

# The Representation of LGBT in Indonesia's International Mass Media

## *A Case of the Jakarta Post*

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Abstract: The recent free press commitment of media and nation brings impacts on the way in which media select and present a sensitive report such as on LGBT. This study is aimed at investigating the representation of LGBT in Indonesia's international mass media. The Jakarta Post as the most popular Indonesia's international news reports is the data source from which this study more specifically focuses on identifying how the news report deploys language choices in reporting LGBT and how the choices give impacts on the meaning potentials. This study employs a qualitative data collection and analysis design following the framework of Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to analysing texts. The analysis reveals that the Jakarta Post represents LGBT as a more passive social group being discriminated and intimidated by several religious groups, society and government officials; therefore, this position has gained supports from Human Rights activists. The Jakarta Post also portrays LGBT as an acceptable identity and acknowledged phenomenon in Indonesia. The findings suggest that the Jakarta Post promotes democratic values in which there is no exception for any social groups including LGBT to be accepted as part of the Indonesian community by critiquing that the discrimination serves as a means of intimidation.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

LGBT, according to American Psychological Association (2015) is an acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. LGBT has been widely accepted as a sexual and gender orientation-based minority (Subhrajit, 2014; Pew Research Center, 2013). As a minority group, the presence of LGBT has raised many pros and cons around the world. Especially in a country where religion is put as a central, such as Indonesia, LGBT is illegalized as none of the religious groups accept it (Pursika, 2009). The rejection is always voiced by national figures and religious communities (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Despite the rejection, LGBT shows its presence through LGBT activities such as LGBT's rally to gain equal rights in Yogyakarta on February 23, 2016 (*Jakarta Globe*, 2016). This study attempts to investigate the role of news reports in taking up the issue of LGBT by analysing reports on LGBT in *The Jakarta Post*, an Indonesia's international newspaper which has the potentials to address and to be read by wider audience. This study

uses Fairclough's three-dimensional concept in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to allow an in-depth analysis of formal properties of texts and connects it to a broader social context that will unveil representation, power, and ideologies.

### 1.1 Fairclough's Three Dimensional Concept

The three dimensional concept refers to Critical Discourse Analysis in the perspective of Fairclough (1995) which deals with the investigation of relation between two assumptions regarding language use: that language use is both socially shaping and shaped. The process in which language is being socially shaped is a very complex one, and Fairclough proposes the term 'mediation' to describe the indirect relationship between language use and society. In this regard, he believes that language is a medium to draw out beliefs, values, conventions and norms of society. In the analysis of discourse, Fairclough (1995) proposes three components to study a discourse: description, interpretation and explanation. The

three-dimensional model proposed by Fairclough (1989) aims to help linguists conduct discourse analysis critically. This model of Fairclough's three-dimensional concept can be seen in figure 1.

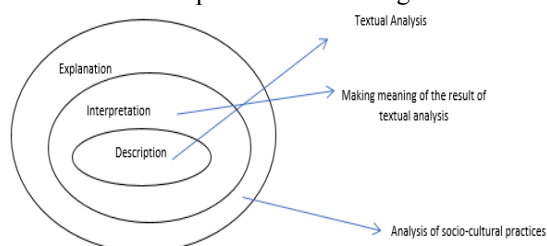


Figure 1: Three-Dimensional Concept in CDA.

As shown figure 1, description becomes one of the three crucial components of Critical Discourse Analysis. Fairclough (1995) argues that content of a discourse cannot be analyzed properly without analyzing the form, since what distinguishes one content of discourse to another is the form. Analyzing the forms allows the analysis of the relationship between text and its processes of production in three stages.

The next stage is interpretation stage, the relationship between text and processes of production and interpretation of a discursive practice is interpreted (Fairclough, 1989). This aims to investigate the connection "between text and interaction by considering a text as the product of a process of production, and as resource in the process of interpretation (Fairclough, 1989).

Fairclough (1989) recommends six major domains of interpretation levels. The first two levels of domains refer to the situational context and intertextual context. Meanwhile the four of them relate to four levels of text interpretation, namely surface of utterance, meaning of utterance, local coherence and text structure and point (Fairclough 1995). For the connection between intertextual context and situational context and textual interpretation, Fairclough (1989) assumes that interpretation is the combination of both levels.

The final stage of Fairclough's three-dimensional concept is explanation. This stage has two dimensions that depend on whether the emphasis is upon processes of struggle or upon relations of power (Fairclough, 1989). He further explains that the emphasis of process of struggle is contextualized in terms of non-discoursal struggles and the effects on structures. Meanwhile, there is an argument in the emphasis of power relations that discourse is determined by power relations. Fairclough (2012) sees this explanatory part as a critique that seeks causal factors (language is socially shaped and

shaping) of the emergence of a discourse that is concerned with ideologies, beliefs and concern manifested in the discourse that contribute to the establishment, sustaining, and reproduction of social orders and power relations. He further adds that "the nature of such relations can vary between institutions and organizations and in different places, and can change over time; it needs to be established through analysis" (Fairclough, 2012).

## 1.2 Transitivity

Transitivity is defined as a grammatical system in which clauses are described as representations (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) also claim that clause is the central processing unit in lexico-grammar, in which different kinds of meanings are mapped into an integrated grammatical structure within it. They also mention that the system of transitivity construes the world of experiences into a manageable set of process types, in which every type of process provides its own model to construe a particular domain of experience. This means that clause represents meaning or experience. Fairclough (1995) views transitivity or ideational function of language as a significant part that constitutes systems of knowledge since representation corresponds to ideational function.

In transitivity, there are three semantic categories namely processes, participants and circumstances, that are used to explain the representation of phenomena in real world through linguistic structures. Processes in transitivity, which are realized by verbs, are considered central to the analysis of transitivity. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) argue that clauses providing different types of process, contribute distinctively to construal of experiences in text. Thus, different process types contained in text may produce reality or experiences differently. In addition, Halliday and Martin (1996, p. 31) believe that process types build a world of action where physical and biological entities act by themselves, or on other things, and construe "a world of semiotic activities in which typically conscious entities negotiate meaning; as well as construe a world of relationships among entities or "a world in which things can be without doing". These varying construes of reality, according to Halliday and Martin (1996), are represented through different types of processes. As mentioned by Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), there are seven types of processes, namely material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, existential, and meteorological.

### 1.3 Media

Media play a significant role in society. According to Philo and Happer (2013), the main role of media is to inform the public about what happens in particular areas in which audiences do not have direct experience or knowledge. Another significant role of the media is “to reinforce dominant social values and norms that legitimize social system” (Gurevitch, et. al., 2005). Corresponding to the role of media as a means of the reinforcement of dominance in society, Fairclough (1992) introduces the term ‘hegemony’ as power of domination across economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of a society. Hegemony is power. According to Fairclough (1992), hegemony is about constructing alliances, and integrating rather than simply dominating subordinate classes to win their consents. In addition Fairclough (1999) comments on hegemony as follows:

*Relations of domination based upon consent rather than coercion, involving the naturalization of practices and their social relations as well as relations between practices, as matters of common sense; hence the concept of hegemony emphasizes the importance of ideology in achieving and maintaining relations of domination. (p. 24)*

Thus, hegemonies are produced, reproduced, contested and transformed in discourse as well as naturalized to be widely accepted (Fairclough, 1999). In addition to the role of media as a medium for the reinforcement of dominant social value and legitimization of social systems, there is a tendency that media are political. Hadesian (2006) argues that media is a political power and tool, occupied in a way by the big powers, international corporations, big agencies using for their political and economic objectives that control and can pay. By considering the presence of power and political bias existed in media, it indicates that media are not neutral.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

The data of this study comprise four controversial news reports with distinctive titles on LGBT issues of nine-year time span (2008-2016), published by *the Jakarta Post*. The selected news reports are published in 2008 (the first published articles) and between 2015-2016 when the issue of LGBT was heated as illustrated in figure 2.



Figure 2: The line chart of the 9-year time span (2008-2017) of the published articles on LGBT in *the Jakarta Post*.

This study employs qualitative descriptive research method involving three stages of analysis, namely description, interpretation and explanation. The first stage, description, explores the linguistic features of the data that rely on Halliday’s transitivity analysis. In interpretation stage, the description of data is interpreted in terms of the meanings of process types in which the quantity of process types serves as the basis for the interpretation. In the third stage, explanation, the interpretation of the data is connected to a broader context of society in Indonesia, including ideologies and power relations embedded in the media.

## 3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 The Representations of LGBT

*The Jakarta post* tends to represent LGBT as a more passive participant (e.g. as a goal, carrier, and phenomenon) that is evident in the dominant processes. Through the frequent appearance of material processes (32%) LGBT is represented in a way that LGBT is positioned as the target (LGBT as a goal (23%) of intimidation and discrimination by several religious groups, society and government officials; therefore, this position has caused Human Rights activists and several government officials to defend them. From the choices of relational processes, it can be seen that *the Jakarta Post* reports LGBT as an acceptable identity in which LGBT is defined by a carrier (18%) to attribute to it positively. Meanwhile, the presence of negatives attributes given to LGBT as stated by the media is to pint out the cause of homosexual condemnation. The positive attributes to LGBT is as seen on Table 1.

Table 1: Positive Attributes to LGBT

Carrier	Attributes
<b>Homosexuality/ Homosexuals</b>	natural, permissible within Islam, no reasons to reject homosexuals under Islam, not enemy, no difference between lesbians and non-lesbians, was from God, equal

Another finding also suggests that the use of mental processes for LGBT is mostly represented as a phenomenon (26%), indicating that the presence of LGBT is acknowledged in Indonesia that they should be recognized, encouraged, protected, or accepted by Indonesian society that includes TV programs, MUI, as well as government (see Table 2).

Table 2: LGBT as Phenomena

Sensors	Mental Processes	Phenomena
A 2014 UN Development Program report	(called on government) to officially recognized	The existence of LGBT people
KPAI	Acknowledged	The rights of the members of LGBT community
	Was concerned with	The increasing numbers of LGBT starring programs
So people	Realize (LGBT must be protected)	
	(Most of the discussion regarding LGBT community in local media) is focused on encouraging	Hatred and intolerance against members of LGBT community
	Is respected	Homosexual groups in Bugis Makasar tradition called Bissu
KPAI	Should instead encourage	LGBT programs
Programs	Could shed lights	on LGBT community

MUI	Should embrace	People for their difference
	Should get	The fact that LGBT exists in Indonesia

### 3.2 The Hidden Ideology

Based on the choice of transitivity, *the Jakarta Post* shows an attempt to democratize the readers in responding to the issue of LGBT in Indonesia. This claim is in accordance with Fairclough's (2003) explanation that ideologies are "representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and exploitation". The claim relates to the way in which *the Jakarta Post* shows its struggle for supporting the acceptance of LGBT group as part of Indonesian community and critiquing the intimidation towards LGBT. Democratization or the act of democratizing is defined as a way to mediate various social interests in a particular community and to solve conflicts by dialogues rather than by force of arms that focuses on a wide range of human concerns and the protection of human rights (Boutros, 1996). This claim is supported by the findings showing that the media attempt to convince their readers to consider the presence of LGBT as a marginalized group in Indonesia.

Based on the transitivity analysis, the tendency of *the Jakarta Post* in representing ideological agenda can be illustrated in figure 3.

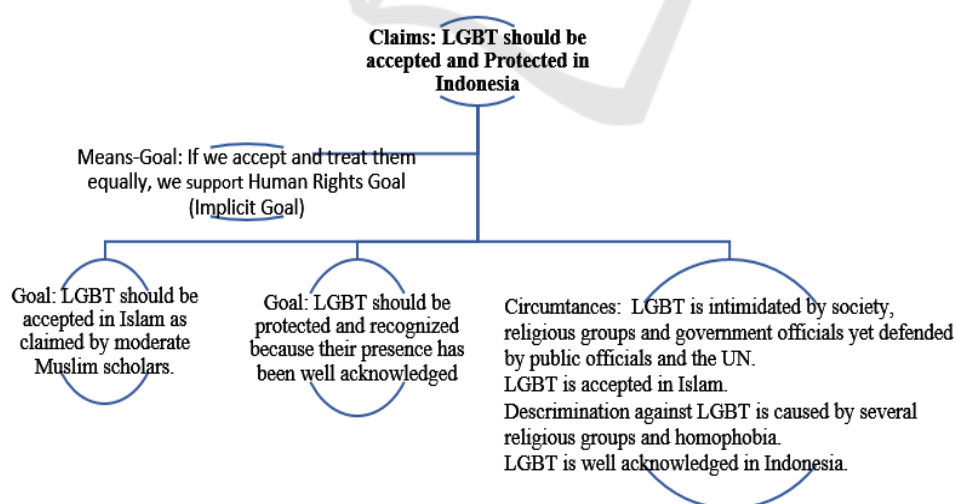


Figure 3: Practical Reasoning of *the Jakarta Post*.

*The Jakarta Post* claims that LGBT should be accepted and protected in Indonesia. There are

several attempts made by the media in order to make their claim acceptable and persuasive, i.e. through

circumstances and goals. There are two goals embedded in the news reports published by *the Jakarta Post*. The representation of LGBT as a victim that is defended by Human Rights activists and several public officials as one of the circumstances that lead to one of the goals, suggests that the media tend to build up a judgment among their readers that LGBT as a minority is vulnerable and discriminated thus they should be defended. The overall goals generally support the claim proposed by the media that LGBT should be accepted and protected in the country. Different from other findings (such as Badgett et al., 2017), The findings of this study indicate that *the Jakarta Post* represents LGBT in a more positive way and position it as “victims” discriminated by the public, religious groups, police officers as well as government officials. *The Jakarta Post* aims to present to its readers the representations of LGBT only in the way it feels fit ideologically with its orientations, agenda and ideologies. The ideological stance of the media reflects Boutrous’ (1996) argument about democratic media as a free press and a vehicle to promote open society in which it can flourish, mediate and enable people to discuss, debate, and express positions regarding particular issues.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study unfold some interpretations related to the representation of LGBT in *the Jakarta Post*. The findings suggest that *the Jakarta Post* attempts to represent LGBT as a passive participant in a way that the media depict them as an acceptable identity, acknowledged a phenomenon whose existence should be considered a defended party by Human Rights activists due to the presence of intimidation and discrimination against it. The ideology embedded in the representations of LGBT in such media as drawn from the explanation stage suggests that *the Jakarta Post* shows its struggles in persuading people to accept LGBT as inclusively part of Indonesian community. The explanation stage also reveals how *the Jakarta Post* critiques that the intimidation rejoiced in Indonesian communities could serve as a means of discrimination against LGBT; therefore, *the Jakarta Post* recommends it should be ended. By drawing a line intertextually with other parties commonly voicing this issue, this study relates this issue with Human Rights’ perspective. Intertextually, the ideology embedded in the *Jakarta Post* is the one celebrated among Human Rights’ activities. *The Jakarta Post* voices strongly that

LGBT is a minority group in Indonesia that should be treated equally.

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