The Online Media Representation of Bullying Issue: A Case of Audrey

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Abstract—This study analyzed the online media representation of Audrey's bullying issue by identifying the appraisal devices used in reporting the case of Audrey in five news portals. The study aimed to reveal the reporting strategy by exploring the appraisal devices and identifying the potential representational meanings. The data included five news related to Audrey's Bullying in 2019, analyzed by grouping the clauses to mark engagement, attitude, and graduation used in language according to Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal System. The appraisal analysis shows that all of the five news portals dominantly used Engagement (Monogloss-Heterogloss) and Attitude (Judgement) to construct their news discourse. The five news portals also show a rather similar negative-reaction to the issue. However, the use of the appraisal devices of these five news portals varied in accordance with the context and the main focus of the news, contributing to the news' representation which covers specific perspective, generalization, and victimization.

Keywords—Appraisal Theory, Bullying, Media Discourse, Representation, Systemic Functional Linguistics.

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of bullying is often discussed as a social phenomenon due to its unique nature of aggression. However, Yahn (2012) claimed that there is little research that offers a coherent, comprehensive, and uniform understanding of the underlying dynamics, the causes, and the societal influences of bullying. Yahn also added that there is no universally accepted set of definitions or criteria for what constitutes bullying. As Waasdorp and Bradshaw (2015) described, bullying is a form of 'unwanted aggressive behavior' that occurs repeatedly against a victim, that shows power imbalance that could occur physically (e.g., hitting and kicking), verbally (e.g., teasing and threatening), and relational (e.g., rumor spreading and exclusion). The phenomenon can be described as intentional aggression or abuse to assert dominance and create a power imbalance over the victim that can occur in physical, verbal, and relational forms.

Furthermore, mass media has the ability to expose any social phenomenon in every aspect of layers of a community: criminal acts, celebrity controversies, political issues, catastrophes, etc. Therefore, bullying can be considered a social phenomenon that can be explored as news material. All of these events are exploited as news material which is a valuable commodity in the world of mass media, both in print and electronic (newspapers, radio broadcasts, television, internet, etc.) This implies that the mass media has become one of the most powerful tools of social control (Suherman, 2008).

According to Purwanto (as cited in Suherman, 2008), a journalist is capable of leading their readers into a certain attitude towards various types of news that cannot be separated from various interests. This means that mass media can independently publicize their beliefs into their own prints. Particularly to the interest of the study, is the representation of the mass media ideology of bullying issue. Therefore, it also implies that mass media cannot be considered neutral due to the possibility of a certain bias.

As a news material, there was one topic that most debated in 2019 revolving around Audrey's bullying issue. Audrey is 14-year old a junior high school student from Pontianak, West Kalimantan, who was beaten by a number of high school students. As reported, the beating occurred on Friday, March 29th, 2019. However, her parents reported to the South Pontianak Police Station one week later or on Friday, April 5th, 2019. Audrey's case first gained people's attention on Twitter in the middle of 2019. Because of the massive attention, Audrey's case became one of the most popular topics on the platform.

The study aims to unveil media representation and the social context in

Audrey's case. This study used the model of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) Appraisal System Analysis Approach by Martin and White (2005). The theory allows the researcher to conduct an in—depth analysis of the texts and connect the representation of media to the social context that will unveil representation behind the texts.

There are several studies related to the appraisal system that have been conducted. For example, Ross and Caldwell (2020) explored a selection of the tweets of President Donald Trump, Su (2016) conducted a study about positive discourse analysis of Xi Jinping's speech at the National University of Singapore, Jakaza (2013) conducted a study on appraisal devices focused on political issues representation in newspaper articles, and Widya (2008) explored the appraisal system found in punk-zine columns in order to identify the writer's ideology represented to the readers.

This research attempted to expand the appraisal analysis in investigating another field unexplored in some of the previous studies. This study is expected to raise language awareness to the readers to be more critical in responding to the news.

II. THEORETICAL FRRAMEWORK

This research uses several theories and understandings in revealing the representation in the Audrey's bullying case.

A. Representation

According to Hall (1997), language is a tool to express thoughts, ideas, and feelings. In the relation to language and representation, the *mental representation* (concept and ideas) is translated into a common language to correlate concepts and ideas with certain written words, spoken sound, or visual images. Furthermore, another definition discusses views on representation as a "language used in a text or talk to assign meaning to groups and their social practices, to events, and to social conditions and objects" (Fairclough, 1989, as cited in Wenden, 2005, p.90). In addition, representation can contain a point of view or ideology of the individual who made them; the creation of meaning put in the representation is selected and constructed including the built-in value judgments.

This difference makes representations varied and has effects on the built-in value judgments regarding the topics. Based on this, several representations can arise from the use of appraisal devices, such as generalizations or victimizations. This depends on the ideas or representations that the mass media wants to represent in their news. It also could be done by directing the readers into a certain perspective or opinion from a particular source, making the reader agree or disagree with the topic presented

B. Appraisal Theory

Appraisal is a system of interpersonal meaning. Appraisal is used to negotiate social relationships between humans, by telling readers what they feel about objects and people. The beginning of Appraisal Theory itself according to White (as cited in Suherman, 2008), was developed as an extension analysis of interpersonal meaning from Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). In this study, the theory aims to unveil the relationship between news writers (author) and readers as consumers (reader/audience), specifically on how journalists intention in positioning their reader.

Furthermore, Martin and White (2005) propose three subsystems of Appraisal Theory; *Engagement* (oriented in more philosophically influenced approaches), *Attitude* (moves beyond emotion to deal more comprehensively with feelings), and *Graduation* (deal more comprehensively with feelings). The image below shows the concept of appraisal theory more clearly.
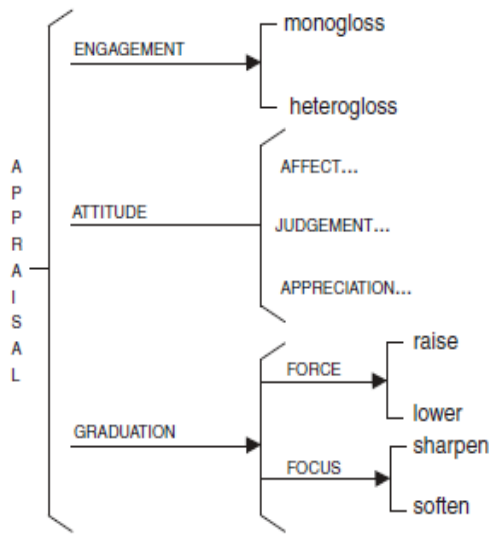
Figure 2.5.1
Appraisal Theory Subsystems (Martin & White, 2005, p. 38)

III. METHODS

The study adopted the methodical analysis from Ting Su (2016), analyzing the data under the guidance of the appraisal theory. The study was conducted to reveal the hidden representation of five online news from five news portals, in order to reveal the ideology and how these mass media represent issues in Audrey's bullying case. The study involved online news regarding Audrey's beating case in Indonesia in five online media portals published by South China Morning Post, Coconuts.co, Nextshark.com, The Jakarta Post, and Tempo.

The data was coded in the general distribution based on appraisal resources used by the five news portals. The strategy used was the discourse analytical approach with clauses as a unit of data analysis. The group of clauses from the five news analyzed which then calcified in coded sign of Appraisal device by checking in the box according to the Appraisal devices found. With this strategy the researcher analyzed the patterns of appraisal devices in the clauses used by each news portal; clauses that show appraisal tools were then marked and grouped into their respective sections (i.e. engagement, attitude, and graduation). Then, theory of representation of Hall (1997) used specifically to unveil the representation based of the use of appraisal device done by the five news portals.

The result of the appraisal devices classification then identified to understand the underlying ideology in the five articles on how each news portal represented the issue.

In analyzing the patterns of appraisal devices in the clauses, the coded the appraisal devices showed, as follows:

Table 3.2 Appraisal Devices Code

Appraisal Devices	Code	Meaning
Engagement (Egm)	mon.	Monglass
	het.	Heteroglass
Attitude(Att)	Aff	Affect
	Ju	Judgement
	pju-a	Personal Judgement (Admiration)
	pju-cr	Personal Judgement (Criticism)
	mju-p	Moral Judgment (Praise)

		Moral Judgment (Condemnation)
	mj-u-co	Moral Judgment (Condemnation)
	Apr	Appreciation
Graduation(Grad)	For	Force
	Foc	Focus

After the data were coded, they were calculated. The results of the analysis are presented in a simple quantitative analysis (%). Then, the results were analyzed to uncover the hidden representation of each news article through the appraisal devices pattern that is used. Finally, discussion and conclusion are made from the collected analysis.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis showed that the five news portals represented Audrey's case differently to the audience. The result concluded based on the number of frequencies of the use of Appraisal devices (Engagement, Attitude, and Judgement). The distributions of appraisal devices used by the five news portals showed in Table 4.2. The result suggested the news were structured differently and the meaning was conveyed in different ways.

A. Appraisal Devices used by the Five News Portal

Table 4.1 Distribution of Appraisal Devices used by the Five News Portal

Frequency		Engagement		Aff		Ju		Apr		Graduation		Total clause
		Mon	Het	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)	(+)	(-)	For	Foc	
South China Morning Post		24	12	0	4	3	25	1	3	0	0	72
	%	33.33	16.67	0	5.56	4.17	34.72	1.39	4.17	0	0	
Coconuts.co		51	7	0	2	0	12	0	2	1	0	74
	%	68.92	9.46	0	2.70	0	16.22	0	2.70	1.35	0	
Nextshark.com		26	4	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	35
	%	74.28	11.43	0	2.88	0	11.43	0	0	0	0	
The Jakarta Post		89	26	0	1	0	12	0	1	0	0	129
	%	68.99	20.15	0	0.77	0	9.3	0	0.77	0	0	
Tempo		27	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	31
	%	87.1	3.22	0	0	0	0	3.22	6.45	0	0	
Total		**216**	**50**	**0**	**8**	**3**	**53**	**2**	**8**	**1**	**0**	**341**

As shown in Table 4.1, Engagement was the most frequently used appraisal device in the five news texts. Monogloss was the most used feature in general for (87.1%), followed by Negative-Judgement (34.72%), and Heterogloss (20.15%). Meanwhile, none of the news used positive affect and focus in their news article.

Engagement describes the types of clauses being used, and how the issue conveyed. It indicates the source of the argument; whether it comes from the journalist only or there is a possibility of alternative influence (outside source, other than the journalist). Overall, Monogloss held the highest percentage of Appraisal device usage in general. As shown on Tempo (87.1%), while the lowest percentage of Monogloss used by the South China Morning Post with only (33.33%). In terms of Heterogloss, The Jakarta Post used the features in their text the most (20.15%) while Tempo appeared to use them the lowest (3.22%). Here are som examples of engagement devices used in the text.

Example 1

[11] *The victim is <u>undergoing intensive treatment</u> in hospital.* (South China Morning Post)

Example [11] showed the use of Engagement-Monogloss. It provided textual context, meaning that the journalist represented their ideas or proposition as one which has no alternatives needed to be recognized or engaged in a communicative context.

Example 2

[41] *The two authorities, however, have put forward different versions of the incident.* (The Jakarta Post)

Although the number of Heterogloss feature used was small compared to Monogloss, the used of the Heterogloss device still influenced how the whole idea was build and conveyed. The data [41] used the Heterogloss devices by using the word 'however' that stated contradictory thoughts or arguments.

The analysis of Attitude involves the three aspects namely Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. Attitude includes journalists' attitudes towards a particular issue, which impacts on word choices. The words chosen result in interpersonal relationships between journalists and the audience. It is shown that the most frequently used appraisal device after Monogloss was Negative-Judgement, mainly appearing in the South China Morning Post (34.72%). Furthermore, South China Morning Post was also found as the only next text that used the Positive-Judgement (4.17%). In Affect, only Negative-Affect features are used. South China Morning Post (5.56%) used Negative-Affect the most. Positive-Appreciation, however, was only used by South China Morning Post (1.39%) and Tempo (3.22%) while Negative-Appreciation used mostly by Tempo (6.45%) and South China Morning Post (4.17%). Some example of attitude analysis as follows;

Example 3

[12] *until the culprit went to pick up the victim because she was upset.*(Nextshark.com) In data [12] the use of negative affect reflected the feelings of the alleged perpetrators, which caused the physical aggression.

Example 4

[62] *I plead to netizens please stop judging us,*(Coconut.co)

In example [62] it showed the suspect using Personal Judgement-Criticism to criticize the actions of netizens who judge and threaten them. The suspects tried to dismiss the accusations and criticized the actions of netizens who were not any better than the suspects.

Example 5

[22] *AY was brutally bullied in two different locations, Jalan Sulawesi and Akcaya Park.* (Tempo)

Data [22] showed negative appreciation because of the act done by the suspects. It showed that journalists wanted to emphasize a negative impression on certain issues by emphasizing the 'brutal attack' as a response to the event.

The last feature used was Graduation. The study only found Force with (1.35%) used by the Coconuts.co. Graduation is how journalists assert meaning scales in their news. In short, the appraisal device has a communicative purpose to lead the reader to a certain attitude or ideas towards an event in the news. The discussion of each Appraisal Devices provided in the following sub-chapters.

Example 6

[1] *The #JusticeForAudrey assault case, which has dominated Indonesian headlines this week* (Coconut.co)

The data [1] showed the use of Graduation-Force in the form of level, marked by the word 'dominated' which means 'having full influence above else more than…'

However, none of the five news articles use force in their text. In the use of graduation, focus is used as a gradable attribute to measure the intensity. The main difference between force and focus is that focus can go up and down, but not for comparison (non-graded) while force has "degree of comparison"

B. *Ideology Representation based on the Choices of Appraisal Devices*

Based on the findings, there were three main classifications of representation that appeared and used by the five news portals. For easier understanding, below is a table of result classification.

Table 4.5 Representation Classification

Specific perspective	Teen's Romance	The Suspects

		Problem	are also Victims
Internet-biased (focused on arguments of people from the inte	Local/officials Report (providing point of view of the local or officials report regarding the issue)	(Generalization. Bullying, but more likely a teen aggression based on love matter)	(Victimization to gain sympathy. The alleged suspect also got bullied by people on the internet)

rnet)			
The South China Morning Post	The Jakarta Post	Nextshark.com	Coconuts.co
		Tempo	

The first is a Specific perspective, used by the South China Morning Post and The Jakarta Post. In this group, the two news portals provided the news from many perspectives. As a result, the reader was given the option of which sides of the story that the audience will likely choose to believe. For example, the news from the South China Morning post decided to use mostly Monogloss and Heterogloss, also putting the emotive feature (Attitude, both positive and negative). In this case, to represent the emotion of the netizens reaction to Audrey's bullying by putting the positive and negative opinion and also some opinion that was 'not sure' about the issue, the reader might consider what kind of reaction that they will likely take based on the opinions provided. On the other hand, The Jakarta Post makes its news by providing two versions of the story which tells two different perspectives of the issue. They were also clearly stating that this case was still unclear that represents the

many 'point of view' of the news. This kind of act gives the reader options and the reader might react differently after reading the news.

However, based on the sources of news, those sources shared a completely different point of view in their news. The South China Morning Post preferred to include only opinions found on the internet on how the netizens react regarding the issue. Meanwhile, The Jakarta Post decided to put several versions of officials' reports on the chronological issue of the accident. Both of the news leads the audience to understand the points from particular source.

The second representation was described as a 'Teen's Romance Problem', used by Nextshrak.com and Tempo. The two news articles showed their view on the issue being generalized as a matter of teen romance that leads to aggression. Both used mostly Monogloss and Heterogloss in delivering the factual aspect of the news, both of the news also used the emotive feature (negative attitude) in their news as the representation of condemning the actions of the suspects. Both of the portal news agreed that the issue is indeed bullying. However, at the same time, both of the news portals put the emphasis on the chronological order that it was caused because of teen's romantic problem. Based on this, it seems that the bullying was simplified as teen aggression.

The last is Coconuts.co. In their news, Coconuts.co tried to represent victimization by providing 'another' side of the story based on the alleged suspect point of view. In the text coconuts.co dominantly used Monogloss and Heterogloss. However, the main point of their representation that Coconuts.co wanted to deliver was 'the suspect is also a victim' by using negative Attitude in order to represent the emotions of the alleged suspects. As known from the news, the alleged suspects were juvenile. However, they got backlash and harsh treatment from netizens that could be considered as cyberbullying, as they received death threats and their account got hacked. Coconuts.co trying to give an insight that the suspects were also an ordinary human and all the accusations that were thrown at them by netizens were already crossing the line.

This shows that the mass media can have different representations regarding the way it perceives one phenomenon, which of course based on the ideology or culture of the media to turn the audiences into certain biases. This confirms the argument from (Fonte & Williamson, 2014, p. 3) that media plays a vital role which implicates the power and influence of the media to alter community discourse and construct people's realities.

V. CONCLUSIONS

According to the analysis, in general Engagement was the most frequently used appraisal device in the five news texts. Monogloss was the most used feature by Tempo, followed by Negative-Judgement by South China Morning Post, and Heterogloss used by The Jakarta Post. Based on the analysis, the five news portals report the same issue and showed a rather similar negative-reaction to the issue based on the high number of Negative-Judgement features used in the all five news articles. The results also showed that the five news portals have similarities in conveying their news in a brief and factual way. The high percentage of Monogloss usage was an indication of low usage of complex clauses that might lead to the possibility of arguments or alternatives. However, all of the news portals tend to highlight different ideas based on the same issue to be represented in their news.

As for the representations, there were three main classifications of representation that appeared and used by the five news portals. The first is a Specific perspective (it was biased on specific point of view whether it was from the internet or official report), Teen's Romance Problem (Generalization. Bullying, but more likely a teen aggression based on love matter), The Suspects are also Victims (Victimization to gain sympathy. The alleged suspect also got bullied by people on the internet). This showed that the mass media can have different representations regarding the way it perceives one phenomenon, which of course based on the ideology or culture of the media to turn the audiences into certain biases.

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