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## Controversy Spokesperson of G20 Indonesia: A Critical Discourse Analysis Study

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Critical Discourse Analysis, Bloomberg, Presidential Spokesperson in G20 Indonesia, Roger Fowler

*Received* : 5 June

*Revised* : 18 June

*Accepted* : 19 July

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### ABSTRACT

Bloomberg Businessweek has published the news titled G-20 Role for 27-year-old Indonesia Singer Sparks Criticism. The news contains controversy about Maudy Ayunda's role as a spokesperson for G20 Indonesia. The research is interesting because the power of international news can dominate the political issues of national media, especially since the person who gets attacked is a female gender figure who is also a celebrity. This research used qualitative and descriptive methods. The source of research data is a Bloomberg article written by Yudith Ho and Rieka Rahadiana in 2022. Text analysis was used to analyze the data, with an emphasis on women's discourse from Roger Fowler. The results show the existence of discourse battles carried out by critics. Wasisto Raharjo and Irfan Wahyudi's thoughts became an opinion subject because the government did not choose Maudy Ayunda correctly as the international spokesperson. From this analysis, this research contains an element of controversy and a reasonable interpretation that the point of view of critics is different from the point of view of ordinary people

## INTRODUCTION

The G20 is an international forum for world economic and political policy. The history of the G20 began with the initiation of a group of developed countries called the G7 (G20-Secretariat, 2023). The formation of the forum between the Minister of Finance and the Governor of the Central Bank occurred in 1999 in response to the world economic crisis in order to realize international financial stability. Not only developed countries, one of the representatives of developing countries such as Indonesia has joined the G20 forum representing the Southeast Asian region and the Islamic world. The G20 presidency period runs once a year, with the 2020 presidency trip led by Saudi Arabia and Italy leading the G20 presidency in 2021. Italy handed over the G20 presidency to Indonesia on October 31, 2021 in Bali (Ghoshal, 2022; Vaswani, 2022).

Indonesia holds the 16th Group of 20 (G20) Presidency from December 1, 2021, to November 30, 2022, for the first time. In view of the international country's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, Indonesia raised the theme "Recover Together, Recover Stronger". Indonesia's vision for the world is a strong, resilient, and sustainable pandemic recovery worldwide. In connection with this vision, Indonesia focuses heavily on health recovery, digital, energy transition, and world economic recovery issues (Ulya, 2022).

Indonesia is also friendly to developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and small island states in the Pacific and Caribbean. Spain, Chair of the African Union, Chair of the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AU-NEPAD), Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Netherlands, Singapore, the United Arab Emirates, Chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), and Chair of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) are the nine invited countries of Indonesia's G20 Presidency (Alvin, 2023c).

Maudy Ayunda has been appointed as the Government Spokesperson of the Indonesian G20 Presidency by Johnny G Plate, a Minister of Communication and Information (Kristianti, 2023). Inaugurated on March 31, 2022, the presence of a Maudy is believed to be able to bring change for young Indonesians, especially for handling economics and politics. In addition, Maudy has a

good educational background, she also has an authoritative public speaking aura.

Interestingly, foreign media from the United States called Bloomberg (bloomberg.com) highlighted the figure of Maudy Ayunda. In the publication of an article entitled: "G20 Role for 27-Year-Old Indonesian Singer Sparks Criticism" (Ho & Rahadiana, 2022), Bloomberg criticized Maudy Ayunda's role as spokesperson for Indonesia's G20 presidency. The researcher observed a controversy over the arrangement of the headline. It appears that in the arrangement of the headlines, journalists use the characters of age and occupation as an attack on the identity elements of the news object.

In addition, researchers also highlighted the use of description under the headline. The sentence "singer without economic experience named as G20 Spokesperson" (Ho & Rahadiana, 2022) shows the core reality hidden in the news source. The use of language above suggests the researcher to observe the helplessness of Maudy Ayunda who was honorably taken to take a big part in an international event.

The news was about Maudy Ayunda being selected as one of Indonesia's G20 presidency spokespersons. The representation of Indonesian women was criticized by Bloomberg media journalists. Maudy Ayunda is unfit to be a spokesperson for building the international economy due to her lack of experience in the economic field. This can be seen in Maudy Ayunda's response when she did not respond to questions related to the presence of Putin, the President of Russia and instead diverted the topic of conversation into her personal life. In addition, the government is also using Maudy as its privilege to reach out and attract the attention of millennials.

Maudy Ayunda was born in Jakarta on December 19, 1994. She is an Indonesian woman who has a career as a singer, actress, author, and business investor. Based on the year of birth, she falls into the millennial generation category (Robin et al., 2022). Since the 3rd grade of elementary school, she has a habit of reading books. Maudy's educational trajectory is fairly good. The woman who has one younger sibling pursued her undergraduate education majoring in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics at Oxford University, England and continued her Master's in Business and Education at Stanford University. After graduating from education, Maudy

became a local product investor of startup Segari in 2021 and startup Sirka in 2022 (Hardiantoro, 2022).

This research uses Roger Fowler's critical discourse analysis model. This analysis reviews the function and structure of the language vocabulary used to be easily accepted by the audience. The language structure is analyzed based on different experiences and politics so as to be able to see the social struggles that occur. Thus, Fowler assumes language as a social practice in which it carries certain implications and ideologies (Eriyanto, 2012).

This research topic is interesting because the power of international media news is able to dominate the issue of national media political topics. Especially those that contain the context of the attack are object figures who have careers as artists. The rest, the selection of title sentences containing the age element "twenty-seven years" is a taboo to judge whether or not someone deserves a big role in international events.

## **METHODS**

In this study, the authors used a qualitative approach or method to understand the phenomena of behavior, perceptions, motivations, and actions experienced by research subjects. Qualitative type research through the use of in-depth data aims to explain phenomena (Leavy, 2017).

Researchers use Roger Fowler's critical discourse research analysis to obtain results in achieving research objectives. We chose critical discourse analysis because it allows researchers to examine and analyze the power dynamics present in social interactions and discourses. Further, it also helps uncover how language and discourse shape and maintain power structures in society, such as those related to gender, race, class, and ideology.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the discourse of Bloomberg's international media news content regarding the controversy over Indonesia's G20 government spokesperson. Through data analysis, researchers hope to reveal the results of foreign media analysis or ideology when reporting on political-economic events in Indonesia.

In the level of discourse analysis model, there are three levels of analysis. These levels of analysis are micro, macro, and meso analysis. First, micro analysis is an analysis of the text alone. Especially on the language structure studied in media texts. Second, macro analysis looks at the social,

economic, political and cultural structures of society. Ideology or dominant forces in society become the focus of macro analysis. Third, meso analysis looks at individuals as producers and producers of texts, including analysis on the audience side as text consumers (Eriyanto, 2012; Robin et al., 2020; Tyrwhitt-Drake, 1999).

Roger Fowler's analysis model uses micro and macro levels of analysis. Micro analysis shows the choice of words, vocabulary, and sentences used to describe an event. Macro analysis looks at the social, economic, political and cultural structures of society. Ideology or the dominant forces in society are the focus of macro analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of the research, it was found that there is a new reality created by the media in Indonesian society. The news of G-20 Role for 27-year-old Indonesian Singer Sparks Critics shows the inappropriateness of Maudy Ayunda as the spokesperson for Indonesia's G20 presidency. The reality is created by the views expressed by critics. Researchers found the results of critical discourse in the news text aired by Bloomberg media on April 18, 2022.

In accordance with Roger Fowler's method, researchers found several elements of news vocabulary: making classifications, vocabulary: limiting views, vocabulary: discourse battles, and vocabulary: marginalization. The discovery of the news phenomenon seems to be clearly visible in the context of vocabulary: discourse battle.

### **1. Vocabulary: Make a Classification**

The classification vocabulary Bloomberg uses refers to Indonesia's decision to choose pop stars or celebrity is in order to strengthen connections with young people. Seen at the beginning of the paragraph, Bloomberg deliberately shapes the reality that there is a deliberate favoritism made by the government in order to attract millennial attention (Alvin, 2023a; Alvin & Dewi, 2022).

Classification vocabulary is found in the journalist's statement listed at the beginning of the paragraph contained in the following media text (Schaffner, 1996).

Indonesia's decision to name a pop star as its G-20 spokesperson is the latest move in what some

analysts say is a series of vanity appointments the government is making as part of a bid to connect with a young population (Alvin, 2022b, 2022a, 2022c, 2022d; Jackson, 2008; Jackson & Darrow, 2005; von Sikorski et al., 2018)

The use of the phrase connect with a young population at the beginning of the paragraph has provided a limitation to the reader. The reader's view is limited because Maudy Ayunda's presence can strengthen the connection with the young population. The G20 Indonesia event is indeed open to the public, but here the journalist provides the context that her role is to capture the attention of the younger generation only.

First, the use of the word young limits the researcher's mind and the audience's perception that the government's decision to appoint Maudy Ayunda as the spokesperson for Indonesia's G20 presidency is an international issue, not just an Indonesian issue.

With the use of the word 'young', the mere reality of the problem of the inappropriateness of Maudy Ayunda's role is defined as a problem that needs to be known worldwide.

Secondly, the word 'young' also restricts the reading audience to look at the hidden function behind Maudy Ayunda's spokesperson role. The word is not just a restriction, but can also be categorized as a judgment. When discussing a reality of the role of Indonesia's G20 presidency spokesperson, language users use social experiences into language vocabulary. From the word, the reader can find out the actor's point of view or in terms of internationalism, which assumes that the appointment of artists in terms of international events only aims to gain massive connections with millennials (Street, 2019; Verenia & Alvin, 2022).

## **2. Vocabulary: Limiting Views**

While the vocabulary of limiting views lies in the point of view or perspective of the critics being discussed. Wasisto Raharjo and Irfan Wahyudi as political pundits who criticized Maudy Ayunda for taking the role of spokesperson. Maudy Ayunda is an actress who was appointed by the Ministry of Information and Information Technology on March 31, 2022.

The critical opinion conveyed through this media was aired due to the mismatch of expectations expected from political actors. The critics' views are in line with expectation theory. Where one of the

factors for the emergence of expectations is the possession of appropriate skills to do the job and the availability of appropriate resources. Maudy Ayunda was criticized because her criteria were not in line with the critics' expectations.

A range of scholars have pointed out that celebrities can bring attention to important causes and raise awareness about political issues, but their involvement can also have drawbacks.

One concern is that celebrities may not have the expertise or understanding to fully grasp complex political issues, and their statements or actions may oversimplify or misrepresent the situation (Lewis, 2020; Marsh et al., 2010). This can potentially harm the public's understanding of the issue and lead to uninformed opinions and decisions.

Additionally, celebrity involvement can also shift focus away from the actual issue at hand and instead become centered around the celebrity themselves. This can lead to a lack of substantive discussion about the issue and instead focus on the celebrity's appearance or actions.

Moreover, celebrity involvement can also perpetuate the notion that politics and activism are only for the wealthy and famous, which can alienate marginalized communities who do not have the same platform or resources (Haastrup, 2018).

## **3. Vocabulary: Discourse Battle**

In terms of the vocabulary of discourse battle, Wasisto Raharjo labeled Maudy Ayunda as the government's lucky asset to cover up the ongoing phenomenon at a critical time. When the government's decision to endorse Maudy Ayunda as a spokesperson, the reality coincided with an increase in Indonesian companies laying off active employees.

"These symbolic appointments are part of efforts to temper criticism from the youth on critical issues, such as jobs and public services" (paragraph 4, Ho & Rahadiana, 2022).

Wahyudi's negative discourse opinion is in line with Suharjuddin's concept (2020). Maudy Ayunda's efforts to take the position of spokesperson for Indonesia's G20 presidency are considered futile due to restrictions on access to knowledge in international scope work. When viewed from the context of marginalization, researchers found a smoothing of the word Maudy Ayunda. Journalists used the sentence does not have diplomatic or

economic skills which generally indicates that Ayunda does not have special skills when taking on the role of spokesperson.

Apart from that, journalists marginalize Maudy Ayunda's position for the motive of limited experience and knowledge which leads to injustice that limits the role of the news object.

In the context of media, there is a well-known concept called euphemism. In media discourse, it refers to the use of vague or indirect language to describe something that is considered unpleasant, offensive, or sensitive. This can be a deliberate strategy employed by journalists, politicians, or other communicators to soften the impact of a statement, avoid controversy, or manipulate public opinion.

Euphemisms can take many forms, ranging from subtle language shifts to more overt substitutions. For example, instead of using the word "dead," a news article might refer to someone as having "passed away" or "transitioned." Similarly, instead of using the word "terrorism," a politician might refer to "violent extremism" or "radicalization."

While euphemisms can serve a legitimate purpose in certain contexts, such as avoiding unnecessary offense or protecting privacy, they can also be used to obscure the truth or manipulate public opinion. In some cases, euphemisms can be deliberately crafted to downplay the severity of a situation or to make it appear more palatable to the public.

Irfan Wahyudi's subject expresses both the identity of Maudy Ayunda that has an educational background in the same field and the influence of the spokesperson position is able to reach millennials. At least, Wahyudi's opinion in understanding the government's mission of choosing Maudy Ayunda to be a spokesperson is in line with the concept explained by Cangara (2016), which reveals that one of the factors that encourage the role of women in government and politics is the existence of a formal education sector so that women's positions can develop.

However, with the lack of work experience in the international sphere as said by Wahyudi, Maudy Ayunda's position seems to be eliminated. Due to the condition of limited knowledge of global issues, Ayunda is considered unable to master the realm of government spokesperson for the Indonesian G20 presidency (Alvin, 2020, 2023b).

#### **4. Vocabulary: Marginalization**

Each writer or journalist has their own way or strategy to use vocabulary and grammar (Türken et al., 2016). This is in accordance with Roger Fowler's statements that language use is a social practice with certain implications and ideologies. In fact, they also argue that different experiences and politics result from the language used to describe the social struggles that occur. The importance of this classification can be seen from the fact that the same event is spoken in different languages (Eriyanto, 2012).

When the government's expectation is to use Maudy Ayunda to reach out, on the contrary, critics think that the utilization is just to reach out to the largest group of people in Indonesia.

"In this case, the use of young people will be seen as a gimmick, not as a strategic function." (paragraph 3, Ho & Rahadiana, 2022).

The choice of the word the use seems to indicate that critics consider Maudy Ayunda to be used for the sake of attracting the attention of certain groups. The bright spot here is how the researcher's expectation of Maudy Ayunda is no longer someone who is educated abroad and has qualified skills, but the word "utilization" there also has a negative connotation.

In fact, if observed from Maudy Ayunda's position, she did not have the opportunity to put herself to the readers after being criticized. When she was selected as the spokesperson for Indonesia's G20 presidency on March 31, 2022, and Bloomberg released the article on April 18, 2022, she was only given the opportunity to explain the duties of her role. Nevertheless, Ayunda became a disadvantaged female object in the news context due to the controversy expressed by Bloomberg's critics and writers.

When the national media republished Bloomberg's news text, there seemed to be some opposing responses from Indonesians. One of them was an expression made by Maudy Ayunda's followers during an interview. She revealed that Maudy Ayunda deserved to be chosen by the government for her talent and achievements in

Indonesia (Alvin, 2023d). She considered the critics' responses to be one-sided for those who could not experience being in the position of spokesperson for Indonesia's G20 presidency.

Although Maudy Ayunda did not have the opportunity to tell her own story, she did not portray the fact of the staff's millennial resignation from a political position in the news text. Instead, Maudy successfully completed her responsibilities as Indonesia's spokesperson until the end. Apparently, Maudy attended Indonesia's G20 Summit as a guest in Bali. The event coincided with the closing of the Indonesian G20 which will be handed over to India on November 16, 2022.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on Roger Fowler's critical discourse analysis, the researcher found three parts: vocabulary, grammar, and analytical framework. Vocabulary is found in the form of vocabulary: making classifications, vocabulary: limiting views, vocabulary: discourse battles, and vocabulary: marginalization. While grammar is classified into passive sentence form effects: omission of the perpetrator and nominalization form effects: omission of the perpetrator. The results show that there are several vocabulary choices that are useful for understanding events whose reality is realized from the discourse battle of critics' thoughts.

There are some things that are in accordance with the theory of expectation and conceptualize the critics' views that invite readers to think reasonably to agree with them. This study finally also invites researchers to see how the values or suggestions expressed by the critics can be accepted or not. In general, this news value cannot be fully accepted because journalists only emphasize the critics' point of view. So it looks concrete that the flow of the news framework emphasizes aspects from the political side, not taking the views of the public or ordinary people when Maudy Ayunda has been chosen as the spokesperson for the Indonesian G20 presidency.

With Roger Fowler's critical discourse analysis research on news texts, researchers hope that the powerlessness of object due to lack of work experience is not the main factor for someone not to be able to take a big role. Therefore, the mass media plays an important role in not emphasizing the opposing sides of certain parties. The mass media must remain a neutral party to a phenomenon issue. Additionally, personality traits such as confidence, assertiveness, and leadership skills can also be important factors in taking on a big role, regardless of work experience. Some people may be naturally more suited to taking on leadership roles. Discrimination based on factors such as race, gender, or socio-economic status can prevent people from advancing in their careers or opportunities, despite having the necessary qualifications and experience.

In short, while work experience can be an important factor in taking on a big role, it is not the only factor. Other factors such as education, skills, personality traits, and social structures can also play a significant role in determining opportunities for advancement

This research also provides knowledge to the public to think more critically in understanding news. The media can reconstruct social reality and attack group morality for public consumption. Therefore, the public must be wiser in selecting news that is worth knowing so as not to fall into negative news content.

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