Polarization through Religious Driven-issues in the Dutch Mass Media: A Critical Discourse Perspective

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Abstract: This study examines two mass media coverage in the Netherlands about the polarization through religious driven-issues. The purpose of this study is to explain the textual strategies and discursive strategies used by Dutch media dutchnews.nl and nltimes.nl between the range of December 1, 2016, to March 15, 2017, prior to parliamentary elections. The research data was collected through the reading-record technique with a qualitative descriptive approach using van Dijk's critical paradigm. The results of data analysis revealed that the textual strategies used include the use of activation/passivation, abstraction, categorization, and lexicalization. Meanwhile, related to the discursive strategy, the media show the tendency to portray anti-Islam and anti-immigrant in the Dutch context positively.

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the ideological manifestation of political issues on religious issues in the Netherlands. It combines the results of current work on van Dijk's theory of ideology (Van Dijk, 1998) with those of previous projects on the discursive reproduction of racism (Van Dijk,1984; Van Dijk, 1987; Van Dijk, 1991; Van Dijk,1993) In more specific concern, we investigated religious-driven issues, both spoken and written discourse of the leading politicians in the Netherlands. As we regard from the existing studies, this topic has a similar theoretical framework in a way that it combines multidisciplinary elements as follows: (a) an elite theory of racism, (b) a socio-cognitive approach, and (c) a (complex) multi-level analysis of text and talk.

There are some previous studies focusing on the media role in constructing the discourse within the critical framework. Persson (2016) examined how a group of migrant rights activists in Sweden is represented in the news discourse. He found that activist voices were accommodated unevenly in the news. Such portrayal, furthermore, is able to rule out the political significance of activism. In addition, Li (2011) studied ideological constructions process on the profound American and Chinese news media (*The New York Times* and *China Daily*) regarding the reports of an air collision between the USA and China in April 2001. The study reveals the two newspapers construct different look at the circulated collision in accordance with the specific political position, interests, and priorities of each party.

Specific lexical choices made by each newspaper are not unintentional. They serve as a medium to orient readers to particular (ideological) purpose. This notion is in line with Oostendorp's work on President Jacob Zuma's discourse construction in the media. The study suggests that inter-textuality plays a fundamental role in constructing the president's political agenda (Oostendorp's, 2015).

This research aims to conceal majority and minority discourse of the religious group where Dutch politicians speak about them. We then formulate the following questions as the central concern a) How does Dutch media construct the majority and minority discourse(s) of religious group? To what extent do the Dutch politicians manifest political agenda within discursive practices and discourse structures expressing polarization upon religious driven-issues?

1.1 van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis

The fundamental framework of van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies cover some elements. First, he distinguished Micro vs. Macro structural level (Van Dijk,2000). The former layer

deals with language use in either spoken or written form, while the latter copes with the power exercise in the text, such as inequality and dominance. CDA, at its main tenet, is projected to combine both levels, in the sense that hardly ever can people detach the preference of lexical choice and a particular discursive purpose. Power exercise is often perceived as a tool to control the thought and act of any discourse recipients. Regardless the fact that social power may not always be negative, CDA analysts highlight it as a vulnerable means to produce inequality in the society.

van Dijk (2002) defines ideology as the belief shared within a group of people in certain issues. He offered a socio-cognitive approach (henceforth SCA) and discourse analysis of the text to unveil ideological load in the discourse. Further, SCA should also examine the speaker's mental consciousness during the discourse production process [5]. The van Dijk's SCA is comprised of schemas (person schema, self-schema, role schema, event schema) and memory (these schema models were extensively discussed in van Dijk (Van Dijk,1990).

Memory is an element in human's mind through which they are able to recognize certain things and have knowledge about them. In more detailed, memory in this perspective is made up of two parts: short-term memory and long-term one. Short term memory is a memory used to remember or recall an event and occasion that recently occurred in the past. For instance, we try to remember our friend's home address given in few minutes ago. While, long-term memory is a memory used to remember or refer to an event or object that took place in pretty longer past time (Raslau.*et.al*.,2014). For example, we try to remember or run the story of how the movement of PKI occurred in 1965. As a matter of fact, typically, people tend to take for granted and use their long term memory to judge a certain event, for instance, of how people still judge the descendants of PKI as a dangerous group in the society. This condition results from people's long-term memory of the badness of PKI rebellion and, hence, it should be suspected that they might do the same act as what their ancestors did in the past.

In relation to media framing, van Dijk's (2004) framework consists of two main discursive strategies of 'positive self-representation' and 'negative other-representation' manifested through such following discursive moves:

1) Actor Description

Actors in discourse studies may be addressed from their (social) background as members of particular groups or as individuals (Van Leuween, 1996). Besides, they may also be described by their first or family name, social function in the society, by their actions or attributes, or by their position / relation to other people. For example, how labors' demonstration demanding the rise of salary given unfairly by the employer of a certain company described as an unrest and not conducive event by a journalist against the labors which, hence, seems to place them as the guilty in the event. Such description hardly ever be neutral since the employer has more power to modify the reality by, for instance, bribing journalist of the media to hide the reality. In addition, an inappropriate description of others might result from mental memory of a text producer. For example, how someone's memory of labors' demonstration mostly caused much traffic and street battle against security guards in the past which make him/her easily judge any other similar movement may cause the same condition in the present or future. Thus, such movements typically are always represented inappropriately in a certain text.

2) Authority

Many speakers in most of occasions, including but not limited to, for instance in parliament, have an avenue to modify a certain truth by mentioning authorities to support the case. The authorities may be granted from organizations or political party members, or recognized experts or moral leaders (Van Dijk, 2004). In this case, the United Nations, or Amnesty, scholars, the courts, the church or the media, often have that role. For example, media in producing texts or news of current celebrity-related pornography issue have judged who is guilty in the case by presenting one of multimedia experts' testimonies even the case is not yet investigated by the responsible state law apparatus (e.g. court or police).

3) Burden

Burden is the way how a discourse maker describes a certain case (phenomenon) in the text as a big problem unless it is solved and, thus, by doing so might gain support from others to soon overcome the issue. In addition, such way also labels that burden as a bad or negative entity; conversely, the one with proposal or its solvency, for instance, gain positive reception and support. Nonetheless, sometimes the criteria of measuring a burden are premises that are taken for granted, as either self-evident or as sufficient arguments to accept the proposed inference.

4) Consensus

Consensus is often used in parliamentary discourses on issues regarding national importance or interest. This strategy may be performed by providing claims or wishes. In other words, in-group unification, cohesion and solidarity against outsiders (them), should exist over various political backgrounds, beliefs, or races (Van Dijk, 2004). In addition, real or apparent consensus used in the text

is a means to persuade others to support any common interest together, for instance George Bush, the former US president, always euphemized his main goal of attacking Iraq and toppling down Saddam Hussein, the former authoritarian Iraq president, was to stand up democracy and free Iraqi people from inequality. Since the spirit of democracy becomes a common goal and consensus of American people to uphold, he got great support in doing severe attacks on Iraq.

5) Empathy

The expression of empathy can be combined together with "a disclaimer" tactic to control the speaker's impression with the audience (e. g. I understand that you have had many problems, but...) (Van Dijk, 2004).

6) Illustration

Illustration is a discursive strategy that provides general truths and or concrete examples to help audiences imagine the discussed topic (Laine,2007). Besides, it is also to suggest coercing forms of factual evidences. By employing this strategy, the speaker can manage the discourse being delivered as well as the objective being exercised. In some cases, speakers often tell typical cases as he or she experienced and thus generalization is generated. Therefore, it is very effective to build negative other representation by presenting such technique in the discourse.

7) Self-glorification

Self-glorification of a certain group or nation is a device to create positive self-representation by glorifying a certain group's strength or superiority (Van Dijk, 2004). He further elaborated that such strategy, especially, political discourse of positive self-presentation may regularly be practiced through various forms of national self-glorification, such as positive references to the own country, history and traditions. An instance of this strategy as follows: "Indonesia has gained 2% economic growth in 2009. Meanwhile other nations kept struggling to block a global recession". (SBY, the former president of Indonesia, in his official annual mandatory speech).

8) Disclaimer

Disclaimer is presenting an idea as something positive and then rejecting it by the use of certain terms, such as 'but' in the second sentence (Van Dijk, 2004). In other words, the speaker acts as if admit the state or condition of the communicant either badness or goodness (mostly about goodness admission), afterwards the speaker rejects such information by presenting a statement that comes up after the conjunction "but" is actually the main emphasis in the sentence (Irham & Wahyudi, 2012). An instance of such strategy as follows: "Indeed, they are not against weapons, but they oppose other nations' progress" (Ahmadinejad's speech at UNGA 2008).

2 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach, in a way that the data from written discourse descriptively analyzed in accordance with micro, super, and macro structures found in the mass media. Miles and Huberman (2011) stated that qualitative research is usually in the form of words rather than number. We emphasized on the specific case—Critical Discourse Analysis using van Dijk models to analyze the news about political contestation in Netherlands.

The primary data of this study is obtained dutchnews.nl, and nltimes.nl focusing on political contestation in the Netherlands. There are about twenty articles in the news which mainly elaborate the political contestation of those countries. From the data source, we analyzed and investigated the word-choices which are classified as discursive tactics on a Micro-structure at the lexical level as the data.

To collect the data, the following steps are taken: first, the researchers looked for the data (from December to March, 2017) from mass media mentioned above about news that has some relation with political contestation. Second, the researchers classified the article. In addition, the researcher checked the writer of that article to make sure about the background of the writer. Third, after getting the data, we skimmed it to get the general understanding of the data. Fourth, the researcher classified the data based on the classification of the words, and lastly, the interpretation upon the intention of the journalist, based on the key words in that article, was made.

In the data analysis, first, the researchers classified the topic by picking up related data upon the political contestation in Netherland. Second, the researchers looked for the classification of the words based on Van Dijk's model of the classification in the lexicon level. After finding the classification of the word, finally the researchers interpreted the aim of the journalist in choosing the word itself. Those are the steps of the analysis in this research.

3 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Activation and Passivation

The use of active / passive sentences in CDA is seen not only as a matter of grammar, nor is it considered a product of journalist unconsciousness when writing the news. However, the sentence form determines the meaning of the sentence. The active

sentence emphasizes the subject or the actor, while the passive sentence deemphasizes it and focuses on offender's target or action. Furthermore, through the passive sentence structure, the offender can be hidden (or demoted) and even removed from the text (Frauzer,2008).

In the case of Dutch media, Wilders Wilders (the PVV leader, a far right-wing politician who is explicitly against Islam and (Muslim) immigrants) is often reported by using active sentence construction, particularly related to Islam and Moroccan or Turkish immigrants discourse. Indeed, for some languages, the expressions tend to be more frequently agentive by using active sentence construction than the others when interpreting and construing an event. Perhaps the most celebrated example of the language of this kind is English when, for example, its speaker more likely to say "*he broke the glass*" instead of saying "*the glass broke*" in which the agent is not mentioned (Fausey,2010). However, in CDA tradition, such a pattern of reporting the news may cause the readers or the public's attention to focus on or even blame the actor.

The researcher found some news related to Wilders Wilders using this active-passive textual strategy. For example, in a news release related to Wilders's statement on the murderer of populist politician Pim Fortuyn, dutchnews.nl entitled *"Wilders Wilders tells German tv show Pim Fortuyn was killed by radical Muslim"* in the news release. Meanwhile, to report the same event, nltimes.nl put the headline entitled "*Wilders mistakenly claims Pim Fortuyn was killed by radical Muslim*".

In both media, the news is presented in the form of an active sentence. Here, the maker of this statement is presented in the text. However, the use of this textual strategy may posit different effects on the reader. The actor projection in the first news seems to suggest that Wilders consciously or confidently made his misleading statement that the murderer of the mentioned populist politician was a radical Muslim. However, the use of passive construction in the first line of the news release "Anti-Islam campaigner Wilders Wilders was accused of being a liar…" maybe aimed to blur the public actor(s) of such accusation or reaction that may come from both Wilders's political rivals or ordinary Muslim citizens. By demoting the agent of accusation in the sentence may lead the readers to see Wilders as not making an intentional public lie or controversial statement. While in the second sentence, the use of a word "mistakenly" shows that the media may want to frame the reader to see Wilders's statement on that case as a normal mistake that can be made by anyone, therefore it should not be too much exaggerated. Moreover, coupled with

the use of categorization strategy which is not mentioned in nltimes.nl, such as "Anti-Islam campaigner" at the beginning of the first news content, may serve as a foundation for justification that Wilders was fully politicized and victimized (allegedly convicted as 'a liar') by the public because of his anti-Islam or Muslim immigrants political stance. This strategy may highlight that nltimes.nl wants to present much more negative impression on the reader about Wilders Wilders (as the actor) than dutchnews.nl does, and the author's scrutiny of nltimes.nl's news headlines may later, overall, confirm this proposition.

3.2 Abstraction

The use of this strategy is related to whether the information is presented deliberately or left abstract and unclear aimed to blur it. Through abstractions deliberately constructed by reporters, readers can be directed to capture a certain impression as expected by the media. For example, by utilizing abstraction strategies, an event or the number of actor that is actually quantitatively small can be suggested as if it is large and significant.

An example of the use of this textual strategy is found in news releases from dutchnews.nl and nltimes.nl related to the possibility of VVD or the other parties in building coalition with PVV party to on Monday, January 16, 201. In the news coverage, dutchnews.nl writes "VVD leader Mark Rutte says 'zero' chance of coalition with Wilders Wilders Politics" as the title, while nltimes.nl proclaims the same event with the title "Populist, anti-Islam PVV to stand alone at the elections". In nltimes.nl headline, the sentence *PVV to stand alone* makes the impression that there are no other parties support and are willing to cooperate with Wilders's PVV party, while dutchnews.nl gives an explanation that only Rutte's VVD party that is reluctant to make partnership with PVV, while PVV will supposedly remain supported by the other parties.

By writing a clear referent or subject *VVD leader Mark Rutte* and clear numerical expression *zero chance*, the reader can perceive that it is the only party unwilling to make alliance, and hence it won't be significant. Conversely, the use of verbal phrase *PVV to stand alone* carries abstract meaning that PVV and its very stance against Islam is unwanted in the parliament (or by the public in general). In the example above, both media are not unaware of the opportunity of the other party becoming PVV's allies after the election. The textual abstraction strategy is intentionally used by dutchnews.nl to illustrate how actually there is only one insignificant party rejecting to cooperate with PVV and, on the

other side, is used by nltimes.nl to give bad impression on the readers that PVV is an alienated party in the parliament because of its policy against Islam.

3.3 Categorization

Nominations and categorizations are textual strategies used to present a person or group of people as they are or by embedding the category of a person or group. According to Eriyanto (2009: 182), this category has various forms by showing the important characteristics of a person, such as religion, status, physical form, and so forth. The instance of this strategy usage, for example, can be found in a news release related to the safety and security service's integrity scandal feared to affect Wilders's wellbeing and life, where nltimes.nl writes " The Safety and Security Service is responsible for protecting members of the Royal Family and <u>threatened politicians, including PVV leader Wilders Wilders</u>".

Although categorization does not significantly affect the meaning that the reporter wishes to convey to the reader, the effects may remain massive. In the example above, the underlined phrase *threatened politicians, including PVV leader Wilders Wilders* can indirectly associate into the minds of readers that Wilders Wilders's life is no longer safe in the midst of this scandal. When someone is labeled or categorized as "threatened", this may convey an impression in the reader's mind that Wilders worth receiving protection because his security is in danger and portrayed as a weak and powerless side. Considering that such a security issue emerged from the leakage of police secret information to alledgedly Moroccan gangs, being "threatened" categorization here shows that Wilders may become the possible "victim" of the group (of e.g. Moroccan race), although, in fact, Wilders and his party's anti-immigrant/Islam political stance has long discriminated the group.

3.4 Lexicalization

Lexicalization is a textual strategy of choosing a particular word rather than other possible similar words. In accordance with the notion, lexicon is a language component that contains all information about the meaning and usage of the word in the language (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010). The choice of words used by the media, is not mere coincidence, but also shows how the meaning of a reality is shaped by it. A different media, depending on its interests and alignments, can construe the same reality differently.

The word selection strategy was also found in the Dutch news coverage. For example, in nltimes.nl article titled " Populist, anti-Islam PVV to stand alone at the elections", this media writes that Wilders 'accused' PM Rutte (VVD party leader) as the manifestation of "arrogance of power" because he rejected to build alliance with Wilders's PVV party.

The word "accused" actually has several other alternative words carrying more positive connotations, such as assumes and feels. nltimes.nl could have written a sentence, such as *Wilders assumed Rutte as….*, but the impression gained by readers will be different. Word choice tends to indicate the attitude and alignment of the media over a particular fact or side. Implicitly, nltimes.nl wants to depict Rutte as an accusing person without any strong evidence.

Another example of the lexicalization strategy usage is found in news released on the same day by dutchnews.nl entitled "Wilders Wilders tells German tv show Pim Fortuyn was killed by radical Muslim". In its news content, the media chose to quote from Wilders's tweet regarding his misnaming of the populist politician who was killed, saying "The left-wing elitist losers are enjoying my slip of the tongue but we are going to <u>de-Islamise</u> the Netherlands very quickly and that is no slip of the tongue". The word <u>de-Islamise</u> gives a sense of removing Islam or its reversal in the Netherlands, with prefix *de-* itself is denoting removal or reversal (https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/de-).

This lexical selection strategy might be understood by the readers as very rude statement because it also implies ethnic cleansing or, at least, extreme restriction on Islam, although they have long recognized the PVV party's main ideal is pushing Islam and Muslim immigrants out of the Holland. However, the use of this word in dutchnews.nl news, the author would argue, is to strengthen the foundation of polarization between the party(ies) who stand for Islam or Muslim migrants and who are against it. This strategy is further reinforced in the frequent use of racial laden phrases, such as *anti-Islam* and *anti-immigration* in dutchnews.nl news reports.

4 CONCLUSION

The analysis of microstructure through the use of textual strategies in two online Dutch mass media shows that dutchnews.nl tends to use textual strategies to support and reinforce the legitimacy of right-wing politician (also known as nationalist, anti-Islam, and anti-immigration) that is best represented

by Geert Wilders. Meanwhile, nltimes.nl tends to use a textual strategy that gives positive impression when the news coverage is related to 'center to left-wing Populist' politician (also known as pro-EU) that is best represented by Mark Rutte or negative impression if the news report related to left-wing politician's movement or ideology.

In terms of discursive strategy analysis, Dutch news. Nile shows the alignment with right-wing's politicians and tends to describe positively. Conversely, the media describes leftist politicians (mainly PM Rutte) negatively. In the context of dutchnews media, therefore, Geert Wilders and PVV become to the self-group/US category, while the leftist politicians (Mark Rutte and allies) positioned as Others/Them category.

The other way around, nltimes.nl does not show any alignment to leftist politicians, therefore many occasions tend to describe Geert Wilders and his supporters. By utilizing several discursive strategies, nltimes.nl also tends to portray advocates of open society and populist ideology. In context nltimes.nl's news coverage, the populist left-wing politicians belong to the self/US category, while right-wing politician (Geert Wilders) and his supporters are the other/Them category.

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