

Analyzing New York Times Opinion “*Is America Becoming a Failed State?*” Under the Perspective of Appraisal Framework: A Systemic Functional Linguistics Implementation

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ABSTRACT

The contestation of America’s presidency in 2020 showed a very competitive and strict run. Both candidates provided arguments and attacked each other in public discussion rooms. However, it is a typical of a normal election where there will be always campaigns from the candidates to persuade and to gain public’s votes as much as possible. Therefore, the 2020 presidential election of America feels unusual compared to the previous. Besides it was conducted within the pandemic outbreak, the high tension of global conflict issues and internal social-economic problems of America caused the contestation becoming hotter and noteworthy. Regardless of its final result, it is really interesting to discuss the discourses appeared in the public room regarding the issue. New York Times, one of the leading media in USA provides the room for publics to participate in writing their opinion. This study tried to analyze a writing written in opinion column entitled “Is America Becoming a Failed State?” using appraisal system. The discourse was analyzed in the three aspects of White’s appraisal framework namely attitude, graduation, and engagement. Under the scope of critical discourse analysis, this study aimed to elucidate the appraisal aspects found in the text regarding public’s opinion and its standing points to the issue. This study is a descriptive qualitative and the data were collected from an article in New York Times. The discussion was also connected to some external factors besides the three aspects mentioned such as political, economic, and socio-cultural factors.

Keywords: SFL, Appraisal Framework, Critical Discourse Analysis, New York Times, Presidential Election.

INTRODUCTION

Media holds an essential role in the civilization. Mass communication is a tool that can affect a big mass of people. Therefore, anything that is shared by media will possibly reach every element in society. The development of technology also leads to the effectiveness of the information to spread (Watanabe, 2021; Asad, 2021). In this era, communication becomes limitless. People can communicate to each other in no time. The distance is also not a big deal in this era. Besides, people also can share information easily. In short, there is no boundary in order to communication.

In every important occurrence, mass media has crucial role especially in reporting the event or as the facility to deliver opinion or point of view. Media can be in the form of printed or digital media. Every media has its own strength in terms of its reaching to publics. To be more specific, the communication is strongly related to the use of language. In this case, language is an essential tool. It has significant roles in the communication and in the daily aspects of human beings. The importance of language can be found in the daily activity of humans. Without a language, people will be difficult in conveying their thoughts to the others. Besides, the

interaction among humans will be very limited and will take time. In short, the communication without using language will lead to the impracticality in communication (Tehseem et al., 2020). For delivering simple message, people may use sign language and it is usually acceptable. However, the complexity of the problems and thoughts of every person is different. Meaning that, people will find difficulties when trying to convey a complex and abstract message to the others. Therefore, the use of language in the daily communication is crucial and vital.

Related to that issue, language and media are two essential aspects that support each other. Media, whether printed or electronic, really depends on language. It can be said that, language is the spirit of a media. Language supports almost all contents of a media. In the other side, language will be powerful if it is used in the appropriate media (Fitriani et al., 2020). It will affect many people and sometimes it may cause big difference and change to a society. In short, the combination of them will create great impact. To be more specific, the media that is still frequently used in this recent day is newspaper. The advance of technology also leads to the development of newspapers. In past, newspaper is only published in printed form. Because of the development of technology, people now can find various kinds of newspaper (Samsi et al., 2021). The printed and online form of newspaper are very common in this era. It makes people's access to get information becoming easier. In line with that, The New York Times, which is one of the oldest newspapers in USA and in the world, also adapt to the development of era. Even the management is still consistent to publish the printed version of the product, people can also get the online version of the newspaper. The newspaper expands its influence and tries to gain bigger attention whether in the scope of local or international market. In fact, the newspaper has gained many prestige awards, one of them of course is Pulitzer Prizes-the biggest winner in America.

From the facts, it can be concluded that the newspaper has big reputation not only in America, but also in the world. It can be imagined how big the power of the media is. It can convey message and information to the readers in the big scale. In other word, the newspaper has power and influence to affect many people. In the relation to discourse analysis, it is obvious that media and language are inseparable. It is interesting to observe the phenomena occurred in the newspapers especially in its relation to the language and discourse.

Besides, this work is also strongly related to the work of discourse analysis, especially critical discourse analysis. As stated previously, the data obtained are aimed to elucidate the appraisal framework in the article. Paltridge (2012) opined that discourse analysis is an approach to the analysis of language especially in its relation to the patterns of language and also between social-cultural contexts found across the texts. From this definition, it can be stated that the main point of discourse analysis is the study of interrelationship among some factors that relate each other. Besides, social-cultural context and texts become essential points in this issue. Meaning that, in this study, those two aspects are essential and inseparable (Msuya, 2020). In addition, Harris (1952) introduced the term discourse analysis as a way of analyzing connected speech and writing. He had two main interests, namely: the examination of language beyond the level of the sentence and the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behavior. In this case, Harris examined the first aspect in most detail, aiming to provide a way for describing how language features are distributed within texts and the ways in which they are combined in particular kinds and styles of texts.

In line with that, (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, n.d.) stated that discourse analysis is a rapidly evolving and growing study field. Meaning that, Current research in this field now flows

from numerous academic disciplines that are very different from one another. Included, of course, are the disciplines in which models for understanding, and methods for analyzing, discourse first developed, such as linguistics, anthropology, and philosophy. From this opinion, it can be clearly understood that this field of study is really challenging. It is a dynamics field of study and very interesting because it reaches all aspects and elements in every sector of human life. In this case, the discourse study found especially in analyzing appraisal framework, there is a strong relation between cultural aspect and writing. It is essential to bear in mind that the article is taken from a foreign newspaper. Therefore, there must be some differences in some aspects related to the cultural points. As stated by Hymes (1964) that different culture may have different ways to do something regarding languages. In this point, it can be considered that language, especially for its use, has very strong related to culture. It provides additional perspectives and paradigms specially to observe and analyze a case in different culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a qualitative study. The researcher obtained the data from the source of data and then tabulated the data on the table. After that, the data were analyzed descriptively because this research was a descriptive- qualitative research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the article, it was obtained some data regarding appraisal system in the article. The article as the primary source of data was an opinion taken from The New York Times. The article was written by Paul Krugman entitled *Is America Becoming A Failed State?* Which was published on November 5th 2020. In this study, all aspects of appraisal framework namely attitude, graduation, and engagement are observed.

From the study, the data obtained as follows:

ATTITUDE

In the aspect of attitude, the data were taken from the article and were tabulated in the table 1 below:

TABLE 1. Realization of Attitude

Appraising Items	Attitude		
	Affect	Judgement	Appreciation
As I write this, it seems extremely likely that Joe Biden has won the presidency	+		+
And he clearly received millions more votes than his opponent	+		
He can and should claim that he has been given a strong mandate to govern the nation.	+		+
But there are real questions about whether he will , in fact, be able to govern	-	-	
will remain in the hands of an extremist party that will sabotage Biden in every way it can.	-	-	
let's talk about just how unrepresentative the Senate is .	-		
The overweighted states tend to be much less urbanized than the	+		-

nation as a whole.			
And given the growing political divide between metropolitan and rural areas , this gives the Senate a strong rightward tilt.	-		
After all, Republicans controlled one or both chambers of Congress for three-quarters of Barack Obama’s presidency, and we survived, didn’t we?	+		
In fact, G.O.P. obstruction did a lot of damage even during the Obama years.	-		-
Republicans used hard ball tactics , including threats to cause a default on the national debt,			
to force a premature withdrawal of fiscal support that slowed the pace of economic recovery.	-		
I’ve estimated that without this de facto sabotage , the unemployment rate in 2014 might have been about two percentage points lower	+		
And the need for more spending is even more acute now than it was in 2011, when Republicans took control of the House.	-		-
Most immediately, the coronavirus is running wild , with new cases exceeding 100,000 a day and rising rapidly	-		
This is going to hit the economy hard , even if state and local governments don’t impose new lockdowns.	-		-
We desperately need a new round of federal spending on health care, aid to the unemployed and businesses, and support for strapped state and local governments.	-		-
Reasonable estimates suggest that we should spend \$200 billion or more each month until a vaccine brings the pandemic to an end.	-		
I’d be shocked if a Senate still controlled by Mitch McConnell would agree to anything like this.	-	-	-
Even after the pandemic is over , we’re likely to face both persistent economic weakness and a desperate need for more public investment.	+		+
But McConnell effectively blocked infrastructure spending even with Donald Trump in the White House. Why would he become more amenable with Biden in office?		+	
Now, spending isn’t the only form of policy.	-		
Normally, there are many things a president can achieve for good (Obama) or evil (Trump) through executive action.		+	
In fact, during the summer a Democratic task force identified hundreds of things a President Biden could do without having to go through Congress.		+	
But here’s where I worry about the role of a heavily partisan Supreme Court — a court shaped by McConnell’s norm-breaking behavior, including the rushed confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett just days before the election.	-		
And I think there’s a substantial chance that this court may behave like the Supreme Court in the 1930s , which kept blocking New Deal programs until F.D.R. threatened to add seats — something Biden wouldn’t be able to do with a Republican-controlled Senate.	+	+	-
So, we are in big trouble.	-		
Trump’s defeat would mean that we have, for the moment, avoided a plunge into authoritarianism — and yes, the stakes are that high, not just because of who Trump is, but also because the modern G.O.P. is so extremist and anti-democratic.			-
we would probably consider it on the edge of becoming a failed state that is, a state whose government is no longer able to exert effective control.		-	+
But despite his apparent victory, the Republic remains in great danger.		-	

As described previously, the aspect of attitude can be divided into three parts, namely: affect, judgment, and appreciation. There are some data obtained from the article regarding this aspect. For the first example, “As I write this, it seems *extremely likely* that Joe Biden *has won* the presidency”. From that sentence, there are two sub-aspects of attitude that can be obtained, they are: affect and appreciation. From the sentence, some things can be analyzed. First, the affect sub aspect in the sentence. If it is analyzed thoroughly, it can be seen from the sentence that it consists of positive vibes. Meaning that, there are strong beliefs from the author that Biden will win the contestation. Besides, from the sentence, it indicates some things. First, it emphasizes the standing point of the writer. It can be clearly seen that the writer supports Biden. Therefore, the writer expresses his feelings and perception in one clear supporting sentence in his very beginning part of the article. It becomes the essential beginning to describe the whole feelings and opinions of the writer in the article (Tavassoli et al., 2019).

TABLE 2. Realization of Engagement

Appraising Items	Engagement	
	Monoglass	Heteroglass
As I write this, it seems extremely likely that Joe Biden has won the presidency		✓
And he clearly received millions more votes than his opponent	✓	
He can and should claim that he has been given a strong mandate to govern the nation.		✓
But there are real questions about whether he will , in fact, be able to govern	✓	
will remain in the hands of an extremist party that will sabotage Biden in every way it can.		✓
let’s talk about just how unrepresentative the Senate is .	✓	
The overweighted states tend to be much less urbanized than the nation as a whole.	✓	
And given the growing political divide between metropolitan and rural areas , this gives the Senate a strong rightward tilt.		✓
After all, Republicans controlled one or both chambers of Congress for three-quarters of Barack Obama’s presidency, and we survived, didn’t we?	✓	
In fact, G.O.P. obstruction did a lot of damage even during the Obama years.	✓	
Republicans used hard ball tactics , including threats to cause a default on the national debt, to force a premature withdrawal of fiscal support that slowed the pace of economic recovery.		✓
I’ve estimated that without this de facto sabotage , the unemployment rate in 2014 might have been about two percentage points		✓

lower	
And the need for more spending is even more acute now than it was in 2011, when Republicans took control of the House.	✓
Most immediately, the coronavirus is running wild , with new cases exceeding 100,000 a day and rising rapidly	✓
This is going to hit the economy hard , even if state and local governments don't impose new lockdowns.	✓
We desperately need a new round of federal spending on health care, aid to the unemployed and businesses, and support for strapped state and local governments.	✓
Reasonable estimates suggest that we should spend \$200 billion or more each month until a vaccine brings the pandemic to an end.	✓
I'd be shocked if a Senate still controlled by Mitch McConnell would agree to anything like this.	✓
Even after the pandemic is over , we're likely to face both persistent economic weakness and a desperate need for more public investment.	✓
But McConnell effectively blocked infrastructure spending even with Donald Trump in the White House. Why would he become more amenable with Biden in office?	✓
Now, spending isn't the only form of policy.	✓
Normally, there are many things a president can achieve for good (Obama) or evil (Trump) through executive action.	✓
In fact, during the summer a Democratic task force identified hundreds of things a President Biden could do without having to go through Congress.	✓
But here's where I worry about the role of a heavily partisan Supreme Court — a court shaped by McConnell's norm-breaking behavior, including the rushed confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett just days before the election.	✓
And I think there's a substantial chance that this court may behave like the Supreme Court in the 1930s , which kept blocking New Deal programs until F.D.R. threatened to add seats — something Biden wouldn't be able to do with a Republican-controlled Senate.	✓
So we are in big trouble.	✓
Trump's defeat would mean that we have, for the moment, avoided a plunge into authoritarianism — and yes, the stakes are that high, not just because of who Trump is, but	✓

also because the modern G.O.P. is so extremist and anti-democratic.	
But our skewed electoral system means that Trump’s party is still in a position to hobble, perhaps cripple, the next president’s ability to deal with the huge epidemiological, economic and environmental problems we face.	✓
we would probably consider it on the edge of becoming a failed state	✓
that is, a state whose government is no longer able to exert effective control.	✓
But despite his apparent victory, the Republic remains in great danger.	✓

TABLE 2. Realization of Engagement

Appraising Items	Graduation	
	Focus	Force
The overweighted states tend to be much less urbanized than the nation as a whole.		Force Value (-)
In fact, G.O.P. obstruction did a lot of damage even during the Obama years.		force value (+)
And the need for more spending is even more acute now than it was in 2011, when Republicans took control of the House.		force value (+)
Reasonable estimates suggest that we should spend \$200 billion or more each month until a vaccine brings the pandemic to an end.		Force value (+)

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the article, there are many appraisal systems used by the author. The aspects of appraisal that can be found in the article such as: attitude, graduation, and engagement. In the aspect of attitude, it can be divided into three sub aspects such as: affect, judgement, and appreciation. From the findings, the author frequently uses attitude aspect and the sub aspect that is frequently found is affect.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks I attribute to the related components that support me in accomplishing this study.

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