



## ***A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: THE REPRESENTATION OF DONALD TRUMP IN THE REUTERS AND THE NEW YORK TIMES TOWARDS THE ISSUE OF #BLACKLIVESMATTER***

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### **Abstract**

This research discusses about the representation of social actor in news media. The social actor that becomes the focus of this research is the U.S. President Donald Trump. The news media chosen by the researcher are Reuters and New York Times (NYTimes). The issue that become the focus in this research is #blacklivesmatter. Which that issue become trending in social media, because that issue, there are many Americans who do demonstrations in some cities, which asked Mr. Trump to do something related with that national issue. In this research, the researcher uses social actor theory from Van Leeuwen (2008). This research applies descriptive qualitative method.

**Keywords:** #BlackLivesMatter, Donald Trump, NYTimes, Reuters, social actor, Van Leeuwen

### **INTRODUCTION**

On May 25, George Floyd, a 46-year-old black man died due to police brutality. This tragedy spreads internationally because of a video that last in 8 minutes 46 seconds. Due to this issue, hashtag #BlackLivesMatter has shown up and become a trending again since its first appearance in July, 2013 (Pew Research Center, 2020). This huge issue urges Donald Trump to take an immediate action, including delivering speeches, urging New York police department to investigate the incident, etc. This international case also gets huge attention from U.S. portal news to talk about the detail of the case. Since a president is the representation of a government, it's crucially important to see how he/she represents the country through his delivery announced by press. Generally, government as the target of press frequently received criticisms that sometimes are sensitive and bias (Sari and Pranoto, 2021). These conditions arguably drive the society's opinion.

Representation is a means to investigate something through the analysis of language, voice, and action produced in regard to particular condition or issue (Sari and Pranoto, 2021:98). Representation can also be meant of having accounted of what is not and acting for what is not (Arnesen and Peters, 2018). Representation motivates society to perceive issue/condition from alternative point of view. In this respect, linguists have put a great deal of attention in revealing how people or institutions are represented through some strategic uses of language by the media. Language serves as one of the devices to convey message shared among people in various context (Kuswoyo, 2016:257; Afrianto et. al, 2014:78; Samanik, 2018). Socially and politically, language is utilized to obtain and establish social and political stance in particular setting (Puspita and Pranoto, 2021). It is therefore urgent to conduct research to reveal how Donald Trump is represented by reputable media in the US regarding to his position towards the case of #Blacklivesmatter using the perspective of critical discourse studies. It is critical because it denotes the relation of social elements such as ideologies and power relations (Fairclough, 1989).

Through the critical analysis of discourse, how the texts, both spoken and written, are composed can be observed to see how they influence the reader to understand the information (Azijah and Gulö, 2020). Furthermore, the hidden information conveyed by the maker is also visible. In this research, critical discourse analysis is employed to view another perspective on how Donald Trump is portrayed in *Reuters* and *New York Times*. It is done critically because it correlates the language used in the text to what occurs in real life (Puspita and Pranoto, 2021). Lastly, this research is needed to see

what is contained by the text and how it is produced. This is done by analyzing its grammatical components, other elements, and aspects aside from the text itself as also conducted by Kuswoyo and Rido (2019) and Suprayogi and Pranoto (2019). In relation to news media, it is believed that though media tend to claim their independency, they still hold some perspective laid on their news, because everything that is spoken and written in the world are derived from an ideological perspective (Chen 2016; Risdaneva, 2018 in Sari and Pranoto, 2021).

Numerous critical discourse studies have been conducted lately. Pranoto and Yuwono (2019) conducted research analyzing the attitude of state's leader towards terrorism, meanwhile Puspita and Pranoto (2021) did research on the attitude of Japanese newspaper in narrating disaster event. Sofyan and Zifana (2019) analyzes the representation of political figure in Kompas and Republika by using Leeuwen's theory (2005;2008). The findings are the media between Republik and Kompas are non-neutral. After that, Rido and Evayani (2019) analyzes the representation of social actors in sexual violence issue in The New York and Jakarta Post using Leeuwen's theory (2008). The findings are between both media have different focuses and majorly represent the perpetrator as active agents. Then, Pekkariren (2016) analyzes the representation of victims and perpetrators of sexual violence in The New York Times, Los Angeles Times and Washington Post by using Fairclough's theory (1995). The findings are victims majorly portrayed as passive agents, then the perpetrators presented by their accomplishments and jobs.

The researcher narrows the scope of the analysis into only talking about the recent case of George Floyd's death whom his death had created massive protests and re-emergence trend of #BlackLivesMatter. Therefore, the researcher is interested to analyze how both media portrayed Donald Trump in George Floyd cases in order to reveal how he is framed and represented by the news portals. The problem of this research is formulated into this research question "how is Donald Trump represented in Reuters and New York Times regarding to George Floyd case?". For these aims, this research employs van Leeuwen (2008) framework of Critical Discourse Analysis consisting of exclusion, suppression, backgrounding, inclusion, activation, passivation, genericization, specification, assimilation, individualization, association, dissociation, Indetermination, determination, differentiation, nomination, categorization, functionalization, identification, personalization, personalization, and overdetermination.

## METHOD

This research used qualitative method as a way to gather the data (Kardiansyah, 2016). Data also can be seen from pictures, dialogue, or scenes (Istiani and Puspita, 2020). This method also tests hypotheses (Farras and Nurmaily, 2020). It is because, this method is applied because it gives explorative information about the representation of social actors in news article. Litosseliti (2010:52) stated that qualitative research concerned with textual description. Further, qualitative method also pays detailed attention on inductive and deductive processes (Suprayogi, and Pranoto, 2020; Rido et. al, 2020; Mandasari, and Aminatun, 2019; Sari, and Oktaviani, 2021). Thus, it is believed that by using this method the result will be ideal and objective. To add, this research also conducts descriptive study since it describes linguistic phenomena in the form of words. The data are in the form of words and sentences which are obtained from the [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com) and the [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) newspapers online versions published in May and June 2020.

The findings are then analyzed and described qualitatively. In this research, the gathered data are then discussed and analyzed by using some relevant approaches which structured or written as in descriptive (Gulö and Rahmawelly, 2018).

Van Leeuwen (2008) describes exclusion as linguistic mechanism that make the social actors being excluded in the discourse. It is divided into suppression and backgrounding. Suppression is defined as having no reference to the social actors. It means that, the social actors who are supposedly to be the main actor is omitted in the article. In this part, the linguistic mechanism that is used to delete the social actors are less radical. It means that the social actors will be mentioned later in a text. Inclusion is part of linguistic mechanism where the social actors are presented in a text in order to be

involved in a discourse. Activation is when the social actors are presented active in a sentence. There are two types of passivation, the first is *subjected* and the second is *beneficialized*. Genericization is when the social actors are mentioned in general. It can be mentioned in plural or singular. Specification is the exact opposite of genericization where the social actors are mentioned specifically with specific action. Assimilation is when the social actors refer as a group. Individualization is when the social actors are mentioned alone as singularity. Association is when two or more social actors are being formed as a group and form the same goal or purpose. Dissociation is when two or more social actors are mentioned at the same time in a sentence. However, they are no longer associate from each other. Interdetermination happens when social actors can be presented as groups or individuals who are “anonymous”. Interdetermination is usually realized with the uncertainty pronouns, such as somebody, some, some people, and someone. Those pronouns which used in nominal function. Determination is an opposite of indetermination. Determination is when social actors are mentioned anonymously but specific. Differentiation is linguistic mechanism that makes the social actors are different from each other whether it is in negative or positive meanings. Nominations, is when social actors are presented by their unique identity and are usually represented by using proper nouns. Categorization is used to refer to certain social actors that have significant distinctive category with another. It can be in the formed of social status, religion, etc. that people can easily point who the actors are. Functionalization is when the social actors are mention by these categories. The first to be followed by occupation or role, that are followed by -er, -ant, -man, -women, -ee, etc. Identification is sub category that presents the social actors based on what people can see outside of their job and role. Personalization is type of linguistic mechanism that presents the social actors by using proper names or possessive pronouns. Impersonalization is when the social actors are presented by abstraction or objectivation. This linguistic mechanism does not belong to describe the semantic feature of human. Overdetermination is when social actors are represented as participating simultaneously on more than one social practice.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Furthermore, having thoroughly analyzed eight online news articles from both media able to make the researcher found several distinctions of how Reuters and NYTimes portrayed Donald Trump towards the issue of #BlackLivesMatter. Generally, the researcher found between Reuters and NYTimes are opposite each other. Reuters more neutral in order to presented or portrayed Donald Trump. While NYTimes, more negative than positive and neutral in order to portrayed Donald Trump.

### *Inclusion*

The researcher found both Reuters and NYTimes used inclusion strategies. However, there are some sub-categories in inclusion that are not used by both media. Reuters used normalization – formalization, specification, activation, passivation – subjected and benefitted. While NYTimes used categorization, activation, determination, passivation – subjected, and specification.

### **Activation**

In the analysis, it found that activation was used five times in the Reuters. Meanwhile, in NYTimes was used eight times. Two of them from each news media as follows.

**Table 4.1 Data of Activation found in the Reuters**

| Title of News Articles  | Activation  |
|---|---|
| Fact checks: Trump did not tweet that George’s family were honored to hear from him | Trump did say that he had <b>spoken</b> with the family of George Floyd during an event at the White House on May 29.   |
| Trump’s church visit, response to George Floyd’s death frustrate some advisers      | Trump’s <b>focus</b> on “law and order” to curb sometimes violent protests came after discussion among advisers about the best way to respond to the death of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died after a white police officer knelt on his neck for almost nine minutes in Minneapolis last week, senior |

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
|  | administration official said. |
|--|-------------------------------|

From the sentences data, the readers knows that Mr. Trump presented in positive way because from those sentences shows that Mr. Trump cares with the society then made decision to focus with “law and order” to become his respond towards George Floyd’s death. He also cares with George Floyd’s family with said the condolences when he met George Floyd’s family.

**Table 4.2 Activation data found in NYTimes**

| Title of News Articles                                       | Activation   |
|--|--|
| George Floyd, Donald Trump, Hong Kong: Your Tuesday Briefing | President Trump on Monday <b>called</b> the looting and violence amid the American protests “acts of domestic terror” and threatened military intervention.  |
| In Days of Discord, a President Fans the Flames              | Mr. Trump’s <b>initial response</b> to the rioting in Minneapolis, where police officer has been charged with murder after kneeling on Mr. Floyd’s neck for nearly nine minutes as he cried out that he could not breathe, underscored the president’s most instinctive response to national challenges. |

From the sentences data, the readers knows that Mr. Trump presented in neutral way because from the sentence, the researcher found that Mr. Trump who described the demonstrations that happened was “an act of domestic terror”. It is too rough if Mr. Trump described it for the demonstrations. After those issues, in NYTimes also made a positive issue related with Mr. Trump and George Floyd. That issue is Mr. Trump give the first response as a president on national problem that happened in the country. According to NYTimes, the response from Mr. Trump is the instinctive response for the national problems.

### Passivation-Subjected

In the Reuters and NYTimes online newspapers, passivation-subjected used to explained some issues related Donald Trump in the case of #BlackLives Matter. From Reuters, the researcher found 4 data for passivation-subjected strategy, while in NYTimes the researcher found 3 data. Two of them from each news media as follows.

**Table 4.3 Data of Passivation-Subjected found in Reuters**

| Title of News Articles  | Passivation-Subjected  |
|---|--|
| Fact checks: Trump did not tweet that George’s family were honored to hear from him | Facebook users are circulating a fictitious tweet <b>purportedly from U.S. President Donald Trump</b> , which states that George Floyd’s family were “honored” to hear from him.   |
| Trump’s church visit, response to George Floyd’s death frustrate some advisers      | White House spokesman <b>Hogan Gidley said Trump has hit “the perfect tone”</b> in expressing deep sadness for the Floyd family and showing an unwavering commitment to make sure justice is done in the case, while also defending law and order. |

From the sentences data, the readers knows that Mr. Trump presented more positive than negative ways because from the sentence, the researcher found that Mr. Trump explained that there is fake Twitter status which said that George Floyd’s family feel honored to hear such kind of sympathy from Mr. Trump. It became the example of presented Mr. Trump in positive way, because from that explanation related with that, the society knows that is fake Twitter status which means it is not from Mr. Trump. Besides that, Hogan Gidley explained that what Mr. Trump do in focus with law and order related with the issue of Floyd’s death is “the perfect tone”. While in negative way, Mr. Trump explained that he rarely come to the church for at least to pray for God.

**Table 4.4 Data of Passivation-Subjected found in NYTimes**

| Title of News Articles                          | Passivation-Subjected   |
|---|---|
| In Days of Discord, a President Fans the Flames | <b>The turmoil came right to Mr. Trump’s doorstep</b> for the second night in a row on Saturday as hundreds of people protesting Mr. Floyd’s death and the president’s repones surged in streets near the White House.  |
| In Days of Discord, a President Fans the Flames | While most were peaceful, chanting “black lives matter” and “no peace, no justice”, some spray-painted <b>scatological advice for Mr. Trump</b> , ignited small fires, set off fire cracks and threw bricks, bottles and fruit at Secret Service and United States Park Police officers, who respond with pepper spray. |

Mr. Trump presented in positive way. Because, from those explanation, Mr. Trump presented as a victim of the chaotic that happened.

**Passivation-Benefitted**

In the Reuters and NYTimes online newspapers, passivation-benefitted used to explained some issues related Donald Trump in the case of #BlackLives Matter. From Reuters and NYTimes, the researcher found two data for passivation-benefitted strategy.

**Table 4.5 Data of Passivation-Benefitted found in Reuters**

| Title of News Articles  | Passivation-Benefitted  |
|---|---|
| Fact checks: Trump did not tweet that George’s family were honored to hear from him | Facebook users are circulating a fictitious tweet purportedly from U.S. President Donald Trump, which states that George Floyd’s family were “honored” to hear from him. <b>This is not true.</b> |
| Fact checks: Trump did not tweet that George’s family were honored to hear from him | <b>The tweet is not legitimate.</b> It does not appear on Trump’s timeline on May 29, nor does it appear in Twitter searches for posts with this wording.   |

From the sentence and the explanation above, the readers knows that Mr. Trump presented in neutral way. Because in those sentences did not explained Mr. Trump in negative or positive, it is just neutral.

**Table 4.6 Data of Passivation-Benefitted found in NYTimes**

| Title of News Articles                                       | Passivation-Benefitted  |
|--|---|
| In Days of Discord, a President Fans the Flames              | Mayor Murel E. Bower of Washington responded sharply on Saturday morning, saying her <b>police department will protect anyone in Washington, including the president</b> , and by Saturday evening her officers were out in force around the White House. |
| George Floyd, Donald Trump, Hong Kong: Your Tuesday Briefing | The police used tear gas to clear protesters away <b>so Mr. Trump could visit a church near the White House</b> , where he posed for photos with a bible.   |

From the explanation above, Mr. Trump presented in neutral but can be in negative way. Because in the first sentence, Mr. Trump presented neutral, he is not explained in negative or positive ways. But, in the second sentence, depend on the readers itself. If the readers are the person who thinks that religious and pray to God are important, they will see what Mr. Trump did was something bad, so that sentence become presented in negative way. While, if the readers who thinks that religious and pray to God are important but related with those things are privacy and it was the responsibility of that person itself. So, that person will not comment related with it, or become just so, as if there is no something happened. Then, Mr. Trump will be presented in neutral way. While for the researcher’s opinion, the researcher is the person who become the second one. Because related with religious is everyone’s right.

### Specification

Specification described as social actor who presented with certain action. In this analysis, the researcher found two sentences from Reuters, while five sentences from NYTimes.

**Table 4.7 Data of Specification in Reuters**

| The Tittle of News Article  | Specification  |
|---|--|
| Trump says he spoke with family of George Floyd                                 | Trump, <b>speaking</b> during an event at the White House, also said “we can’t allow” the demonstrations in Minneapolis “to descend further into lawless anarchy and chaos”        |
| Trump’s church visit, response to George Floyd’s death frustrate some advisers. | Trump condemned Floyd’s killing and has <b>promised</b> justice but he faced criticism from Democrats and some fellow Republicans for his provocative rhetoric about the protests. |

From the explanation above, the readers knows that Mr. Trump presented in positive way, because in those two-sentence explained that Mr. Trump cares with the society and also the protesters. Even until he gets criticism from the Democrats and some Republicans fellows. But he still tried to give justice in Floyd’s case.

**Table 4.8 Data of Specification in NYTimes**

| The Tittle of News Article   | Specification  |
|--|--|
| Trump Says Jobs Report Made It a ‘Great Day’ for George Floyd, Stepping on Message | “Hopefully, George is looking down right now and saying this is a great thing that’s happening for our country,” Mr. Trump <b>said</b> . “This is a great day for him, it’s a great day for everybody. This is a great day for everybody. This is a great, great day in terms of equality.”  |
| Trump Test a Role He’s Long Admired: A Strongman Imposing Order                    | Mr. Trump also <b>told</b> governors “You have to do a retribution” against the protesters he described as “terrorists”, and, later, endorsed as “100% correct” a tweet by Senator Tom Cotton, Republican of Arkansas, calling for “zero tolerance” of anarchy, rioting and looting” and for deploying an Army division against “these Antifa terrorists”. |

From the explanation above, the readers knows that Mr. Trump presented in neutral way because, in those explanation, Mr. Trump in positive and negative ways. For the positive, Mr. Trump explained that Mr. Trump made ‘a great day’ in terms of equality. While in negative ways explained that Mr. Trump asked governors to do retribution towards the supporters.

### Normalization-Formalization

For this strategy, the news media that used this strategy only Reuters. From Reuters, the researcher found three data, two of them are as follows.

**Table 4.9 Data of Normalization-Formalization found in Reuters**

| The Tittle of News Article   | Normalization-Formalization   |
|--|---|
| Trump Says He Spoke with Family of George Floyd                                | <b>U.S. President Donald Trump</b> said on Friday he had spoken with the family of George Floyd, an unarmed black man who died after a white police officer knelt on his neck in a killing that triggered three days of violent protests in Minneapolis.          |
| Trump’s Church Visit, Response to George Floyd’s Death Frustrate Some Advisors | <b>President Donald Trump’s</b> bellicose response to the racial unrest engulfing the United States and his controversial visit to a church after the forced clearing of peaceful protesters have sparked divisions and frustration among some White House staff. |

From the sentences above, the readers knows that Mr. Trump presented in neutral way, because from those sentence, Mr. Trump presented in positive and negative ways. In positive way because in the first sentence explained that Mr. Trump as a president, he met George Floyd's family to said and show his sympathy towards the national problem #blacklivesmatter which the victim is George Floyd. While presented in negative way because in the second sentence explained that he got pro and contra comments towards his and the police action, when he wants to come to the church to take photos with a bible.

### Categorization

For this strategy, the news media that used this strategy only NYTimes. From NYTimes, the researcher found one datum which detailed as follows.

**Table 4.10 Datum of categorization found in NYTimes**

| <b>The Tittle of News Article</b>               | <b>Categorization</b>   |
|---|---|
| In Days of Discord, a President Fans the Flames | Mr. Trump has presented himself as someone who <b>seeks conflict, not conciliation, a fighter not a peacemaker.</b> |

From that sentence, Mr. Trump presented in negative way, because in that sentence explained that Mr. Trump likes a conflict and he also a fighter, who always looking for problem with other people. Those things have become the characteristic of Mr. Trump.

### Determination

For this strategy, the news media that used this strategy only NYTimes. From NYTimes, the researcher found one datum which detailed as follows.

**Table 4.11 Datum of determination found in NYTimes**

| <b>The Tittle of News Article</b>               | <b>Categorization</b>   |
|---|---|
| In Days of Discord, a President Fans the Flames | Mr. Trump has presented himself as someone who seeks conflict, not conciliation, <b>a fighter not a peacemaker.</b> |

That sentence presented Mr. Trump in negative way, because in that sentence described Mr. Trump as someone who likes to looking for conflict and not a conciliation or peacemaker.

### CONCLUSION

From the explanation above, the readers knows that Mr. Trump mostly presented in negative ways, because Mr. Trump explained in as someone who seeks conflict, become a fighter, who asked the governor to do retribution to the protesters, and others. For example, Mr. Trump has presented himself as someone who seeks conflict, not conciliation, a fighter not a peacemaker. Mr. Trump mostly presented in negative way with NYTimes. While Reuters rarely presented Mr. Trump in negative ways.

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