among journalists should not arise biased of writing. This could also be due to the editor to 'guard' in the report written by the journalist. Studies need to be done to look at the views of journalists to the pattern of writing from the perspective of Asian countries like Malaysia where political issues are taken as study materials as a political issue is the dominant issue in the pattern of writing for studies and by western countries for dismantling understanding of this matter in the world of journalism and political in Malaysia. Results from previous studies, several research questions submitted as follows:

1. Does the conventional writing is still used in news writing now?
2. Is the concept of interpretive writing (analyze / evaluate / explain) used by the journalists who serve as a medium to deliver issues of political news?
3. What is the point of view of political news reporter?

Methodology

This study used interview of five experienced journalists to see the phenomenon of journalists in news writing. According to Creswell (1998) the number of informants for in-depth interview for studies related to the phenomenology requires only 5 to 25 informants. Purposive sampling will be used in selecting informants by creating a number of features to ensure the accuracy of the information gathered. Specifically, this study will use a type of semi-structured interviews. Othman Lebar (2014) semi-structured interviews result of a combination of structured and open interviews or known as unstructured interview. Interview questions will be formulated in advance and openly answer by informant and developed by interviewers (Othman Lebar, 2014).

Research Findings

Differences between Conventional and Interpretive Journalism

At the beginning news writing in the world of journalism focused on conventional concept that emphasizes the concept of writing 5W1H. In contrast to the concept of interpretive journalism more emphasis on one element of the original concept of why.

However, the literature shows that there is a conceptual distinction between journalism interpretive, almost all think journalism interpretive as somewhat contrary to or beyond the descriptive, factual, and emphasis related to 5W in journalism: What, Where, When, Who and Why , Generally, the concept of journalism interpretive give greater emphasis to the 'meaning' of news beyond the facts and the statements of resources and emphasizes the element 'Why' in 5W's (Patterson 1993).

One of the critic of interpretive journalism is Patterson (1980, 1993, 2000a). Referring to his concept, interpretive journalism is journalism that is driven by the theme, the main facts which are used to illustrate the theme chosen by the journalists. This concept should be understood in the context of the relationship between journalists and their sources. Journalism is actually focused on the What, When, Where and Who allows the source to set the news agenda and framing the news, as well as the reduction of journalists to carry and to emphasize the message source. Instead interpretive pattern empowers reporters by giving them more control over the news message. While descriptive pattern putting journalists in the role of observer.

To answer the first research question whether the journalist still uses the concept of 5W1H in political news, the reporter made a statement that 5W1H concept is still used in news writing but it is only used in certain issues such as news reporting news 'hard news'. Suitability of the concept depends on the issue you want reported. In fact, the concept of conventional reporting is said to be writing that no attraction to the audience to read a news writing.

...depending on the particular issue. 5W1H often used for crime news writing. [Journalist A]

In the competitive world of media that is strong enough at the moment, each media has its own way to create unique presentation. 5W1H theory he only on paper and not merely practiced for major or critical writing. The theory of writing practiced for low profile and lack of traction. [Journalist B]

Yes. Still practiced mostly for hard news. [Journalist D]

This shows that the journalists tried to use a various creativity to attract the attention of audience. Studies in western countries show a pattern that can attract an audience is to use interpretive writing patterns. Interpretive pattern requires journalists to act also as an analyst. Based on interviews conducted reporter said that the issues that interest only to be highlighted in the news and news analysis made does not cover the whole issue reported due to the limited factors in the writing of news in print media such as paragraphs. In fact, the analysis made by a journalist still based on the facts in a report content.

For me, the world of politics, the number of sentences or paragraphs to play an important role for any writing. Political writing scientific writing which need not be explained from beginning to end. Only interesting thing only highlighted and political writing is an average of paragraphs 10 to 14 only. Analysis was made but not all of the factors disclosed above. In the world of digital media now, speed is the main thing. The writing short and compact to be a priority. [Journalist B]

Not necessarily. Depending on the facts of the report. [Journalist D]

Interviews show that the journalists tried to enter interpretive elements in their news writing. But there are factors that become their constraints in incorporating elements of interpretive writing. Journalist gradually using interpretive writing pattern arising from a change in the pattern of this writing more independent approach used in writing their news: the news explaining what has happened and explain why it has happened (Erik 2011).

Point of view Journalist in delivering Political News

Patterns of news reporting is often associated with the issue is framed by journalists, particularly in political journalism. Shaw and Brian Roberts (2000) found in their study during campaigning, the media's role and relationship with the victory of president of the United States in 1992 and 1996 during the election, that the role of media in framing has a huge impact on the events that are expected to affect the decision of the voters. These results are consistent with studies conducted by Patterson (2000a, b) and Iyenger (1991) and other media gave a lot of reaction to the public for political campaigns.

The current study shows how writing journalists can influence what is read by the people and play an important role in how a particular issue is framed. For example, Barbour and Wright (2001) which introduces two examples that define their views in framing the issue in which the first assumption to say that each news writing has not changed but the audience sees something on the issue. While the second assumption, every delivery of news by different journalists. One of the journalists can report the news of the disaster on the number of journalists were injured while others may focus on the number of victims was not injured.

In addition, Barbour and Wright (2001) stressed that as a journalist working in a competitive environment, they are required to write stories that attract and retain the attention of their audience. This requirement requires journalists convey information in an entertaining way or make audiences think. Meanwhile, the politicians want the ability to communicate with the public and set the agenda. However, objective reporter and regulations they sometimes conflict with the will of the politicians who want to convey a piece of information has a positive and effective leadership. Based on the interviews conducted, journalists involved in reporting political issues need to understand style and rhythm in the writing of news so they become more impartial to any political party. Rich media practitioners to something political information but there are constraints in the delivery of the audience.

Politics is a complex issue. It is difficult for me to say who's telling the truth or not. Unlike writing court, the decision can be concluded when the sentence was passed. In politics anything could happen and persists for a long time depending on the attractiveness of the issue. At times, new writers will be confused with the submission of the political issues. This can be seen in several examples of writing which misinterpreted. Political journalists need to understand the rhythm and style of presentation of political issues based on their experiences during the charge. Media practitioners with information is much greater than what is reported in news writing. However, the authors are bound by ethics, agendas owner / investor companies, government, politics, society and others. At times, the

author is not satisfied with the quality of the information presented but the constraint factor that needs to be recognized. But in reality, in the world, no one hundred percent independent media to report something without the above constraints. Journalists can choose which company can meet the satisfaction of writing them based on confidence. [Journalist B]

The question arises of whether the primary factor constraints of journalists in conveying information to the audience about political issues? Framing issues in the dailies to the community is important because opinions are formed or changed by reporters who have the power to control the content and format of a news causing the change. Based on interviews found that every word said to be biased and still follow journalistic ethics outlined. Each media has its own agenda and neutral fact-based, language used in other aspects of diversity.

Malaysian media history, from the first has been controlled by certain parties who have a particular agenda. Struggle and agenda they change with time. When the pre-independence era, the media also have an agenda against the invaders. No neutral agenda here, they raised the issue on the basis of their struggle. If we say they are neutral, they will report on the benefits of colonial rule at the time. [Journalist B]

No, journalists are still maintaining the ethics of journalism that cannot be bias or bias in reporting the news, but the way writing is now more 'advanced' so that it becomes an issue exclusive but still neutral. [Journalist C]

Still neutral for the mainstream media. Notice of the facts, the use of language and other aspects. The opposition media and new media bias that triggers coverage and many elements of the charges and allegations. Anti-government parties like such coverage, and vice versa. [Journalist D]

This assertion is supported by Lotz (1991) who argued in McCombs, Shaw and Weaver (1997) framing is not an ideological bias, even if it is one-sided, but it is a structural bias the results of the selection process or edits occurring in the news. For example, when journalists need to enter some information into a few paragraphs, some parts are accidentally left behind and some of the more deliberately highlighted. The cause distortion of information occurs in every story written by journalists. Lotz (1991) said that in sociology, communication bias is always present.

Patterson (2000b), most of journalists believe they have instructions to represent the community. Wish journalists play a role as public advocate has increased significantly since the 1960s. Patterson said that the status of journalists increased, they became more assertive, news writing style tends toward interpretive report. News about the Watergate scandal was one of the issues on politics also contributed to the change in the pattern of writing and events like these have convinced many journalists that their judgment in a news report focusing on the political leaders.

Studies show that the journalists tried to serve as a community representative, spokesman and advocate public. The role of journalists is also seen as a political activist. However, Patterson (2000b) believes that the media does not fit the role as public representatives of political leaders. Journalists are not selected and society cannot attack journalists. Therefore, people do not have control over the media. In

their role as journalists, people expect the journalists provide the facts on the basis of their opinion.

As a political activist, a journalist trying to influence public opinion by framing the issues to the public through the media. The role of a daily newspaper in framing the issue during the election is a significant topic for research. Media cannot tell people what to think, but it tells people how to think about an issue (Barbour dan Wright, 2001). As a result, journalists are using their position as a political activist when writing reports and misuse of power when framing issues become important for political news.

Conclusion

The development of research on writing patterns can give a clearer understanding of the trend of writing news reports by journalists and their role in framing political issues, especially the issue. Conventional concept in the literature is still used, but depending on the issue you want reported. In fact, the study also found that there is a limiting factor in the delivery of which involve factors internal culture of the organization, external and social change in which most studies show that there are characteristics, patterns and effects associated with the cultural framing of the news that a lot depends on the cultural orientation of narrators. Cultural differences in framing evidence also supports the establishment of an investigative news that the news is a product built (Altheide 2002). Studies ahead to be done to see changes in the pattern of journalists in Malaysia within a prescribed period in which political issues were used as research material and see how journalists frame the issue in the same time the study will also identify patterns of writing is writing patterned interpretive, descriptive or the combination of these two patterns of writing. Understanding reporter's writing style and framing this issue also needs to be refined as it can affect the audience from time to time.

In addition, studies on the pattern of writing pioneered by Stromback and friends (Stromback and Aalberg 2008; Stromback and Dimitrova 2006; Stromback and Aalberg 2008; Stromback and Shehata 2007). Salgado and Stromback (2011) suggests that the study of the interpretive report in journalism should be expanded to take into account the relationship between interpretive journalism and journalism in the political framing. The above recommendations then, studies have focused primarily on the pattern writing in the newspaper in Malaysia are taking a political issue as research material. Given this kind of research can enhance the understanding and clarify the definition of the concept of writing pattern-focused journalism in Malaysia. According to Salgado dan Stromback (2011) again, the definition of the concept and understanding the differences may occur between interpretive journalism media diversity and differences in the country in the context of the study patterns and relationships between other features in journalism.

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