

## GETTING BEHIND THE PORTRAIT OF JOKOWI: FRAMING ANALYSIS OF AN ARTICLE ABOUT JOKOWI PUBLISHED AT BBC

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### Abstract

*Recently, there has been a wide interest to study how media frame issues in news text which then lead to the understanding of how reality is constructed. The current research aims to enrich the understanding of how international media construct a portrait of a national political figures, in this case the current President of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, prior to his election. An article titled Flooding Tests Jakarta's Obama was analysed using Pan and Kosicki's (1993) framing analysis model. The syntactic, script, thematic and rhetorical structures of the the article was analysed and interpreted to identify what were the signifying elements used to deliver the story. The finding showed that through the use of signifying elements, the journalist made more salient the greatness of Jokowi as a leader than his weakness. In term of the stylistic choices, words and phrases with positive connotation were more dominantly used.*

*Keywords: Framing and Reality Construction*

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### a. Background Of The Study

Elected president of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, familiarly known as Jokowi, has initially received great attention from the media. A year before the presidential election, he already began to receive international recognition. Some international media such as The New York Times, Reuters, and BBC attempted to publish comprehensive reports about him. One of the reports published on BBC was "Flooding Tests Jakarta's Obama". This headline made us aware that, at that time Jokowi was already compared to Obama and it is interesting to explore further the framing strategy utilized by the journalist to cover the story about Jokowi.

According to Scheufele (1999), "Journalists actively construct frames to structure and make sense of incoming information. The formation of frames is moderated by variables such as ideology, attitudes and professional norms and is eventually reflected in the way journalists frame news coverage" (p. 115). In addition, according to Entman (2007), "sometimes to news that favors one side rather than providing equivalent treatment to both sides in a political conflict (p. 163).

A considerable amount of research has been done on how national newspapers frame certain issues and certain political figures, however less attention has been paid to how international media frames a certain national figure. Therefore, the present study intends to examine how international media make use of frames to accentuate or weaken certain facts in news texts to produce certain meaning. The present research also aims to investigate what is narrated, shared and represented in articles about Jokowi.

In the current study, the signifying elements proposed by Pan and Kosicki (1993) are going to use as a stepping point to uncover the operation of framing devices in the texts. According to them, the signifying elements functioned as framing device because, "they are recognizable and thus can be experienced, can be conceptualized into concrete elements of discourse, can be arranged or manipulated by newsmakers..." (p. 59).

#### b. Scope and Limitation of the Study

Based on the Pan and Kosicki's (1993) model, the current research only focuses on the news text analysis and interpretation, without crosschecking them with the writers of the news because the text itself is considered to provide adequate data to answer the

research questions. For further research, crosscheck with the writers of the articles may provide richer data and a more profound understanding about what is behind the frames used.

### c. Statement of The Problem

Regarding to the background of the research, the problem can be formulated, as follows:

1. What are the signifying elements used by BBC to frame an article about Jokowi?
2. How are the signifying elements utilized to construct the portrait of Jokowi?

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

### a. Framing and Reality Construction

Tuchman (1978) proposes that “Mass media actively set the frames of references that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events.” (as cited in Scheufele, 1999, p. 105). In addition, Neuman et al (1992) states “a version of reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers and interpreted selection from mass media” (Cited in Scheufele, 1999, p. 105).

Scheufele (1999) classified media framing research into two categories, namely:

- 1) **Media frames as a Dependent Variables (Tuchman 1978, Bennet 1991, Edelman 1993).** The research questions for this kind of media framing are (a) *What factor influences the way journalists or other societal groups frame certain issues?* (b) *How do these processes work and, as a result, what are the frames that journalists use?*
- 2) **Media frames as Independent Variable (Pan and Kosicki 1993, Entman 1993, Huang 1996).** The research question for this type of media framing research is *What kind of media frames influence the audience’s perception of certain issues, and how this process work?* Pan and Kosicki (1993) and Entman (1993) analyse a link between media and audience frames, but only investigate of media frames. Pan and Kosicki did research on a newspaper article about antiabortion rally, whereas, Entman examined the coverage on the downing of a Korean and Iranian airplane.

### b. Pan and Kosicki Framing Analysis

Pan and Kosicki (2010) define the news media frame as “a cognitive device used in information encoding, interpreting, and retrieving; it is communicable; and it is related to journalistic professional routines and conventions.” (p. 57).

Borrowing Gamson and Modigliani (1989)’s concept, Pan and Kosicki suggests that every news story has a theme that functions as the central organizing idea. “A theme is not the same as a topic, which is a summary label of the domain of social experiences covered by a story. A theme is an idea that connects different semantic elements of a story (e.g., descriptions of an action or an actor, quotes of sources, and background information) into a coherent whole.” (p. 58-59, in this case, the concept “theme” later on will be mentioned as “frame”). They conclude that the frames are “tools for newsmakers to use in composing or constructing news discourse as well as psychological stimuli for audiences to process. They make a frame communicable through the news media” (p. 59). This model also differs from its closest conceptual ally-William Gamson's (1988) work on news discourse—“in that it does not assume the presence of frames in news texts *independent of readers of the texts.*” (p. 58)

The basic idea of Pan and Kosicki’s model of framing analysis is viewing news text as “a system of organized signifying elements that both indicate the advocacy of certain ideas and provide devices to encourage certain kinds of audience processing of the texts.” (p. 56).

Pan and Kosicki (1993) focus on how political languages used in various stages of communication are investigated. They believe that choices of words and their organization into news stories are significant matters, because of their role in setting the context and defining the issues by making use of certain mental representation. (p.70). In addition, Pan and Kosicki (1993) propose that a news text always consists of shared beliefs about society.

“These beliefs, despite the elusive nature of their content, are known and accepted by a majority of the society as common sense or conventional wisdom.” (p. 57).

**c. Earlier Study on Framing Analysis**

A study done by Michael Pearce (2001) examined a documentary film which presented a portrait of Tony Blair. This paper investigated how Blair’s biography is used for propaganda purposes. The result of this research showed that Blair presented his own biography and personality as a symbol of the synthesis of dynamic free market and social justice.

In 2010, Yulimar examined the speeches of Obama during his race for presidency. The findings from the study revealed that repetition, using and evoking emotional appeal, transitioning between pronouns “I”, “we”, and “you”, and extensive use of metaphors were used as persuasive techniques to create dramatic appeal and motivate Americans to vote for him.

Tannen (2004, p. 399) conducted a framing analysis on a family’s talk to their dog and found that dogs become resources by which speakers effect a frame shift to a humorous key, buffer criticism, deliver praise, teach values to a child, resolve potential conflict with a spouse, and create a family identity that includes the dogs as family members. The finding of the research supported Bakhtin’s work (1981) about how family members use pets as resources to mediate their interactions while constituting and reinforcing their identity as a family.

Another framing analysis also has been done by an Indonesian scholar, Damono in 2001, examining how labour strikes were covered by Kompas and Media Indonesia daily newspapers. The research was done by analysing news about labour strikes published in two newspapers during the year of 2000, utilizing the framework proposed by Gamson and Modigliani (1989). The results of this research are:

- a. There were no significant differences in frames used between those two media.
- b. The news about labour strikes was not placed in first page.
- c. Both of the media preferred using hard news format in covering the labour strikes.
- d. Anarchist frames were used to deliver the story about labour strikes and news coverage was oriented to focus more on events than issues. Damono in 2001 conducted framing analysis on labour strikes reporting in Kompas and Media Indonesia.

Nugroho, Eriyanto and Surdiasis (1999) conducted framing analysis on an Indonesian political figure, Habibie, in three media, namely *Kompas*, *Merdeka* and *Republika*. The news about Habibie was analysed in all three newspapers. This research was carried out within a period of six months (May – November 1998) and the results of this research were:

- 1. *Republika*, *Kompas* and *Merdeka* used different frame to report the same story
- 2. In *Republika*’s frame, Habibie was constitutionally elected president.
- 3. *Kompas* judged Habibie’s inauguration in both pro and con perspectives.
- 4. On the other hand, *Merdeka* framed the appointment of Habibie as president was Soeharto’s tactic to make sure the presidency position was occupied by his confidant.

**3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**a. Theoretical Framework**

In Pan and Kosicki’s model, the framing devices may be classified into four categories, representing four structural dimensions of news discourse: syntactical structures, script structures, thematic structures, and rhetorical structures as follows (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, p. 59-62): **1) Syntactical Structures** refer to the stable patterns—the arrangement of words or phrases into sentences. A headline is the most salient cue to activate certain semantically related concept in readers’ mind. **2) Script Structures:** news reports are often conceived as stories, and when viewed as stories, news discourse has its

own recognizable organizations called scripts. A generic version consists of the familiar five Ws and one H: who, what, when, where, why and how. The presence of the news script conveys an impression that a news story is a relatively independent unit, because it appears to contain complete information pertaining to an event, with a beginning, a climax, and an end. The strategy in this structure is that it contains the intrinsic push of our attention towards drama, action, characters, and human emotions. **3).Thematic Structures:** a theme is presented or implied, and evidence in the forms of the journalists' observation of actions of a source is presented to support the hypothesis.

**b. Data Source**

The data was downloaded from the official media website of BBC. The unit of analysis of the present study are words, phrases, sentences, and propositions which indicate the signifying elements and strategies used in those three articles to construct the portrait of Jokowi. The data was also chosen based on the credibility of the media, the format (feature) and the theme (the coverage about Jokowi). The present study replicated a research done by Pan and Kosicki (1993) on one article about anti-abortion rally which was published in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1991, but the current research picked three articles from three different international media in order to get richer data from three different international media.

**c. Data Analysis**

The data was analysed by reading the text closely and identifying which part of the texts showed the signifying elements supporting certain frame used. After a close reading on the four structural dimensions, the researcher followed it up with data interpretation of how the portrait of Jokowi was constructed within the three articles, and how the use of certain strategies compare among the three media. For the first research question, the signifying elements were identified by means of the table of Pan and Kosicki's model of structural elements, which consists of the syntactical, script, thematic and rhetorical structures. By identifying the signifying elements, then the use of particular strategies by journalists to construct the portrait of Jokowi can be examined.

**4. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

**a. The Signifying Elements used in BBC's Article**

This article was written by Karishma Vaswani and published by BBC News on January, 23 2013. The Structural Elements table consisted of sentences, propositions, syntactical, scripts, thematic and rhetorical structures. The sentences from the news text are extracted into propositions and analysed in term of four structural dimensions of Pan and Kosicki's (1993) model.

**In terms of syntactical structure,** *the lead* directly attributes the figure of Jokowi to US President, Obama. *The lead* is consistent with *the headline* "Flooding tests Jakarta's Obama". In Pan and Kosicki's model, *the lead and headline* has a strong framing aspect. Cotter (2010) supports this position, according to him "the lead encapsulates the story, highlighting the fronting of what is most interesting, relevant, or new" (p. 151). In the case of this present study for which the object was feature articles, according to Lanson and Stephen (1994) it requires greater freedom of style. (Cited in Cotte, 2010, p. 153).

*The supporting paragraphs* contain two kinds of information: (1) the supporting information about the figure of Jokowi as Obama from Jakarta, (2) The details about the devastating floods that hit Jakarta. Jokowi's political career as the mayor of Solo and the governor of Jakarta were provided as *background information*. For example, the background information was connected to the rest of the texts by using the conjunction "previously", as following:

*Previously the governor of Solo, a far smaller city than Jakarta, Mr Widodo campaigned on a pro-people platform, promising Jakarta residents that he could bring real change to their beleaguered city.(Paragraph 3)*

**In term of script structure,** the whole story presented by the article is providing information about who Jokowi is and introducing him to those who are not familiar with

him. That is why the journalist called him Jakarta's Obama. It is an attempt to draw the reader's attention by comparing him with a more well-known figure for Western society, Obama. This way of telling the stories also brings another implication. Being compared with the elected president of America, Jokowi has been viewed as a potential candidate for 2014 presidential elections. As presented in paragraph 30, "*He is often compared to US President Barack Obama, not just because of his tall and lanky frame, but because of his ability to empathise with the common man.*"

**At the beginning** of the present article, Jokowi is introduced as a new prominent figure. **In the middle**, Jokowi is described that he has to deal with very complicated problems. The complexity of problems in Jakarta is outlined in a great detail. They are described throughout 10 paragraphs (paragraph 4 to paragraph 13) from 33 paragraphs of the whole text. This strategy has two implications. First, Jokowi is positioned as a hero, who has to fight against very tough villains. Second, if Jokowi fails to solve the problems, he is provided with a reasonable excuse due to the complexity of the problems encountered. As can be seen in the following paragraph:

*It is not just annual floods that he has to deal with. A daily part of life in Jakarta is battling through the city's world-famous traffic jams - one of the reasons why the Indonesian capital has earned the moniker of being one of the most unliveable cities on the planet. (Paragraph 28)*

He was described more dominantly in positive tone in the overall article. The Jakarta residents are portrayed to feel more hopeful and to believe that Jokowi was working hard for them. Here are the examples:

*Jakarta residents are looking to **their hero**, Mr Widodo, to prove that he is up to the job of governing their city. (Paragraph 7)*

**At the end** of the article, the journalist repeated her initial assumption that compares Jokowi with Obama with an emphasis on positive words like "*a clean politician*", "*a man who listens to the people*", "*because of his ability to empathise with the common man*" etc.

In the current article, two sources are quoted, the first one is a flood victim, Suhendra and the second one is Ary Hermawan, a newspaper editor. Their opinions are quoted in almost similar portions, in five paragraphs. Suhendra is Jokowi's supporter, whereas Ary Hermawan is his opponent. Despite the same portion supplied to both of them, Suhendra represents the voice of the little people, who position Jokowi as hero, and also support the news text's proposition. As mentioned in paragraph 7: *Jakarta residents are looking to their hero, Mr Widodo, to prove that he is up to the job of governing their city*, and paragraph 14: *But many are feeling more hopeful now that Joko Widodo, known popularly here as Jokowi, someone they helped to put in to office, is in power.*

**Analysing the thematic structure**, it turns out that the current article makes the positive tone about Jokowi more prominent than the negative tone. Even though, he has been depicted to face burdensome problem with the floods, he was portrayed to work hard for it, and people trust him. Based on the thematic structures, there are some subthemes emerging from the text. **First**, Jakartans are portrayed as believing in Jokowi's reputation. **Second**, Jokowi is described to have to face the first test in his political career: the devastating flood that hits Jakarta. **Third**, in spite of complicated problems encountered, the people are depicted to feel more hopeful to have Jokowi in power. The people of Jakarta are portrayed to have high expectations of him. **Fourth**, Critics says Jokowi need to spend less time for courtesy visits. Jokowi has been criticized to having too many courtesy visits. **Lastly**, Jokowi is depicted to have a tough job in solving dozens of problems of Jakarta

**In terms of rhetorical structure**, some rhetorical devices were found in the present article, namely: *depictions, quantifications and catchphrases*. **The depictions** i.e. *urban poor and middle class, overwhelming support, humble and clean reputation, real change, pro-people, their hero, particularly from among urban poor, slum neighbourhood, more hopeful, very nice to the people, cares about us, the poor people,*

*significant achievement, clean politician, emphasise, common man, just a simple man.* Meanwhile, **the quantifications found** are *hugely and many*. Some **catchphrases** also used by the journalist such as *a leader who can make a difference, and a man who listens to the people*. The rhetorical devices mentioned above obviously showed the viewpoint of the journalist. Words with positive connotation were dominantly used, and also words which are associated with life of the little people also appeared quite a lot in the article.

According to Pan and Kosicki (1993), there are three strategies in news text used as framing devices, namely, **claiming empirical validity or facticity by quoting experts** or **citing empirical data**, linking certain points of view to authority by quoting official sources, and marginalizing certain points of view by relating a quote or point of view to a social deviant.

In the BBC article, "Flooding Tests Jakarta's Obama", the figure of Jokowi had been compared to US President, Obama. The lead sentence repeats that expression, "They call him Jakarta's Obama". In this case, the journalist has used a strategy of claiming empirical facticity and citing empirical data. The comparison between Jokowi is presented as a lead as if it truly represents public opinion, as a matter of fact, there is no research that can prove this claim. The word "They" in "They call him Jakarta's Obama" remains unexplained, the journalist does not specify who are exactly referred to by the pronoun "they". This expression was repeated in paragraph 31 in which the journalist attempted to represent public opinion, without providing any proof that the public really thought the same way. However, the readers were finally provided explanation why Jokowi had been compared with Obama:

Several signifying elements showed that the three media framed the portrait of Jokowi as a figure who were very closed to his people. BBC used several expression which positioned Jokowi as a hero for the little people, namely: *their hero, feeling more hopeful, Jokowi cares about us, the poor people*.

In BBC's article, "Flooding Test Jakarta's Obama", out of 33 paragraphs, only 5 paragraphs are discussing criticism to Jokowi. The rest contained compliments or being neutral. Thus, the journalists of those articles did not find it necessary to explore further about the shortcomings of Jokowi's leadership. They had been quite satisfied with positive facts about Jokowi, and lead the audiences to follow their viewpoints.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Using Pan and Kosicki's (1993) model, the present research has examined the syntactical, script, thematic and the rhetorical structures of an article published in BBC. choices made by journalists in relation to their intended effects

*In terms of syntactical structures*, the journalists made more salient the greatness of Jokowi as a leader by placing it in the "lead" and as a "headline". The BBC compared Jokowi to the US President, Obama. *In term of script structures*, the findings showed that the news texts were presented to shape understanding that Jokowi is a hero rather than a villain, by describing that he was a loved leader who had to work hard to solve the problems and also presenting positive fact more dominantly than the negative one. The portion which praised him was much larger than portion which criticized him. Quoted sources were dominantly coming from Jokowi's supporters than his opponents. *In terms of thematic structures*, the subthemes that appeared in the article brought forward several subthemes, namely: "Jokowi is a loved leader", "He had to face very tough challenges", "He works very hard to solve the problems", and "He has a good track record". *In terms of rhetorical structures*, words and phrases with positive connotation were more dominantly used. BBC used several words like *overwhelming support, humble, clean reputation, real change, pro-people, their hero, more hopeful, very nice to the people, cares about us, significant achievement, and a simple man*.

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