

**THE REPRESENTATION OF *ORLANDO SHOOTING* IN
ONLINE NEWS ARTICLES OF *FOX NEWS* AND *AL JAZEERA*:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

Thesis

***Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the Strata One
(S1) Degree***



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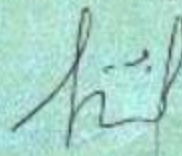
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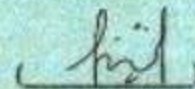
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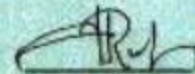
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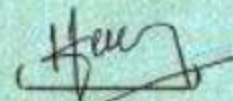
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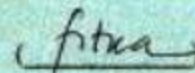
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to:

1. my beloved parents, Suyatno and Ngasirah, for unconditional love, tireless work, and ceaseless pray. Thank you for taking me this far in spite of all hurdles and limitations.
2. my dearest brother and sister, Hendri Dwi Alivik and Yuni Prihatiningsih, for teaching me what and how it means to grow as an adult.
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MOTTO

“Grit to be Great”

Hengki Agus Rifa’i

Khairunnaas ‘anfa’uhum linnaas

“The best people in the world are those who bring the most benefit to the rest of the
mankind”

Muhammad Sallallahu Alaihi wa Sallam

ABSTRAK

Agus Rifa'i, Hengki. 2017. "The Representation of *Orlando Shooting* in Online News Articles of *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera*: A Critical Discourse Analysis". Skripsi. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Walaupun telah banyak studi yang menunjukkan bahwa Muslim sering kali direpresentasikan secara negatif dalam pemberitaan umum di media massa, masih sangat sedikit sekali studi yang meneliti representasi Muslim dalam pemberitaan kejadian kriminalitas. Penelitian ini menganalisa, 1) tipe-tipe kategori representasi yang digunakan dua media berita Internasional, *Fox News* dan *Al Jazeera*, dalam menggambarkan pelaku kejadian *Orlando shooting*, sebuah kasus penembakan massal yang terjadi pada 11 Juni 2016 di Orlando, Florida, yang merupakan seorang Muslim, 2) persamaan dan perbedaan dalam konten pemberitaan kasus tersebut, dan 3) mengungkap alasan sosio-kultural atas perbedaan-perbedaan dalam konten pemberitaan kasus itu. Kajian representasi aktor sosial dari Van Leeuwen (2008), *News Schemata* dari Van Dijk (1986), dan analisis sosio-kultural Fairclough (1995) digunakan untuk menjawab ketiga pertanyaan tersebut. Sebanyak delapan artikel berita dari *Fox News* dan *Al Jazeera* yang relevan dengan pertanyaan penelitian dipilih sebagai data penelitian. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa, 1) terdapat delapan kategori representasi yang digunakan untuk merepresentasikan pelaku penembakan, 2) terdapat persamaan dalam hal detail dan kronologi kejadian, investigasi sebelumnya terhadap pelaku penembakan, dan komentar dari saksi dan pemilik klub malam tempat penembakan terjadi, dan 3) terdapat tiga praktek sosio-kultural yaitu konteks institusi, konteks situasi, dan konteks masyarakat yang menjelaskan perbedaan fokus dan konten pemberitaan kedua media tersebut. Kesimpulan yang didapatkan adalah Fox News secara aktif mengasosiasikan pelaku dengan terorisme ISIS, sedangkan Al Jazeera mengaitkan tindakan penembakan oleh pelaku sebagai sebuah kejahatan pribadi atas dasar kebencian.

Kata Kunci: *Orlando Shooting, Representation, Offender, Muslim.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Research

Crime is one of social problems in society today. There has been high number of crimes in the last few years. This phenomenon can be seen from the excessive amount of crime coverage in media. One of the crime types that captures considerable media attention is gun-related crime. Shooting, as a form of gun-related crimes, has been estimated to take place and victimize an average of 40 individuals every single day in United States of America (Gun Violence Archive, 2016). Consequently, it has been the routine news produced by news media, either through conventional newspapers or via online news. This leads crime news to become one of the most frequently encountered news.

It is undeniable that media hold fundamental role in the life of society as people constantly rely on them to get information. Media is a primary source of information today. With their control over information, particularly in the use of language, media have capacity not only to influence but also to shape the knowledge of society about what is going on in the world. What is reported by media will be consumed by, and therefore affect, large number of people in society. Hart (2010:16) contends that the understanding of social realities is shaped more by texts exposed to us rather than our hands-on experiences. Therefore, what is informed by media matters to our conception of realities – how we understand social events covered in the media.

Considering this power, it is fair to say that media viewers should be mindful of what they read. However, people tend to pay attention only to the information being reported, not the certain perspective that media intentionally embed in news to influence them. News has been claimed to report an event from certain points of view and thus is not neutral (Fowler, 1991 in Sivandi Nasab & Dowlatabadi, 2016:92). It implies that media is biased and put their own perspective in news article in order to shape the understanding of society about a given issue. Sustained by centers of power, news is said to be “the best shelter” to conceal ideology (Kabgani, 2013:58). In other words, news articles embody values or ideologies that are not always directly visible to media consumers.

As news media are expected to, as best as they can, stay neutral and objective in their coverage of a particular event, media bias is a serious issue in the realm of journalistic world. Tuchman (1972, in Richardson, 2007:87) suggests that an objective media should always quote a contesting opinion after presenting a particular claim from a certain source in a news story. A news story only presenting one-sided opinion can therefore be regarded as a biased news. Putri (2016) exemplified this account in her study about the bias of two news media, *The Jakarta Post* and *The Australian*, in covering Indonesia’s policy towards *Duo Bali Nine* before their execution. After studying two news articles from both media, Putri concludes that *The Jakarta Post* seems to support Indonesia’s policy, while *The Australian* tends to denounce it by exaggerating the Australia’s voice in the news article.

The alleged bias of media has drawn many linguists to study media discourse, especially news article. While they adopt different methods in their investigation such as framing theory, genre theory, and content analysis, most research has been approached by using Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth CDA) as it has capacity to disclose the abuse of power by media. CDA provides various tools to analyze and show the existence of power abuse in media manifested, one of which, through news article. Furthermore, media bias is one of social problems concerned by CDA. Van Dijk (2001:352) defines CDA as an analytical research studying the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. Therefore, it is in the interest of CDA to study news discourse.

The power of media and their biased practice have been the incentive to conduct this study. This study specifically analyzed the case of *Orlando shooting*, a mass shooting taking place in *Pulse*, one of gay night clubs in Orlando, Florida on June 12, 2016. With 50 deaths and 53 injured, making it the deadliest mass shooting in the modern U.S. history (Ellis, 2016), the event has drawn not only domestic but also International media attention. The offender was identified as Omar Sheddique Mateen, a U.S. citizen born in New York of Afghan origin.

This study primarily examined and compared how two online news media, *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera*, covered the incident in their news article, including the representation of the offender identified as a Muslim. There

have been plenty of studies about Muslims who are repetitively stereotyped and negatively represented in media (see Kabgani, 2013; Alazzany & Eng, 2014; Abdullah, Mukundan, & Jahedi, 2014; Tahir, 2013). However, there is still small number of studies about the language use to represent Muslim as the offender in mass shooting case. This study therefore attempts to see if the media discourse in form of news article is also biased in reporting this historical event, especially in terms of representing the Muslim offender. In other words, this study investigated whether media presented different perspective with regard to the shooting.

To carry out this study, articles from *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera* were chosen. *Fox News* has been considered as the most ideological channel in America (Pew Research Poll, 2009). The news practices in *Fox News* are deemed to supply foundation for Islam's negative image (Vultee, 2009). On the other hand, *Al Jazeera* were sometimes compared to western media to see if its discourses – news article and editorial – countered its western media counterparts' (Alhumaidi, 2013:22). The researcher investigated online news articles about the event because they are more accessible for readers than traditional newspaper. Furthermore, the reason to choose online news is that a significant number of previous studies in CDA regarding news discourse concern online news article.

B. Identification of the Problem

News article as a type of media discourse can be studied from several linguistic approaches. Firstly, it can be studied under discourse analysis. In discourse analysis, the study focused solely on the textual analysis to find meanings from the discourse. News article can also alternatively be studied by content analysis. Under this approach, the study largely relied on the quantitative measuring of media bias. Therefore, significant techniques to quantitatively calculate the data were employed to draw conclusions. Lastly, news article can be studied by using CDA. The analysis in CDA related the textual features to the discursive and socio-cultural practices which in part determine the choice of textual features of media, making it a more critical study of news language.

News discourse is prone to bias, although it is expected to be objective. This study examined if, and to what extent, media are biased in covering the event. The identified problem is how media represent the *Orlando shooting* event. There were three possible issues to be studied. Firstly, the researcher can analyze the representation of the offender – how both media portray the offender in their coverage and why they do so. The researcher can also analyze how the media report the event in general to know the similarities and differences in the coverage. Lastly, the researcher can study about the motivation of the offender causing the crime to happen.

C. Limitation of the Problem

This study was conducted under CDA framework because it allows the researcher not only to present analysis on the news textual features but also the socio-cultural practices explaining the choice of such features. In addition, this study only analyzed the representation of the *Orlando shooting* offender and the similarities and differences in the coverage contents from two media, *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera*.

D. Formulation of the Problem

The problem is formulated as follows: “How do online news media *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera* represent *Orlando shooting* in their news articles?”

E. Research Questions

The research questions in this study are as follows:

1. What are the types of representation category used by *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera* to portray the *Orlando shooting* offender in their online news articles?
2. What are the similarities and the differences in the coverage contents of *Orlando shooting* event in *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera*?
3. Given any differences in the representation of the offender and the contents of the coverage, what are the socio-cultural practices that can explain the differences?

F. Purpose of Research

This study seeks:

1. to find the types of representation categories used by *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera* to portray the *Orlando shooting* offender in their online news articles.
2. to find the similarities and differences of contents in the coverage of *Orlando shooting* in *Fox News* and *Al Jazeera*.
3. to find some socio-cultural practices that explain any differences in the portrayal of the offender and the coverage contents.

G. Significance of Research

This study theoretically contributes to linguistics, especially to CDA study, by filling the gap in literature on media discourse which is one of the primary areas of CDA research. This study investigated the representation of Muslim as a crime offender in a specific topic: mass shooting, something which is not much studied in CDA yet.

Practically, this study is significant as it shows how language, as a medium of communication, can indeed be used by media as a tool to shape the opinions of society with regard to certain events. Media consumers should be aware that the choice of words and phrases and how they are structured by media can have impact to their conception of social events. In other words, they need to be mindful that the construction of language by media, even in news article which is deemed objective, can sometimes be biased and thus they hopefully are susceptible to this practice.

H. Definition of Key Terms

1. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is an analytical research to investigate and to reveal the existence of power abuse or inequality within discourse.

2. Representation

Representation is the way in which social actors are referred to in news article, including details such as the status of the actors, their role in society, their relationship with others, and comments about the actors by the news author.

3. *Orlando shooting*

Orlando shooting was a mass shooting that happened in Pulse, one of gay night clubs in Orlando, Florida, on June 11, 2016, killing no less than 50 and wounding at least 53. The incident is regarded as the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S history.

4. Online News Articles

Online news articles in this study refer to the news articles taken from the official websites of news media.

5. Offender

Offender is someone who commits a crime and has been judged guilty by authorities or criminal justice system.