A Critical Discourse Analysis of Online Newspaper Articles on 29th SEA Games Flag Incident

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Abstract: Newspaper is a representation of what happened in a society. It ideally informs the truth without any intervention and subjectivity from any party. This research is aimed at identifying Indonesia and Malaysia perspectives on flag incident printed in the booklet of Sea Games 2017. Malaysian government as the host for the annual event was responsible on what happened, but most Indonesian is still questioning about the background the fatal incident. The top-rank online newspaper articles from both countries were used as the instruments in revealing the stand point of the countries from mass media by using the discourse framework from Fairclough (1989). The online news is believed to have faster publication in today's digital and technological era, thus the researcher focuses on the news published short after the issue was acknowledged. A critical discourse analysis (CDA) was administered by focusing on the vocabulary used in the news and by considering the cultural background between these two nations. It is expected that the findings of this study would represent the real intended messages and implied ideology from the parties involved. Thus, it highlights the relationship between those Southeast Asia Nations.

1   INTRODUCTION

Online newspaper becomes one of the major information sources in the society, enabling the reader in this digital and technological era to access the updated news (Tewari, 2016). This form of mass media contains discourse which conveys social structure and power relation both explicitly and implicitly (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1988). It reflects the attitude, believe, and perspective according to each socio-cultural background. Thus, analysing a text may reveal the stand point of a certain society.

As newspaper holds an important role in revealing the principles of a certain society, this research focuses on administering Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which is expected to identify the strategies adopted by online newspapers articles in presenting an event.

Analysing one of social event, this research focused on the ideology implied in the recent international sport event held by Malaysian government. The event experienced difficult situation because of the upside-down flag of Indonesia, one of countries participated in the event, Southeast Asian (SEA) Games. This was recognized by the Sport Minister of Indonesia that later posted the picture of the wrong flag printed in the booklet in his personal social media account. Since social media is mostly used in this era facilitating communication in seconds, the posting of Indonesian flag being printed upside down became viral.

The issue therefore ignited a storm of protest from Indonesian and demanded an official apology from the host of the event. However, the apology from the Foreign Minister of Malaysia did not stop some citizen asking the demise of the diplomatic relation between the two nations. This flag gaffe thus remarks as having great effect since it created mass reaction especially from Indonesian.

Research on news report using CDA on a particular event has been done (Wang and Liu, 2015) by using Fairclough (1989) framework in which Systemic Functional Grammar is employed to find out the hidden methodology among the news articles. On the other hand, the author used combination of Fairclough (1989) and Van Dijk (1988) in obtaining the aim of the study.

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2 THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

This study represents a newspaper analysis using the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It is a framework to study or examine how an individual or institution make use of language by not only identifying the textual features but also interpretation based on the context and interaction within it. CDA is seen as the practice of language in society (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 1999), the representation of power in social life (Weiss and Wodak, 2003), as a means to connect linguistic analysis to social analysis (Woods and Kroger, 2000). Therefore, it can be generalized that CDA concerns in scrutinizing the power and ideologies embedded in both linguistic and social aspects.

The research employed the CDA framework proposed by Fairclough (1989) consisting of three level of discourse: description, interpretation, and explanation. It describes the feature of presentation, analyses the relationship between the text and interaction, and relates the interaction with the social context.

The online news described here were taken from two online newspapers articles of The Jakarta Post (TJP), representing Indonesian Media and The Star (TS), Malaysian media. The news article was selected since it is supposed to be objective, whereas editorials or other news type have the higher degree of subjectivity. The articles were selected randomly after the Malaysian government officially gave respond regarding the event.

3 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This presents the findings analysis and discussion. The section begins with description by analysing seven linguistic features of presentation in description stage, followed by interpretation and explanation (Fairclough, 1989).

3.1 Description and Interpretation

3.1.1 Headline

Headline holds a critical role in attracting the readers' attention (Van Dijk, 1988). It is the keywords summarizing the whole news story (Dor, 2003), reflecting the writer's perspective on the news being reported. Both the news media use active sentence reporting the event indicating the role of the subject participants. TJP states "Sport minister of Indonesia, *Malaysia* settle flag incident", while TS writes "*KL* apologises over flag blunder". There is a different reference used by both media in representing Malaysia. TJP clearly denotes Malaysia as a country, while TS use the word KL, one of the cities in Malaysia. Thus, it can be inferred that TS acknowledges only the city, "KL", which apologise, not Malaysia as the whole nation.

3.1.2 Lexical Choice

The lexical choice plays a key role in the presentation of position and attitude of the two newspaper agencies. It mainly describes the writer's point of view towards the news as the he has freedom in choosing the lexical item explaining a news event. It also defines particular kinds of identities, values, and series of event which is not explicitly stated (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

In these articles, there are several lexical items referring to the Indonesian flag being printed upside down, represented in the table below.

Table 1: Lexical choice on the Indonesian flag being printed upside down.

The Jakarta Post	The Star
▪ flag incident	▪ flag blunder
▪ problem	▪ upside down publication of the republic's flag
▪ incident	
▪ problem	▪ issue
▪ misprinted Indonesian flag	▪ matter
	▪ error
▪ mistake	▪ "big mistake"
	▪ Mistake

From the data above, it can be seen that TS and TJP used similar word choice, however there is one particular lexical item which is absent in TS and appear twice in TJP.

Text 1

He has asked his fellow Indonesians to put aside the *problem* and move on with the games.

Text 2

"However, we ask that no more *problems* like this happen in the future."

Thus, it informs that the journalist of TS does not consider the issue is a part of problem, but it indeed believes that it is a part of error and mistake.

3.1.3 Quotation

Quotation and reported speech plays an integral part in news reporting. Since the reader may not know the real situation being reported, the journalist has an authority to shape the readers' perception by his writing. Thus, it is crucial whether the verbal action in the news is presented using direct or indirect speech act. The absence of verbal action presented in direct speech act in news may lead to uncertainty causing the doubt of the readers since the journalist may use his wording which is not suitable with the real condition (Fairclough, 1995). Moreover, the use of quotation is able to show the party holding the power (Van Dijk, 1988).

By using about 30.77 and 33.33 % direct speech acts without, the TJP and TS respectively tries to maintain the reliability of the event. In this case, the journalist has the choice in deciding what actions need to be cited verbally. From the data, it shows that both TJP and TS tend to cite from Indonesia's point of view. However, TJP uses more proportion on citation from Indonesia government comparing to Malaysia Government. Therefore, it can be said that the power of Indonesia's stakeholder holds important part in this event.

3.1.4 Quoting Verbs

There are various quoting verbs in news being analysed. The writer has the option in choosing the quoting verbs best described the situation. The verbs chosen thus determine the writer's ideology or perspective. In TJP, they are *said*, *told*, *added*, *asked*, *praised*, *assured*; while in TS are *said, quoted* and *expressed* as the reporting verbs in the article being analysed. According to Coulthard (1994), TS used the neutral structuring verbs in *said* and *expressed*. While *quoted* belongs to metalinguistic verbs. The metalinguistic is a more specified verb than the neutral category having probability to give ironic effect. In this case, *quoted* still tends to be neutral since it simply reports on what happened. It can be summarized that the quoting verbs administered in TS give neutral point of view regarding the event.

TJP used more types of verbs in reporting the event. *Said*, *told*, *asked* are categorized as neutral structuring verbs, while added belongs to transcript verb in relation to other parts of discourse. It is the verb giving more information on the same point. *Praised* and *assured* mentioned in the news are classified as assertives in metapropositional verbs, expressing the writer's interpretation of the speaker. The metapropositional verbs indicate a higher level of interpreting and evaluating by the journalist. Here, we can say that reporting verbs in TJP contain neutral, transcript, and metapropositional verbs.

3.1.5 Scare Quote

Scare quote is quite identical to quotation mark, but it covers only for some words, not the entire sentence. Thus, it gives stress to particular words and symbolizes disagreement on that certain lexical item. It also represents that the term in scare quote belongs to someone else; it is between the writer's and assumed reader's perception (Fairclough, 1992). There is not any scare quote written in TJP, however TS makes use of this scare quote in one of its sentences.

Khairy, while offering his public apology[7], expressed his regret over the matter and was quick to admit that it was a "big mistake".

The words big mistake shows the uncertainty from media publishing it. Thus, it can be interpreted that according to TS, the flag being printed upside down in the Sea Games booklet is not considered fatal incident. However, the media still considers that this event is a mistake as TS uses the mistake as one of lexical choice representing the flag gaffe.

3.1.6 Theme

According to Van Dijk (1988) refers theme or setential topic as the main point on the sentence. Thus, it relates to what the subject is doing in which the subject plays the key part of the news. In TJP, the comparison of the Indonesia and Malaysia government being the theme is 8:5 while in TS is 8:9 respectively. Both media in this case represent the country government in which media published, placing each country as the main focus of the news.

3.1.7 Report Proportion

Generally, the two media gave three kinds of information: Indonesia's action, Malaysia's action and the action from both countries. The simple calculation of the report proportion is written in the following table.

Table 2: The proportion of reporting.

Kinds of information	The Jakarta Post	The Star
Indonesia's action	53.84 %	44.5 %
Malaysia's action	38.46 %	50 %
Both countries	7.70 %	5.5 %

By looking at the table, it can be analysed that TJP and TS have different ways in reporting the event. TJP focuses the action done by Indonesian government, while TS tends to represent Malaysian government as the main actor. Thus, the report proportion has a role in detecting the tendencies of the news media.

3.2 Explanation

After describing and interpreting the articles, the next stage is explanation which is needed to make the connection between language, power and ideology clear.

The news articles represent the 29th SEA Games hosted by Malaysian government in which tainted with the issue having Indonesian flag being printed upside down in the booklet distributed to the participants. Youth and Sports Minister of Indonesia, Imam Nahrawi, spotted that and then shared his disappointment on his social media account, twitter, which later triggered responses from Indonesian netizen giving remark #ShameOnYouMalaysia. Demonstration over Malaysian embassy in Jakarta and the hacking on Malaysian websites following the flag incident are the other reactions expressing the disappointment toward the incident.

Flag of a country symbolises an honour and dignity. In Indonesia case, it also reflects the struggle in acquiring independence which contains historical value. Considering the geographical aspect between these neighbouring countries which have mutual traits, including culture, history and religion, it seems unnatural for organization committee getting the Indonesian flag mistakenly printed. Thus, that what makes citizens of a country feel insulted because of the mistake of the flag.

Historically, Malaysia and Indonesia had a number of problematic situation related to the right of several islands lies around the nations. There were also growing tension regarding the heritage culture, like Reog and Batik. Batik is later officially recognized as the Indonesia intangible heritage by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Having prior conflict makes the Indonesian are more sensitive towards the incident demanding further investigation about it.

Officially, Malaysian government expressed apology through the Foreign Affair Minister and President of Indonesia accepted it. The president then invited his citizens to move their attention to support the Indonesian athlete in the sport event.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

The analysis of two online newspaper articles shows that even though the news is seen as objective social practice product, it is inevitably determined by ideology. From the two online articles, we can see the difference in representing the same event. Thus, it is undeniable that media has the ability in shaping the readers' perception.

In the first step analysis, describing the headlines, lexical choice, quotation, quoting verbs, scare quote, theme, and report proportion was done to observe in what point of view the journalists from both newspaper media representing the event.

Secondly, the interpretation was done on those aspects in getting the implication of the lexical features chosen. Therefore, the embedded ideology can be revealed.

Lastly, those point of view and interpretation were related to the social context geographically, culturally and historically as the social context is important in finding out the background of the issue. Therefore, it is useful to for the readers to be aware and critical when reading news media.

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