

Thesis abstract

Naming and visualising people in the discourses of disability

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Disability is a multi-faceted discursive construct shaped by diverse motivations and perspectives. To understand this complex construct, this thesis examines the aspects of naming and visualising people in a Malaysian newspaper. Although the focus is on disabled persons, the non-disabled are also examined as they co-construct the discourses.

This study draws on Fairclough's (2010) dialectical-relational critical discourse framework and Candlin and Crichton's (2011) multi-perspectival methodology. The data sets comprised 863 news texts on disability issues and 1002 photographs accompanying these texts. They were sourced from *The Star*, a mainstream Malaysian English newspaper (July 2008–June 2011). Corroborative perspectives from 46 interviews with various stakeholders were also used to provide insights into social institutional practices.

On naming practices, the nominal group structure and lexical choice in name phrases, as well as the voices that employed these phrases were analysed. Findings show the multiplicity of voices have different motivations for their choices of names. On visual representations, van Leeuwen's (2008) visual actor analytical framework was utilised, aided by Garland-Thomson's (2006)

taxonomy of visual rhetoric of disability as well as the analysis of *affect* from Appraisal Theory (Martin and White, 2005). Findings suggest symbolic *exclusion* of disabled actors. Extending from these, this thesis also proposes the *perspectivisation* of disability. It describes the visual framing of disability on a cline of *perspectivising/personising* images and the emotive dimension on the *enabling/disabling* cline. Subsequently, the Visual Discourse of Disability Analytical Framework (VDDAF) is developed as a tool for analysing and understanding the effects of this *perspectivisation*.

By analysing the practices of naming and visualising disabled persons in news discourse, this study reveals discriminatory practices affecting the social standing of disabled persons. To be inclusive, the discourses should reflect dignified representations of the persons as members of society, and disability as part of human diversity.

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