

Representation of the elderly in Taiwanese newspapers: A corpus-based study

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1. Introduction

This corpus-based research aims to discover how the elderly are presented and how that presentation may vary over time in Taiwanese newspapers. In addition, how male elders and female elders are portrayed differently in newspapers and how the changing representation of the elderly is related to the socio-cultural context will also be explored.

2. Data

Data for this study are from three newspapers which circulate most widely in Taiwan, the *United Daily News* (UDN), the *China Times* (CT), and the *Liberty Times* (LT). A total number of 240 news stories were sampled from four months, i.e. July, August, September, and October in the year of 2007. In addition, 157 news stories from the same four months in the year of 1998 from the *China Times* were included for a chronological comparison.

3. Analysis

3.1 Negative presentation of the elderly

Table 1

Positive and negative image stories
in three newspapers in 2007

Paper	Positive		Negative		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
China Times	50	62.5%	30	37.5%	80	100%
United Daily News	42	57.5%	31	42.5%	73	100%
Liberty Times	56	64.4%	31	35.6%	87	100%
Totals	148	61.7%	92	38.3%	240	

Table 2
Positive and negative image stories
in China Times, 1998 and 2007

Year	Positive		Negative		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1998	34	21.7%	123	78.3%	157	100%
2007	50	62.5%	30	37.5%	80	100%
Totals	84	35.4%	153	64.6%	237	

- These negative stories can be further categorized into 6 groups:
 - **accident or death**
 - **sadness/suicide**
 - **victimization**
 - **crime**
 - **family violence or tragedy**
 - **others**

3.2 Positive presentation of the elderly

Table 1

Positive and negative image stories
in three newspapers in 2007

Paper	Positive		Negative		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
China Times	50	62.5%	30	37.5%	80	100%
United Daily News	42	57.5%	31	42.5%	73	100%
Liberty Times	56	64.4%	31	35.6%	87	100%
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- **The positive stories categories include:**
 - **helping others**
 - **vigorous or quick-witted**
 - **caring for family**
 - **special achievements**

3.3 Gender differences in the representation of the elderly

Table 3
Positive and negative stories by gender
in China Times, 1998 and 2007

Year	Male		Female		Totals	
	P	N	P	N	P	N
1998	10(12.3%)	71(87.7%)	5(13.2%)	33(86.8%)	15(12.6%)	104(87.4%)
2007	22(53.7%)	19(46.3%)	16(61.5%)	10(38.5%)	38(56.7%)	29(43.3%)
Total	32(26.2%)	90(73.8%)	21(32.8%)	43(67.2%)	53(28.5%)	133(71.5%)

Table 4
Positive and negative stories by gender in three newspapers in 2007

Paper	Male		Female		Totals	
	P	N	P	N	P	N
China Times	22(53.7%)	19(46.3%)	16(61.5%)	10(38.5%)	38(56.7%)	29(43.3%)
United Daily News	14(43.8%)	18(56.3%)	15(62.5%)	9(37.5%)	29(51.8%)	27(48.2%)
Liberty Times	33(75%)	11(25%)	10(40%)	15(60%)	43(62.3%)	26(37.7%)
Totals	69(59%)	48(41%)	41(54.7%)	34(45.3%)	110(57.3%)	82(42.7%)

4. Summary and conclusion

- Age-related news stories tend to appear in less prominent space, which usually devoted to local or regional news.
- The number of age-related news has decreased significantly over time despite the growing population of the elderly.

- The chronological comparison has revealed that older adults were presented in a more positive light.
- The increasing family violence/tragedies (e.g. murder, abuse, abandonment) caused by conflict between elderly parents and their children further indicate the changing role and status of the elders in the changing Taiwanese society, in which the traditional Confucian ethical principle of filial piety is diminishing.

Thank you!

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