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ROHINGYA IN MEDIA: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
OF MYANMAR AND BANGLADESH NEWSPAPER HEADLINES

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ABSTRACT

Rohingya case has attracted world-wide attention as it is regarded as humanity rather than racial issue. The case has become viral throughout the world by means of, one of which, newspaper headlines. Media plays an important role to blow this humanity issue. Critical Discourse Analysis is urgently required to deconstruct the role of media in portraying that issue. Newspaper headlines on Rohingya case published in Myanmar and Bangladesh were analyzed in terms of their textual structures, employing Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar. The data were taken in a purposive sample technique by observing twenty newspaper headlines from two newspaper companies: *Mmtimes* from Myanmar and *The Nation* from Bangladesh, taken during 2017. Both newspapers used topical Theme in their headlines, yet the participants chosen as the Themes are different. Myanmar headlines involved Actor, Goal, Sayer and Verbiage as their Themes. Bangladesh headlines, on the other hand, employed Actor, Goal, Carrier, Token and Sayer as the Themes. The ideologies concluded from different Theme features in the headlines are different. Myanmar newspaper headlines cover the Rohingya issue by blowing up the good deeds by Myanmar government, while Bangladesh newspaper headlines show the actions done by Rohingyans to save themselves.

Keywords: Rohingya, headlines, ideologies

INTRODUCTION

Rohingya ethnic, located in south-western Rakhine state of Myanmar, has experienced a long sorrow regarding their identity and freedom of living. The government denial of their national state has taken place over than 150 years ago (Steinberg, 2010). Until now, Rohingyas are stateless. The conflict was triggered by the location where Rohingyas have stayed. Living in the border of Bangladesh, Rohingyas who are west Arakan, have been claimed as Bengalis by Myanmar government (James, 2006, p. 22). Blamed as 'outsiders', Rohingyas experienced ethnic cleansing by Buddhist groups in the early of 1900s and late 2003 (James, 2006).

Rohingya is located in Rakhine state and considered as Arakanese, occupying 4.5% of the population (James, 2006, p. xxiv). Being Muslim, the Arakanese called themselves as Rohingya. The Buddhist group forced the Rohingyans to pursue sanctuary across border in Bangladesh (James, 2006, p. 65). The report mentions that in January 2009, Myanmar government denied Rohingya's attempting to flee Myanmar to Malaysia by sea as a 'national race', and referred them to Bengalis (James, 2006, p. 22). Rohingyans never have any type of citizens and ethnic groups (Steinberg, 2010, p. 73).

The history notes that

> in 1978, Myanmar police and troops made a sweep through that region and prompted more than 200.000 to flee into Bangladesh. A similar flight occurred in 1991-1992 and again there was UN repatriation. The fusion of India and Burma in the colonial period, and the exodus during World War II and in the current period, made matters even more murky (Steinberg, 2010, p. 108).

The clearing has continued up to early 2005, when "some 20.000 Muslim refugees from Myanmar still remained refugee camps in Bangladesh. Malaysia has offered political asylum to about 10.000 such persons" (Ganesan & Hlaing, 2007, p. 191).

Rohingya case has attracted media to blow the issue. The effect is, one of which, countries throughout the world have put attention to Rohingyans. Supports in various forms, such as camps and solidarity in ASEAN countries, are the results of what media expose. One form of how media blows the issue is through headlines. Headlines are forms of words packaged in distinctive ways to communicate to the audience. Metila (2013) asserts that headlines present what newspaper agencies regard as the most crucial information readers ought to know. Moreover, headlines have the abilities to "reproduce hegemonic knowledge and ideologies, creating public consensus, and sometimes challenging dominant discourses by maintaining their independence and autonomous agency" (Metila, 2013).

To unveil the ideologies behind media, Critical Discourse Analysis performs as an approach to figure out the meanings of meaning made by the choice of words bundled in the headlines. Wodak (2007) clarifies that ideology is equated with intended or non-intended meanings, with illocutionary and perlocutionary forces. In headlines, what is obvious is what begins the headlines. In Halliday's term, to analyze the Theme of headlines is by means of mode analysis. Downing and Locke (2006) point out that mode is about how the message is arranged or packaged in different ways and the different forms highlight different aspects of the message.

This research focuses on analyzing newspaper headlines published in two countries, Myanmar and Bangladesh. Newspapers are chosen as the data since they serve social and national issues in terms of their ideological perspectives (Sajjad, 2013). The newspapers involved are *Mmtimes* from Myanmar and *The Nation* from Bangladesh. Rohingyans live in Rakhine state which is located in the border of Myanmar and Bangladesh. It was, then, assumed as the initial problem experienced by Rohingyans. Therefore, it becomes the main reason why this research takes newspaper headlines from the two countries.

This research is also in an attempt to compare how each newspaper presents Rohingya issue from the departing message presented in the headlines. Mahmood and Javed (2011) assert that "news headlines are the most important part of newspapers as they provide a quick mode of information to the ones who cannot spare time for reading the details of news item (Sajjad, 2013). The wordings of the headlines are indeed made intentionally by newspapers. Despite the textual structure in media, the ideologies between the two media are also compared with the respect of each media ideological perspective.

Studies utilizing CDA in news headlines have been popularly researched by scholars. Ulum (2016) observed newspaper headlines on Syrian refugees written in 10 English newspapers, 6 German newspapers and 16 Turkish newspapers. The research aimed at knowing the ideologies by considering the newspaper ideological perspectives. The analysis of the surface structures of the headlines and linguistic structures employed become the results of the research. Plain headlines are mostly used by those newspapers. The linguistic features used are topicalization, passivization, and information. The research found that western newspapers focus on the issue from risk perspectives that Syria may carry to Europe, while Turkish newspapers focused on the tragedy in Syria as the key point of the conflict (Ulum, 2016).

Afzal researched the elements of pathos and media framing in newspaper perspective on Rohingya crisis (2016). The research focused on the framing strategy made by media which brought the issue in the international stage. There were three kinds of newspapers involved: Pakistani, British and American editorial opinions. There was a similarity found in the three different newspapers: all of them represent the crisis, which is Rohingya Muslim minority, anti-Buddhist majority and anti-Myanmar rung elite (Afzal, 2016). The newspapers framed Rohingya crisis to appeal readers' emotion.

Those studies observed both the surface structures and linguistic features employed in the headlines by applying Van Dijk's theory of news and discourse. This research enriches the study of news headlines discourse from different perspective. This research focuses on the textual structures of the headlines by applying Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, supported by

Eggins. The similarity found between the previous studies and current study is all of them compare newspapers, though the choice of newspaper is different.

This paper has two main objectives: (1) to figure our how Myanmar and Bangladesh media select the Theme in their headlines regarding Rohingya case and (2) to conclude the differences and similarities in the way different media present the same news item with respect to their ideological perspectives.

METHODS

The approach of this research is Critical Discourse Analysis as CDA regards language as social construct (Young & Harrison, 2004). The analysis does not regard the analyzed texts as separated language forms, but as the representation of particular view, referring to media in different countries. This research observes headlines of online newspapers in Myanmar and Bangladesh, *Mmtimes*and*The Nation.*

To collect the data, this research applied a purposive sampling technique by taking twenty headlines from each newspaper, taken during 2017. In total, there wereforty headlines to observe. The headlines were selected purposively in which the researcher only took those which were directly related to Rohingya in the search engine. Since this research was started in the beginning of 2018, the data taken were those published during 2017. All data were browsed in the newspaper official pages.

The headlines were coded as follows. The first code signifies the country. Myanmar headlines are coded as MYAN, while Bangladesh newspaper headlines are coded as BANG. The next code is H, which refers to headline. The last code is the number of headlines analyzed in each newspaper. For example, MYAN.H.1 means Myanmar newspaper headline datum number 1, BANG.H.5 refers to Bangladesh newspaper headline datum number 5, and so on. The same description is applied for the rest data.

FINDING(S) AND DISCUSSION

The analysis finds that both Myanmar and Bangladesh newspaper headlines use Topical Themes. Topical Theme refers to the Theme in which it performs as the participants in transitivity analysis. However, the participants involved in the headlines are different. The table below shows the Theme used in both newspapers.

Table 1 Participants of Theme Used in Both Newspapers

	Myanmar Headlines	Bangladesh Headlines
Actor	7	15
Goal	9	1
Carrier	-	2
Token	-	1
Sayer	3	1
Verbiage	1	-

The table above shows different types of participants chosen by both newspapers. Myanmar headlines involved Goal as the dominating participant, while Bangladesh headlines involved Actor as the participant which appears the most in the headlines. Bangladesh newspaper headlines are also richer in terms of its Theme structure. The existence of Carrier and Token is absent in Myanmar newspaper headlines.

The headlines below are taken from Myanmar headlines which employ different participants.

MYAN.H.1   **Government** removes welcome mat for UN Special Rapporteur.

MYAN.H.11   **Government team** to visit Bangladesh to discuss refugee repatriation.

Theme, as the departing message in the headlines, is represented in the form of noun phrases in the data above. Since the noun phrases are elements of the clause to which a transitivity function can be assigned occurs in the first position in a clause, they are categorized as Topical Theme (Eggins, 2004). The

transitivity elements above are Actor, meaning the constituents which perform the actions. In the above headlines, the Actors are represented by the words "government" and "government team". Myanmar newspaper intends to show the government's attempts at solving Rohinya case. The employment of government as the Actor is to attract the readers that they also concern Rohingyans.

The dominating participant in Myanmar headlines is Goal. The data below employ Goal as the Theme in Myanmar headlines.

MYAN.H.4   **Refugee deal** inked, repatriation to begin.

Goal refers to the participant in which an action is directed to. The action meant in above datum is "inked" realized in a passive form. The Theme in the headline above is "refugee deal" as the result of an action "inked". Looking at the context, the headline puts an agreement to refugee as the departing message. Myanmar newspaper intends to show the government's effort to solve the Rohingya issue. However, the term "refugee" instead of "Rohingyans" is chosen to hide the issue acknowledged by the world. The newspaper does not explicitly mention Rohingyans in order to avoid sympathy from the readers. Moreover, Myanmar media shows neglect of Rohingya by not mentioning the term. The employment of "refugee" is to attain respect and image that Myanmar government's action to solve the problem.

Myanmar headlines use similar Goal as the Themes as displayed in the following data.

MYAN.H.8   **Peace, stability** restored in northern Rakhine, some troops withdrawn.

MYAN.H.9   **Plans to repatriate refugees** agreed.

MYAN.H.12   **A strong commitment** to restore peace.

The good image of Myanmar government is retained in the headlines. The Goals in the data above refer to the result of the government's effort to stabilize the humanity issue experienced by Rohingyans. The Goals in the data above are intentionally chosen by the newspaper to return the readers' eyes into the upshots made by Myanmar government. The domination of such Theme proves that Myanmar media is in the side of the government. They also obey the rule not to mention "Rohingya" in public space. It also verifies that the media is still under the control of Myanmar government.

Another kind of Theme showing government's role is shown as Sayer. It is the participants who "says". The headlines with Sayer as their Themes are shown below.

MYAN.H.7   **Ministry** vows speedier info release on Rakhine crisis.

MYAN.H.16   **Rakhine Advisory Commission** report being fine-tuned.

The Themes in above data refer to Myanmar government represented by the ministry and advisory commission. The Themes are represented as Sayers marked by the verbs "vow" and "report". The Sayer "ministry" appeals the readers to focus on the official representative in charge of the crisis. The information on the crisis is highly required so that the world knows what happens to Rohingyans at the moment. The Sayer in datum MYAN.H.16 refers to the government representative realized as "Rakhine advisory commission". As the initial message in the headline, Myanmar newspaper, again, hides the term "Rohingya" in the headlines. The term "Rakhine" is more preferred.

The last type of Theme in Myanmar headlines is Verbiage as shown below.

MYAN.H.5   **Illegal immigration, terrorism new global threats**: State Counsellor.

Verbiage is found in the departing message above. The message said by the state counsellor is about "illegal immigration, terrorism new global threats". The choice of Verbiage which refers to Rohingyans results in the negative image of Rohingyans portrayed as illegal race. Moreover, the headline also assumes that the world attention given to Rohingyans is inappropriate. The headline regards illegal immigration as a terrorism which becomes the global threats. Indirectly, the media signals that other countries should not support Rohingyans.

The elaboration of the findings above shows that Myanmar media intentionnaly hides the humanity issue experienced by Rohingyans by hiding them as the Theme in the headlines. The media prefers to show the government's role and their deeds to the refugees. The existence of government as the Theme in Myanmar headlines proves the previous assumption. Instead of showing how Rohingyans suffer from the ethnic eradication, the media is on the government side which does not regard Rohingyans as a part of Myanmar ethnic.

Different from Myanmar headlines, Bangladesh headlines employ Actor more than Goal. Below are the examples of Themes whose participants are Actors.

BANG.H.1   **Nearly 90,000 Rohingyas** escape Myanmar violence as humanitarian crisis looms.

BANG.H.2   **Rohingya refugee crisis: Thousands** take shelter in no-man's land.

BANG.H.7   **10,000 more Rohingyas** enter Bangladesh.

BANG.H.14   **Several thousand Rohingyas** enter Bangladesh from Myanmar in fresh influx.
The data above have the same referents of the departing messages in the headlines, Rohingyans by mentioning the numbers. In datum BANG.H.1, the Theme is "nearly 90,000 Rohingyans", realized as a noun phrase. The involvment of number and "Rohingyans" as an Actor is an acknowledgment of the ethnic by Bangladesh media. The great number modifying the head, Rohingyans, emphasizes a serious humanity issue which affects massive number of people. The same interpretation is strengthened in data BANG.H.2, 7 and 14 displayed above.

The Actors in the above data reveal that Rohingyans perform dynamic actions to save their lives. The long suffer and neglect Rohingyans experience force them to make an action to look for a safe place. Thus, they "enter" places they are accepted and "escape" from clearing by Myanmar government. Different from Myanmar media which never mentions number and "Rohingyans" as the Theme, Bangladesh media indeed intends to appeal the readers so that they are aware of the massive population of Rohingyans who suffer from genocide which make them escape to find protection. This way is also to gain the readers' sympathy.

Bangladesh media employs different Themes from Myanmar's. The headlines below show Bangladesh government's support by means of Actor performing as the Theme.

BANG.H.6   **Bangladesh** draws global attention to Myanmar Rohingya crisis issue.
BANG.H.11   **Rohingya crisis: Home minister** to visit Myanmar this month.
BANG.H.16   **Bangladesh** to vaccinate Rohingya children.

The Actor in the first datum above is "Bangladesh" which refers to the government. The representation of Actor as the doer signifies the government's support by bringing Rohingya issue in the global's attention. As the nearest country to Myanmar, Bangladesh shows serious support to Rohingyans. Datum BANG.H.16 above also employs "Bangladesh" as the Actor which conducts a dynamic action "vaccinate". Bangladesh government also shows their responsibility and care to the children though they think that Rohingyans belong to Myanmar. Support is also shown in datum BANG.H.11 above by placing "Home minister" as the Theme. What occurs before the Actor in the second datum above is the topic blown in the newspaper. The Theme in the datum also refers to the government.

The role of Bangladesh government as the Theme, realized with Actor, in Bangladesh media reveals that Bangladesh supports Rohingyans. The actions done by the Actor are to open the world's eyes to the humanity issue which happens in Rohingya. By mentioning "Rohingya" in the hadlines, Bangladesh media acknowledges the existence of the ethnic. Different from Myanmar media which hides the term, Bangladesh media intentionally blows up the term in the headlines as one of the ways to attract global's attention. As a result, the news on Rohinya is also blown in other countries. The two referents of Actor, Rohingyans and Bangladesh government, as the dominating Themes in Bangladesh media signify that Bangladesh government supports Rohingyans through their concrete action such as bringing the issue global and vaccinating the Rohingyan children.

What is distinctive between Myanmar and Bangladesh media is the employment of Carrier as the Theme, Myanmar media does not involve this participant. The employment of Carrier as the Theme in Bangladesh media is displayed below.

BANG.H.4   **Rohingya influx in Bangladesh** now 409,000: IOM.
BANG.H.20   **200,000 Rohingya children** at risk in Bangladesh camps: Unicef.

Carrier is the participant which is attached to its Attribute. In datum BANG.H.4, the Carrier "Rohingya influx in Bangladesh" is attached to the number "409,000". The existence of Carrier cannot be separated from its Attribute. Thus, the readers are directly attracted to the massive number presented in the Attribute. Similar analysis is shown in datum BANG.H.20. However, the Carrier is represented in "200,000 Rohinya children" which directly puts the number in the Theme. The Attribute to the Carrier is "as risk". In other words, the number of Rohingya children is classified in a risk situation.

The use of Carrier as the Theme in Bangladesh headlines emphasizes the number of Rohingyans who suffer from the clearing done by Myanmar government. This kind of Theme is absent in Myanmar media due to the fact that it does not concern the "refugee", as Myanmar media calls, as the participants classified to particular attributes. On the other hand, Myanmar media prefers to present the role of government and the result of the government's deeds. It proves that Myanmar and Bangladesh have different ideological perspectives by means of wordings chosen in the Themes.

CONCLUSION

Critical Discourse Analysis focusing on Thematic analysis in headlines can be utilized to figure out media ideological perspectives in presenting news, Rohingya. The employment of Goal as the dominating participant as the Theme in Myanmar headlines prove that the media's ideological perspective is to show the results of Myanmar government's deeds to Rohingya. However, the absence of the term "Rohingya" in the headlines proves that the media is still under the government's control. Thus, it also covers the Rohingya conflict by mentioning the things done by the government. Bangladesh media, on the other hand, uses Actor as the dominating participant as the Theme. The Actor refers to Rohingyans who conduct action to save themselves. The use of Carrier also supports the previous analysis that Rohingyans are attached to particular number which are in risky condition. Bangladesh media intentionally uses that Theme in order to uncover that a lot of Rohingyans have to fight for freedom themselves.

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