

TRANSITIVITY SYSTEM ON PRABOWO'S REPRESENTATION IN BRITISH ONLINE ARTICLE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS APPROACH

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Abstract

Articles in online media may represent media's perspective on the object of their news. After the long process of the Indonesian presidential election in 2019, Prabowo's appointment as the Minister of Defense in the Indonesia Presidential cabinet became a hot topic. The appointment was questioned particularly due to the former general's past actions. This study aims to analyze how the media present their news articles regarding the appointment of Prabowo as Defense Minister using the transitivity system in the Clause as Representation, and to describe how the representation of Prabowo in his appointment influenced the readers' interpretation. This study adopts the descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data based on the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough (1995a) and transitivity system by Halliday (2004). The data were taken from and article in the British online media website, TheGuardian.com. This study results in a slightly higher number of positive representations compared to the negative ones, but the difference is so slight that it can be said the article attempts to present him in a balanced manner.

Keywords: British online article; Critical Discourse Analysis; defense minister; Prabowo; transitivity system

Abstrak

Artikel pada media online dapat mewakili pandangan media terhadap objek dalam berita mereka. Setelah proses pemilihan presiden Indonesia 2019 yang panjang, penunjukan Prabowo sebagai Menteri Pertahanan dalam kabinet kepresidenan Indonesia menjadi berita hangat. Penunjukan itu dipertanyakan terutama karena sepak terjang sang mantan Jenderal di masa lalu. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis bagaimana media menampilkan artikel berita mereka sehubungan dengan penunjukan Prabowo sebagai Menteri Pertahanan, menggunakan sistem transitivitas dalam Clause as Representation. Selain itu, penelitian ini bertujuan memaparkan bagaimana representasi Prabowo pada penunjukan mempengaruhi interpretasi pembaca. Penelitian ini mengadopsi metode deskriptif kualitatif untuk menganalisis data berdasarkan pendekatan Analisa Wacana Kritis Fairclough (1995a) dan sistem transitivitas Halliday (2004). Sumber data diambil dari artikel pada media online Inggris, TheGuardian.com. Penelitian ini menghasilkan jumlah representasi positif yang lebih banyak dari representasi negatif namun dengan sedikit perbedaan sehingga bisa dikatakan seimbang.

Kata kunci: Artikel online Inggris; Analisa Wacana Kritis; Menteri Pertahanan; Prabowo; Sistem Transitivitas

I. INTRODUCTION

Prabowo ran for presidency in the last two Indonesian presidential elections (2014 and 2019), with the latter against the incumbent Joko Widodo. In the elections, Prabowo was defeated by a slight difference in the turnouts. In the end, Joko Widodo gained the most votes based on the results from the General Election Commission of Indonesia (Merrita, 2021). The competition ran so hard that the supporters of both sides were eager to see their candidates win. The fierce competition can also be seen from the wording they used in the series of presidential debates (Citraresmana, 2019). The competition became “special” as the competition involved two fierce rivals in the last two presidential elections. This fact becomes even more interesting after the elected president appointed his rival as a minister in his cabinet. The appointment of Prabowo as the Defense Minister in Jokowi’s cabinet became a concern, not only in Indonesia but also in the international community. This issue became crucial not only because of the tight process of the preceding presidential election, but it also was widely known by the public, nationally and internationally, that the former general was involved in human rights violations in his, namely: during his placement in East Timor (now Timor Leste) in the early 1980s, and during the riot in May 1998 (Noel, 2010; Purdey, 2002) when he was an army commander under his late father-in-law the former President Soeharto. Nowadays, almost all news from the past and present can be easily accessed from all over the world through digital media (Novita & Sujatna, 2019). Media may construct readers’ opinions on the object of their report, through their news articles. An online media outlet that reviewed Prabowo’s appointment as Defense Minister is *TheGuardian.com*, the digital version of the British newspaper *The Guardian*. This present study aims to identify the representation of Prabowo in the article and how the news texts influence the readers on the object of the discussion. This is because media has the power to construct an issue and shape it to achieve the effect they desire (Hakim, Astriani, & Rosiana, 2000).

The issue in this study is best approached using the textual analysis concept in Critical Discourse Analysis by Fairclough, namely the Text Dimension in his theory: *The Dimension of Communicative Events* (Fairclough, 1995b). The media constructed people’s opinion on the representation of Prabowo and his appointment as Defense Minister in the article, not only through the review about the process of the presidential election but also about Prabowo’s position and his historical actions. Therefore, it is assumed that the reviews in the news tend to put the object of the news on a marginal basis by creating certain opinions among the readers through the power abuse that influences social inequality. Fairclough explains that Critical Discourse Analysis related to power can be used to analyze several things, namely the position of the text in the issue discussed, the social actors who get the advantages from the texts written or those who are disadvantaged because of the texts, analyzing whether the texts were used to attack certain people, and the consequences of the texts’ existence.

This text dimension by Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995b) is adopted by Halliday in his transitivity concept of *Clause as Representation*. Transitivity as the analysis system in the concept of *Clause as Representation* can be used to analyze the meaning that lies behind a clause and the intention of the author through the *participants*, *processes*, and *circumstances* in the text (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). The transitivity system consists of six processes, namely *material*, *mental*, *behavioral*, *verbal*, *relational*, and *existential* processes.

Material process is the process of doing and happening (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Sujatna, 2013). The main elements in the clause are *process* and *participant* as doer (called *actor* or *agent*). Meanwhile, the *circumstances* and other participants (which are called *goal*, *beneficiary*, and *scope*) are optional. In this *material process* there are additional elements,

namely *initiator* as the cause of the action (Gerot & Wignell, 1995) and *resulting attribute* as the result of the process (Deterding & Poedjosoedarmo, 2001).

Mental process is the process of sensing (*feeling, thinking, perceiving, and also having an emotional reaction to things*) (Gerot & Wignell, 1995; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The main elements in the clause are *senser (experiencer)* and *phenomenon*. In reference to Halliday, Lock (1996) divided this process into four types, namely (1) *perception (hearing, feeling, seeing, noticing, smelling, and tasting)*, (2) *affection (loving, liking, hating, admiring, missing, and fearing)*, (3) *cognition (knowing, remembering, forgetting, believing, thinking, and doubting)*, and (4) *volition (needing, wanting, desiring, intending, wishing, and hoping)*. There is an additional participant in this mental process called *inducer* (Gerot & Wignell, 1995) as the one that initiates the process.

Behavioral process is the process of physiological and psychological behaviors, including *breathing, watching, looking, listening, smiling, snoring, dreaming, hiccupping, and pondering* (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). The participant involved in this process is called *beholder*.

Verbal process is the process of saying (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). The participants in this process are *sayer, recipient, verbiage, quoted, and target* (Sujatna, 2013). The *sayer* is the one who produces the utterance; the *recipient* is the one to whom the verbal process is addressed (as *indirect object* in the clause); the *verbiage* is what was said (as the *direct object* in the clause); the *quoted* is the representation of the utterance realized in the *direct speech* (Bloor & Bloor, 2004); and the *target* is someone or something that the *sayer* says something about (Deterding & Poedjosoedarmo, 2001). The *target* only includes certain verbs, namely *criticizing, praising, insulting, slandering, flattering, and blaming*.

Relational process is the process that involves states of being and having (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). This is the generalization of the traditional notion of *copula* construction. They are used to identify something or to assign a quality to something. According to Bloor and Bloor (2004) *relational process* can be divided into *attributive process* and *identifying process*. The main elements in *attributive process* are *carrier* (as the subject of the clause), *attributive* (as the process), and *attribute* (as the subject complement in the clause). Meanwhile, the main elements in *identifying process* are *token* (as the subject of the clause), *identifying* (as the process), and *value* (as the subject complement in the clause). *Attributive* and *identifying* as the processes in the clause are represented by copula. There are also additional participants that function as the causer of the relational process, namely *attributor* and *assigner* (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). *Attributor* is the one that gives the attribute, while *assigner* is the one that assigns the identity.

Existential process is the process of exacting existence. The participant in this process is called *existent*, which is expressed by the 'real' subject of the clause and followed by *locative circumstance* (Sujatna, 2013). According to Bloor and Bloor (2004), there are two types of existential processes, namely (1) with a copular verb and an empty *there* as subject; and (2) with a copular verb, the *existent* as subject, and completed by a circumstantial adjunct.

As the topic in this study is closely related to Critical Discourse Analysis and the concept of transitivity system, there are several previous studies that should be considered comparisons to the present study. Isti'annah (2014) conducted a study focusing on the transitivity process. In her research, Isti'annah studied the process of the gubernatorial election in Jakarta, through her analysis upon four selected opinions by people who were interested in political issues. Similar to this present study, she adopted Critical Discourse Analysis as the analysis method since her research was closely related to the field of politics. In her study, the transitivity system of *Clause as Representation* was also chosen as the tool to analyze the representation of the election in the participants' opinions. Also similar to this study, based on her analysis she found that most opinions from the participants used

material processes to show what Jakartans expect from the future governor. Relational process, verbal process, and mental process of the opinions appeared as complements, while the circumstances existed as indicators of people's expectations of the election. However, while this present study attempts to describe the way media represents Prabowo in an article, Isti'anah's study attempted to show the representation of the election through people's opinions.

Purnama (2016) discussed and compared media's opinions on a topic from varying sides. He studied how Arab media and American media represent Hamas and Israel and the conflict between both sides. Similar to the present study, Purnama adopted Critical Discourse Analysis as his analysis method since his research was closely related to media discourse. He also used transitivity system as the analysis tool, to figure out how both sides of the media reviewed Hamas and Israel based on their point of view. Similar to this present study, Purnama's research tried to find out the way mass media represent the object of the study positively or negatively. In the result of his analysis, Purnama concluded that American media represented Israel positively, but represented Hamas negatively. Conversely, Arab media represented Israel negatively, but represented Hamas positively. He concluded that mass media intentionally construct readers' opinions to influence them to support one side rather than the other. This is slightly different from the result of this present study, which produces somewhat balanced results between the positive and the negative representations.

A study by Karisa and Lauwren (2020) analyzed the transitivity system in a speech. The speech of a Swedish teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg in the United Nation's 2019 Climate Action Summit was used as the data source. In their analysis, they attempted to record the frequency of appearances of all the processes of the transitivity system in the speech, while this present study this present study attempts to describe the representation of Prabowo in the article using the transitivity system. For their research, they purely adopted the transitivity system by Halliday without the Critical Discourse Analysis approach. As a result, material process was used dominantly in the speech to describe the damage to the environment done by humanity, followed by the relational process that explained the important effects of climate change to the world and to her life. These two topics were Greta Thunberg's main discussion points. Meanwhile, the mental process, behavioral process, verbal process, and existential process complement the main processes.

II. METHOD

This study adopted the descriptive qualitative research method by Creswell (2014), which focuses on observing and documenting the data, analyzing the data text, and interpreting the themes and text patterns. This main method is supported by the historical approach (Abbas, 2014) as an additional method since past events and media background serve as the secondary data.

As the topic taken is closely related to politics, power, and ideology, this study purposely chose Critical Discourse Analysis as the main tool for the analysis. According to Fairclough (1995a), Critical Discourse Analysis is used to analyze the relation between language, power, and ideology. Using the Critical Discourse Analysis, this study analyzed the representation of Prabowo on his appointment as Defense Minister through the sentences that mention or discuss Prabowo. Fairclough (1995b) also argued that representation deals with two aspects: (1) the relation of *participants*, *processes*, and *circumstances* in simple clauses, and (2) the sequence of the clauses.

The present study focuses on the transitivity processes, used in online news articles as the object of the study. How the texts present the news was interpreted based on the

transitivity system in the *Clause as Representation* by Halliday (2004). Halliday in Sujatna (2013) and in Gerot and Wignell (1995) stated that *Clause as Representation* explains the *ideational meaning* of a text to describe the meaning of a phenomenon through the *participants*, *processes*, and *circumstances*. This statement is related to Fairclough's argumentation mentioned earlier.

The primary data for this study are taken from an article on the British online media, *TheGuardian.com* (2019) entitled “‘Dark day for human rights’: Subianto named as Indonesia's defence minister”. The secondary data are procured from various reports about Prabowo Subianto, such as reports on the Indonesian general elections in 2019 and 2014, Prabowo's involvement in the May 1998 riot, Prabowo's involvement in humanity case in Timor Timur the early 1980s, as well as various sources that reported on Prabowo's appointment.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, various processes of the transitivity system are found in the data source. The data themselves consist of clauses mentioning or indicating the representation of Prabowo on his appointment as Defense Minister or about his past actions. It is through these data in the article that the media, or the author, delivers messages by constructing the readers' minds through the meanings behind the processes.

There are twenty-five processes found in the thirty-six clauses of the article. Some clauses may consist of more than one process, some others consist of one process only, and the rest cannot be taken as data since they do not mention or do not have any relation to Prabowo as the object of discussion. Below are the sample clauses that represent each of the processes found in the article.

1. Material Process

As mentioned before, material process is the process of doing and happening. The elements in the clause are *process* and *participant* or *doer*. In relation to the object of the discussion in this study, the material process explains who does something or what happens. It reveals the action and the phenomenon through the words used by the text author in the report.

In this study, the material process can be found in a number of clauses. There are thirteen material processes in nine sentences that mention Prabowo or indicate discussions about Prabowo detected in the articles. These processes describe what is believed to have happened to or have been done or experienced by Prabowo or other participants in the issue. The examples and their explanation are described as follows.

a. Positive representation

Positive representation in the material process is the word or phrase classified that represents Prabowo positively as the object of the discussion in the clause. This study found five positive representations of the material processes. One of them is presented below as an example.

(1) Subianto named as Indonesia's defence minister.

Subianto	named	as Indonesia's defence minister
beneficiary	material	circ: role

In the example (1) above, “named” is the material process written in passive voice that shows positive representation about Prabowo. “Subianto” (Prabowo) acts as the beneficiary in the

clause, the receiver of the position of Defense Minister. The clause tells the readers that the position has been assigned to Prabowo, officially from the government as the actor (doer) which is not mentioned in the clause.

b. Negative representation

Negative representation in the material process is the word or phrase that represents Prabowo negatively as the object of the discussion in the clause. There are eight negative representations of material process found in the article. One of them is explained as follows.

(2) General who has been accused of abuses.

<i>Subianto</i>	<i>who</i>	<i>has been accused</i>	<i>of abuses</i>
<i>beneficiary</i>		<i>material</i>	<i>circ: cause</i>

In the example (2) above, “*has been accused*” is the material process that is written in passive voice. Again, in the example, Prabowo (*Subianto*) is the beneficiary of the process. Meanwhile, “*of abuses*” works as the circumstantial of cause. The actor (doer), again in the example, is not mentioned in the clause. It makes it difficult to tell who the exact accuser is. This clause is a negative representation that informs the readers that Prabowo is not an innocent person, because he committed a crime in the past.

2. Mental Process

Instances of Mental process can also be found in the article. Since it involves emotional feeling, it is the process of sensing. It tells the readers about what people sense about something.

Mental process is found only in two clauses in the article. Both of these processes are positive representations, showing what Joko Widodo (as Prabowo’s former rival) senses about Prabowo. One of them is given below as an example of the process.

(3) he knows more than I do.

<i>he</i>	<i>knows</i>	<i>more than I do</i>
<i>senser</i>	<i>mental</i>	<i>phenomenon</i>

The example (3) above shows what Joko Widodo senses about Prabowo (represented as “*he*” in the clause). The process “*knows*” is the way Joko Widodo gives appreciation about Prabowo that he is a man who understands his duty because he masters the position. It is an acknowledgement from Joko Widodo to his rival, to inform people about Prabowo’s quality, through the media. The phenomenon in the clause clearly informs the reader that he is not worried to appoint Prabowo because the position was given to a capable and expert person.

3. Verbal Process

This is the third most common process found in the article. Verbal process is used to convey what someone said directly or indirectly. When it is written in the news text directly, then the utterance will be placed between quotes. Usually, this kind of utterance is originally said by the speaker. It is written as it was said without any modification from the text author. This is because the author wants to avoid any mistakes or liability if the original statement contains offensive words or is considered controversial. Meanwhile, the utterance or statement which is written indirectly, is merely a report taken from the source. This kind of

clause or sentence might have been modified by the text writer. In other words, the clause or sentence or statement from the source person is influenced by the text writer's personal opinion and interpretation.

In the article, four verbal processes are found, each contained in four different sentences. This study found out that the verbal process in this article is applied both directly and indirectly. It means, sometimes the author chose to present what has been originally said by another speaker, or merely reported what has been said based on his interpretation.

a. Positive representation

Positive representation in verbal process is the word or phrase classified in verbal process that represents Prabowo positively in the text. This study found three positive representations of the verbal process. One of them is presented below.

- (4) Subianto saying on Monday that his party, Gerindra, was "ready to help if asked."

Subianto	saying	on monday	that	his party, Gerindra was "ready to help if asked."
sayer	verbal	circ: time		verbiage

In the example (4) above, the verbal process is written in an indirect positive representation about Prabowo. The quote used in the text was not meant for direct speech, but as an emphasis. The author quite likely has his own opinion that the phrase "ready to help if asked" might have double meanings: whether Gerindra will always be ready whenever needed, or Gerindra will be ready to help only if there is a request and will do nothing if there is none. However, it was a positive interpretation, because the author tells the readers based on his interpretation that Prabowo accepted his new position in the cabinet, and dedicated his party and himself to his duty to help the government.

b. Negative representation

Negative representation is the word or phrase classified in verbal process that represent Prabowo in the text negatively. The negative representation of this process is found only in one clause of the article and is given bellow.

- (5) Usman Hamid, Amnesty International's Indonesia executive, said "it would be a dark day for human rights in this country" if he got the defence job.

Usman Hamid, Amnesty International's Indonesia executive	said	"it would be a dark day for human rights in this country" if he got the defence job
sayer	verbal	verbiage

In the example (5) above, the media (the text producer) uses quotation marks to express "a dark day for human rights". This is a negative representation of Prabowo, a distrust because of his past action. The article was shared and consumed by the general public; therefore, it can be said that this direct sentence is used to avoid the responsibility that the text writer and the media should take, caused by the use of the expression.

4. Relational Process

The number of relational processes found in this study are fewer than that of material processes. However, as this process is used to identify something or to assign a quality to

something, the relational processes found in this study function to reveal the status of the object of the discussion or to relate the object to some other things.

There are seven relational processes in five sentences that mention, discuss, or are related to Prabowo in the article. These processes explain how the text writer identifies Prabowo or determines his quality in respect to things that can be associated with him. By considering these relations, readers may figure out Prabowo's personal status and his position in the society. Below are the sample clauses of relational processes in the article.

a. Positive representation

Positive representation in relational process is the word or phrase detected to represent Prabowo in the article positively. For this process, this study found four positive representations. One of them is given as follows.

(6) *Prabowo is a huge gamble for Jokowi.*

<i>He</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>a huge gamble</i>	<i>for Jokowi</i>
<i>carrier</i>	<i>relational: attr.-intens.</i>	<i>attributive</i>	<i>circ: cause</i>

In the example (6) above, the relational process shows a positive representation of Prabowo. The media shows that a "huge gamble" for Jokowi (Joko Widodo) means that the president has high expectations by appointing and giving Prabowo an important position as Defense Minister. Despite the negative effects of the appointment, he expected Prabowo's status as the leader of a prominent party, his experience in the military, and also his capability of arranging strategy may give him and his government a lot of advantages.

b. Negative representation

Negative representation in relational process is the word or phrase classified in relational process for representing Prabowo negatively in the article. The negative representation of this relational process is found in three clauses of the article. The example can be seen below.

(7) *it would be a dark day for human rights in this country.*

<i>it</i>	<i>would be</i>	<i>a dark day</i>	<i>for human right</i>	<i>in this country</i>
<i>carrier</i>	<i>relational: attr.-intens.</i>	<i>attributive</i>	<i>circ: cause</i>	<i>circ: place</i>

In the example (7) above, the author provided a negative representation of Prabowo, showing concerns and fears of something that is yet to happen. This clause may influence the readers to feel and think the same, that the appointment of Prabowo as the Defense Minister was a bad decision of the government that might risk the nation's future. This relational process relates Prabowo's past actions to his present days. Therefore, based on Prabowo's past actions, his appointment as the Defense Minister should not have happened, although for it to be cancelled required a great deal of effort.

From the analysis of the data, the material processes appeared in most clauses. Among these thirty-six clauses in the article, there are twenty-six clauses which discuss Prabowo, his past actions, and his appointment as Defense Minister, which make up the data for this study. Thirteen of those clauses are classified as material processes to deliver the message in the article. Other processes that can be detected in the article are mental

processes, verbal processes, and relational processes that appear in two, four, and seven clauses, respectively. Meanwhile, the behavioral process and existential process are not found in the article. The frequency of appearance of each process can be seen in the table below.

No.	Type of Process	Frequency of appearance	Percentage
1.	Material	13	50
2.	Mental	2	7.69
3.	Behavioral	0	0
4.	Verbal	4	15.39
5.	Relational	7	26.92
6.	Existential	0	0
Number of Clauses		26	100

Table 1. Frequency of Appearance of Each Process

According to the analysis, both positive and negative representations brought by the processes are also present in the article. These representations are analyzed from the relation between the processes and the participants and/or the circumstances. The number of positive representations is higher than that of negative representations, which is fourteen to twelve. However, since the number of positive representations is not much different from the negative ones, it can be said that the media viewed the issue more or less equally. The comparison of the frequency of appearance between the positive and negative representations can be seen in the following table.

No.	Type of Process	Positive	Negative	Number of appearances
1.	Material	5	8	13
2.	Mental	2	0	2
3.	Verbal	3	1	4
4.	Relational	4	3	7
Number of Representation		14	12	26

Table 2. Comparison between the Positive and the Negative Representations

V. CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the analysis, the representation of Prabowo on his appointment as Defense Minister in British online media outlet *TheGuardian.com* appears in four processes of the transitivity system, namely (1) *material* (thirteen items), (2) *mental* (two items), *verbal* (four items), and (4) *relational* (seven items). Meanwhile, two other processes (*behavioral* and *existential* processes) are not present in the article. The positive representations are expressed in fourteen items compared to twelve of the negative ones, in the processes supported by the participants and/or the circumstances of the clauses. This means that *TheGuardian.com* as a British online media outlet tends to represent Prabowo in his appointment as Defense Minister rather positively than negatively. However, since the difference is very slight, it can be said that the article presents Prabowo as the object of the discussion rather neutrally.

While this present study attempts to be a thorough one, it certainly has its own shortcomings due to limited data sources and partial analytical approach techniques. Therefore, future similar studies, particularly in Critical Discourse Analysis approach using the Transitivity System, could consider adding more data support or adding analytical

approaches, such as Functional Grammar, Pragmatics, or Appraisal System, to achieve better results.

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