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## THE POWERFUL STAND OF THE RULER BEFORE THE PUBLIC: A STUDY CASE OF EDITORIAL ON THE LAST NEW ORDER'S GENERAL ELECTION

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### **Abstract**

The paper is aimed to reveal the relative position of media before the public and the ruler. It is to find out how the press took their position. How the press, in this case Jakarta Post, positions itself can be seen, partly, through the way of relationship among the participants involved. To achieve the purpose, it focuses on editorial column of *The Jakarta Post* concerning the political issue. It can be concluded that the ruler in the end of New Order era is very powerful. This can be seen from the way the media presents the issue on the last general election in the era. This fact is proved from the grammatical resources of MOOD system, Modality, comment and adjunct. The media at the time tended to put its position lower than the ruler but higher than the public. It represented to function as a control for the public reaction to the general election than to control the ruler's misconduct in holding the general election.

**Keywords:** the Jakarta Post, general election, editorial.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The reform movement in Indonesia was triggered by the lost of public's trust. The public compelled Soeharto, the government leader, to leave his throne. The government firstly ignored the protests. The students even had to fight hard in committing their action because the army always prohibited the demonstration. The clash between the students and the apparatus caused many tragedies scarifying lots of victims, for example the Trisakti and Semanggi tragedies. The protests came into the peak by the exploding of the terrifying 14th May tragedy. Indonesia at the moment changed into the sea of fire. One week after the tragedy, Soeharto announced his resignation as the mark of the movement's success and handed the power over his vice president, B.J. Habibie. The moment becomes the borderline separating the new order era and the reform era. The border shuts down the new order era and opens up the hopeful reform era.

The paper is aimed to reveal the relative position of media before the public and the ruler. It is to find out how the press took their position. How the press, in this case Jakarta Post, positions itself can be seen, partly, through the way of relationship among the participants involved. To achieve the purpose, it focuses on editorial column of *The Jakarta Post* concerning the political issue.

Editorial is a comment of the publisher written by the important person of any publication conveying the will of the corporation toward any topic supposed to be the right, important and necessary thing. Editorial reflects the reputation and the integrity of the publication. By that fact, editorial becomes the most significant column in the newspapers (Mallarangeng: 1992). The topic discussed in this column is the actual problem and is public interest (Mott 1994, Naina 1989). It conveys the view and the opinion of the institution in which it is issued. An editorial is, thus, a reflection of the will of the corporation.

In accordance with that purpose, the analysis on the editorial employs the systemic functional linguistic focusing on the tenor of each text—especially status (Martin: 1992). It analyzed It is to see how a media positions its stand relative to the ruler and the public. It also represents the relation between the public, the ruler, and the media. Ideally, media should function as a good control for the policy and action of the ruler and the public. Media should have a strong power to normally function as the control. Otherwise, it will malfunction and fail to take its main role.

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## B. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the description of the grammatical resource above, it then can be described thoroughly the elements building up the text to find out how the relationships among the participants involved in the discourse are.

### 1. Contextual Configuration

The editorial is entitled *A new style election*. The text evokes the excellent job of the government in succeeding the poll; the fact that committee can handle the duty sufficiently and effectively--despite the inquiry of the fairness of the election. In addition, it also says about the significant increase of the voters who distribute their aspiration to the opponent party, that is PDI. The editor explains the reasons behind the fact that the people turn their head to that party. Then in the final, the editor utilizes the excuses to suggest the ruler, in this case the ruling Golkar, to take the method the PDI party runs in an effort to regain the votes. The editor, in the last line, concludes that the poll is not just fair but also efficient.

### 2. Status: A Relative Position among the Participants

Status deals with the position of the interlocutors in the social hierarchy. It is defined into higher and lower or dominance and deference (Martin: 1992). To determine how the status among the participants included in the text, it requires seeing the grammatical resources of MOOD system, modality, comment and adjunct.

### 3. MOOD System

MOOD system clarifies the types of clauses as a main resource for exchanging the social meaning in interaction. The interaction will involve a verbal communication between speaker and audience, which is realized in various types of clauses. As a resource, MOOD system takes into account on the fact that the free major clause surely services as mood selection (Mathiessen, 1992).

The MOOD system in the editorial text is prominently indicative-declarative. It has meaning of stating, suggests the readers to confess the superiority of the writer who knows more on the topic discussed. This kind of mood also hides or blocks the direct contact emotionally among the participants. In other words such mood system adopted up to avoid the emotional charge between the readers, and the writer. It can be said that the writer, by taking up the option, just does want to inform the readers, and not more than that.

Despite the MOOD system employed, it is absolutely important to see what information the writer shares. The meaning of the clauses does determine the status among the participants in the text. The information or the topic cited in the text is about the success of the committee in holding the poll, and the significant increase of the PDI's voters.

The committee has successfully conducted the poll and gathered the votes in a very short time. This information, of course, leads the readers to the restrictions of viewing the current election. The readers are led to see the success of the committee, ignoring the issue of many violations committed by Golkar. It can be seen in clause 5 by which the editor invites the readers to see respectively to the success of the committee:

*We would like to congratulate it on this success (Clause 5)*

Another example is the final line, which encloses the discussion; it shows the great appreciation to the poll that was just conducted.

*Another sign of fresher political atmosphere introduced through the election on Tuesday is a fair and more efficient polling system.*

These clauses emphasize nothing except the successful and efficient poll that the committee held, instead of the violations occurring in the vote, which is used to be committed by the ruling party, Golkar as the part of government. Based on the content of the discussion, it can be said that the status of the editor before the ruler is lower. This is proved by the topic of discussion which is only around the "success" of the committee--the success in here is still necessary to further inquire; this fact has been proved that there are many voting forms that were not assigned to the voters, especially those in the remote areas. The editor does not have courage to disclose the ballot counting manipulation and other bad manners committed by the

government to gain the maximal votes. This problem is much more right and important for the sake of justice and fair election in the country.

The winning of PDI in gaining the voters, especially the voters who do want the change in the system of the state, then, is turned to be the argument of the editor to suggest or recommend the ruler to see the aspirations of the "little man" who mostly choose the PDI party to distribute their votes. So far, it could be viewed that the editor does not have any gut to proclaim the violations committed by the ruling Golkar. The writer, moreover, obviously support the party, and uses the way taken by PDI to increase their seats in the House to be the means in giving suggestion to the party in regaining the lost votes.

#### 4. Modality

Another grammatical resource that can be used to determine the status of the participants is modality. Modality means the speaker's judgment of the probabilities as the obligation involved in what he is saying (Halliday, 1985: 75). This indicates that modality is the value attached by the speaker on his utterances. It can be supporting, denying or standing in between. This will lead to the understanding of clause if a clause is a proposition or proposal. These two types of a clause determine the two types of modality, whether it is modulation or modalization.

The modality of the text is dominantly modalization, particularly in medium probability. This evidence shows the doubt argument. This is realized in some clauses, like those in clause 7 and 12b

*It **can** be said that PDI ...has a significant increase (7)*  
*Results **will** not change much (12b)*

The modality in these clauses brings to our mind that the writer is not so sure about what he talks about; this can be seen especially in clause 7, *it can be said*. This fact tells the lower status of the editor.

But in the next lines, it reveals something different; the modality shifted in the degree, from medium to high, as in the following clauses.

*PDI will **surely** get eight more seats (9b)*  
*PDI could **even** take 50 seats (10b)*

The positioning of adjunct *surely* and *even* has increased its probability degree. It expresses such high probability. Another instance of high probability found in the text is that in clause 8.

*The voters **do want** to see changes (clause 8).*

This clause also emphasizes the firmness of the writer in the two clauses before. From the two contrast evidences, hesitancy and certainty, showing a very different implication, it can be said that the status among the writer and the readers tends to be equal. However, it is absolutely necessary to see the context restricting the modality in the clause. All of the clauses above are addressed to the government and those clauses talk about the reasons behind the winning of PDI. This is surely proved in the final of the sequence.

*The Golkar **should** pay more attention to aspiration of the little man.*

The modality in the preceding clauses is the premises to come into the conclusion as the final realizing in the recommendation to the addressee, the ruling Golkar. This evidence seems to evoke that the editor regards the ruler to be the one who needs the information or the government is the person who is necessary to know about the fact. It leads the ruler to follow his view. This points out that the status of the editor is higher than the ruler. It seems that the editor has a powerful bargaining position that make him deserves to dictate the government.

To disclose the actual phenomenon, it needs to closely examine another resource, that is the fact that there are many violations committed by the ruling Golkar; the party has broken many rules decided by the committee. The editor let the fact be concealed before the public; at least he does not mention about the wrongdoing of the cadres of Golkar party, who are, most of them, the officials of the government. And what the editor did is just to support, to criticize the party, so in the next poll, it can regain the lost votes.

The editor, through the modality, also vaguely declares what the people want, the justice, the fairness in holding the poll, although it is not proclaimed in detail; this is just revealed in two clauses, i.e. clause 8 and 14.

*The voters, particularly the young ones, **do want** the change seen in this country.*  
(Clause 8)

*The less fortunate **seem** to have turned their heads toward PDI, which calls itself the party of little man.*

### 5. Comment and Adjunct

The comment and adjunct in the lines above are only to deepen the emotional charge realized in modality, and it makes the status more clearly exposed, like those in the following clauses:

*Golkar **still** hold the lion's share (Cl.6)*

*PPP achieving **only** a slight increase (cl.7)*

*PDI will **surely** get eight more seats (cl.9)*

*It is not **unlikely** that PDI could even take 50 seats.*

The adjunct and comments above emphasize that the writer surely knows about the topic discussed. It tends to position the editor in the higher status. In other lines, however, the writer seems to cast doubt on the information shared by using the comment, like '*not unlikely*' and '*perhaps*'. The evidence tends to lower the status of the writer. Finally, viewed from the evidences above, it can be said that the status among the participants is equal, both the editor and the ruler, or the editor to the public, but the ruler has higher position, compared to the public.

### C. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis on the editorial above, it can be concluded that the ruler in the end of New Order era is very powerful. This can be seen from the way the media presents the issue on the last general election in the era. This fact is proved from the grammatical resources of MOOD system, Modality, comment and adjunct. The media at the time tended to put its position lower than the ruler but higher than the public. It represented to function as a control for the public reaction to the general election than to control the ruler's misconduct in holding the general election.

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### Appendix : Editorial Text of *The Jakarta Post* 1992

1. *A new style election*
2. Two days after polling day, National Election Committee (LPU) was able to announce around 89 percent of the election results from the ballots cast by some 107,000,000 eligible voters all over the country and abroad.
3. a. The data released by the Committee yesterday showed
  - b. that ruling Golongan Karya (Golkar) functional group took 68 percent of the total vote,
  - c. while its two opponents, the United Development Party (PPP) and the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI) got 17 percent and 15 percent respectively.
4. a. We cannot

- b. but take our hats off to the achievement made by the Committee, considering that it is not easy to gather that large a number of ballots from more than 291,000 polling stations located on hundreds of islands stretching from Aceh province on the tip of Sumatra to Irian Jaya province in the western part of New Guinea, a distance of around 5,500 kilometers.
5. a. In short, the Committee, through the use of sophisticated electronic telecommunications equipment, has done its duty well,  
b. and we would like to congratulate it on this success.
6. One interesting aspect of the use of sophisticated technology is that the more rapid the announcement of the total vote tallies, the quicker the people have learned that the ruling Golkar has fallen short of securing the 73 percent victory it obtained in the last general election in 1987.
7. a. Although Golkar suffered a decline in percentage in both the number of ballots cast and the number of registered voters who actually went to the polls compared to 1987,  
b. It still holds the lion's share of this year's vote.
8. With PPP achieving only a slight increase of one percentage point compared to what it obtained in 1987, it can be said  
b. that PDI, whose supporters turned Jakarta into a sea of red with its shirts during the final hours of the election campaign, has seen a significant increase of four point from the 1987 poll.
9. That PDI, which championed the country's younger generation during its campaign and demand significant changes in Indonesian's democratic system, is gaining ground indicates  
b. That voters, particularly the younger ones, do want to see changes taking place in this country.
10. a. Making calculation based on the Committee guidelines, we arrive at the conclusion.  
b. that however small increase is  
c. PDI will surely get eight more additional seats in the legislature from two densely populated provinces--four each from and East Java.
11. a. With the vote count still going on it is not unlikely  
b. That PDI could even take 50 seats in the House of Representatives (DPR) compared to the 40 it has now.
11. It is by no means our attention to bypass the final result from the Committee.
- 12 a. Our conclusion is made on the grounds  
b. That the trend set in the provisional result will not change much  
c. as the vote tally continues  
d. as was the case five years ago.
13. a. The increase in the number of PDI seats also reflects  
b. that the ruling Golkar should pay more attention to the aspiration of the little man.
- 14 a. The less fortunate seem to have turned their heads towards PDI  
b. Which calls itself " party of the little man".
15. Another thing worth noticing in this year's election, perhaps, with the more sophisticated equipment being used for counting the votes and Golkar taking only 68 percent of the vote, is that the issue of poll rigging has subsided.
- 16 a. It is no longer the much-heard topic of the man in the street  
b. That it was in the previous elections
17. Another sign of a fresher political atmosphere introduced through the election on Tuesday is  
a. fairer and more efficient polling system.