

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *PEANUTS* COMIC STRIPS LOADED IN *THE JAKARTA POST*

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Abstract

This study is conducted by analyzing the intended meanings lies behind the utterances in the dialogues of *Peanuts* Comic Strips in *the Jakarta Post*. Particularly, this study is aimed at analyzing the general socio-cultural knowledge applied to find the intended meanings, the kind of visual images used by the author to transmit the message, and the goals of the comic strips being loaded in the newspapers. Qualitative approach and content analysis is applied to get descriptive information. Specifically, this study uses Critical Discourse Analysis as the research technique. It sees the goal of the comic strips being loaded in the newspaper from the similarity of the storylines and the ideologies shared with the certain news.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, comic strips, intended meaning

1. Introduction

Why reading comic strips sometimes confusing? This question arose when the researcher read *Peanuts* comic strips in *The Jakarta Post* newspapers. According to Brereton (2001) in Shahriar (2006), comic strips could be a series of short and mainly humorous drawings or cartoons, which appears in newspapers. The comic strips in the newspaper are not presented there without purpose. They are often misunderstood by the readers because of the bias messages behind them. A critical reader would see the relationship between the topic or message of the comic strips presented in the newspaper with the recent hot topic presented in that newspaper.

Moreover, comic strip is combination of cartoon with a story line, laid out in a series of pictorial panels across a page and concerning a continuous character or set of characters, whose thoughts and dialogues are indicated by means of “balloons” containing written speech. It can be assumed that the written speech in the “balloons” in the comic strip makes the comic strip is also included as group of text. Thereby, the dialogues in the comic strips enable me to analyze it easily

using critical discourse analysis approach. The curiosity then came to see whether the news in the newspapers also contributes meaning to the comic strips. Supporting this study, a multidisciplinary course is applied, critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis may be apprehended as an approach, process, system or a method. It critically analyzing discourses in any instances to reveal the hidden purpose embedded in society. It also focuses on social issues endorsing people to become aware of the hidden messages or meaning of a community by establishing a relationship between language, ideology and power.

According to Fairclough, CDA deals with real issues and real problems in the society, like globalization, social exclusion, shifts in governance, and so forth. Wodak (1996) tends to think of it as an instrument whose purpose is precisely to expose veiled power structures: CDA aims to make more visible these opaque aspects of discourse. In other words, the prime objective of CDA is to create a consciousness / awareness of the instances of not so apparent issues in the social structure of a society.

Thus, in the attempts to unrevealing the ‘invisible yet told’ thing or the intended meaning inside the discourse that the author of the comic strips trying to share, it is peeled off from three aspects. Firstly, Brown and Yule (1983:225) suggest how to interpret a speaker’s/writer’s intended meaning in producing discourse that is how the *general socio-cultural knowledge* of the reader, in this case the researcher take the role as the reader. General socio-cultural knowledge of the world underpins the reader’s interpretation of the meaning of a piece of discourse. The interpretation of discourse is based on what the readers have experienced in the past. Secondly, it is seen from the *images* in each interrelated panels of the comic strips. Supported by Kress (1990:23) who says that visual images focus on ‘what the image is about’, that is on the representation of objects and their relations in the physical and social world, thus the author’s intended meaning can be revealed from the images of the comic strips.

2. Data

The source of data of the study is *Peanuts* comic strip in *The Jakarta Post*. This comic strip is published everyday attached in *The Jakarta Post*. 10 chosen comic strips from *The Jakarta Post* published from January through March 2012. Then, the research data are the intended meaning in the utterances spoken by the characters of the comic strips and in the images of the comic strips.

3. Methods

This study adopts qualitative content analysis that became popular by Siegfried Kracauer's "The challenge of qualitative content analysis" (1953) which was regarded as the manifesto of qualitative content analysis for mass communication research (Larsen in Jensen and Jankowski, 1993: 12). This study tries to uncover the hidden meaning of the text in the comic strips that the researcher takes Kracauer's argument (*ibid*,122) that the content of a text must be conceived as a *meaningful whole*, and hence that analysis necessarily involves as act of interpretation which is based on specific assumptions to be made explicit in the course of analysis. Additionally, Larsen (*ibid*:133) states that qualitative content analysis remains an area of inquiry in its own right which is important for the understanding of mass communication as a social and cultural phenomenon. Thus, that methodology, as supported that the study of visual communication has emerged as the central and most promising aspect of content analysis, is applicable to this study which is also concerning with images in this visual media messages analysis.

This study is descriptive which is designed to obtain information to determine the nature of a situation and to describe what exists in a current study objectively. It is supported by what Ary *et al.* (1979:295) state that descriptive studies are designed to obtain information concerning the current status of phenomena.

Furthermore, this study is determined as qualitative research in nature. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: pp 27-29) state that there are five characteristics of the qualitative research. First, it has the natural setting as the direct source of data and

the researcher is the key instrument. Second, it is descriptive since the data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers. Third, the researcher is concerned with the process rather than simply with outcomes or products. I tend to analyze their data inductively. At last, meaning is essential concern to the qualitative approach.

Applying critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the critical approach to discourse analysis, it is also to reveal the implicit ideological forces at work in spoken or written text. It is something behind the text. According to Fairclough (1989: 26), CDA has three dimensions, or stages, of critical discourse analysis.

Presented below are the three dimensions, or stages, of critical discourse analysis postulated by Fairclough:

1. Description is the stage which is concerned with formal properties of the text.
2. Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction – with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a source in the process of interpretation.
3. Explanation is concerned with the interaction and social context – with the social determination of the process of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

Thus, these three dimensions or stages of CDA are used as the steps of analysis of this study.

4. Results

Each utterances uttered by the characters of the comic strips are found contain meaning. The meaning can be seen by classifying the utterances based on their structural forms and meaning forms. There are four types of the structural forms of the utterance, they are declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative form. Meanwhile, there are five types of meaning forms of the utterance. They are representative, expressive, declaration, commissive, and directive. The results of the study are presented in the charts and table.

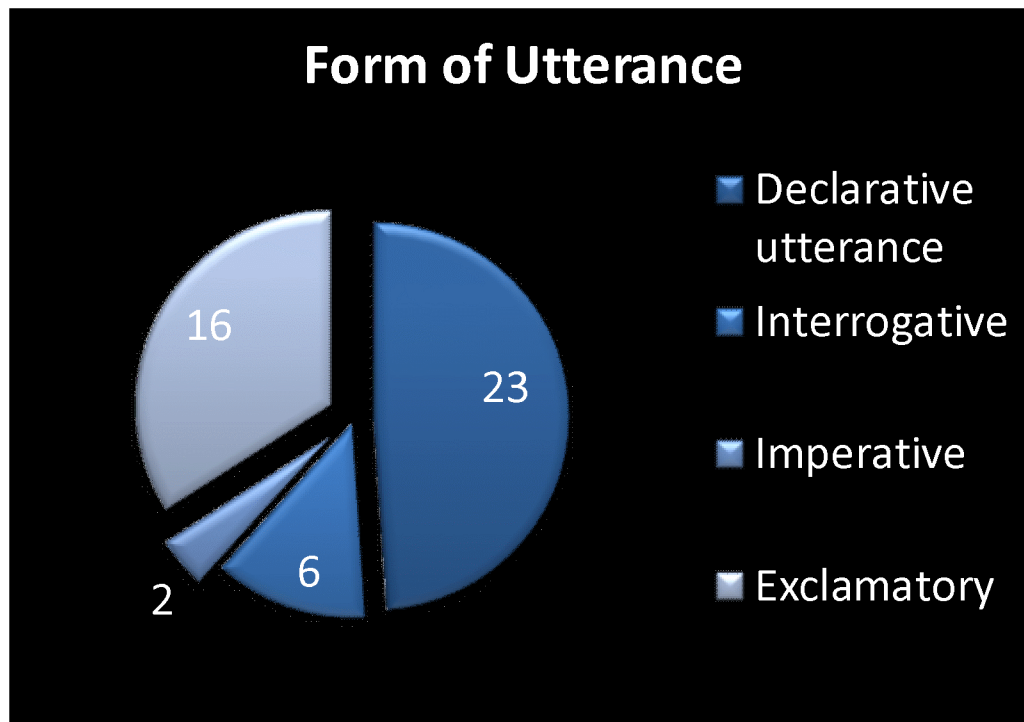


Chart 1: Form of utterance in *Peanuts* comic strips

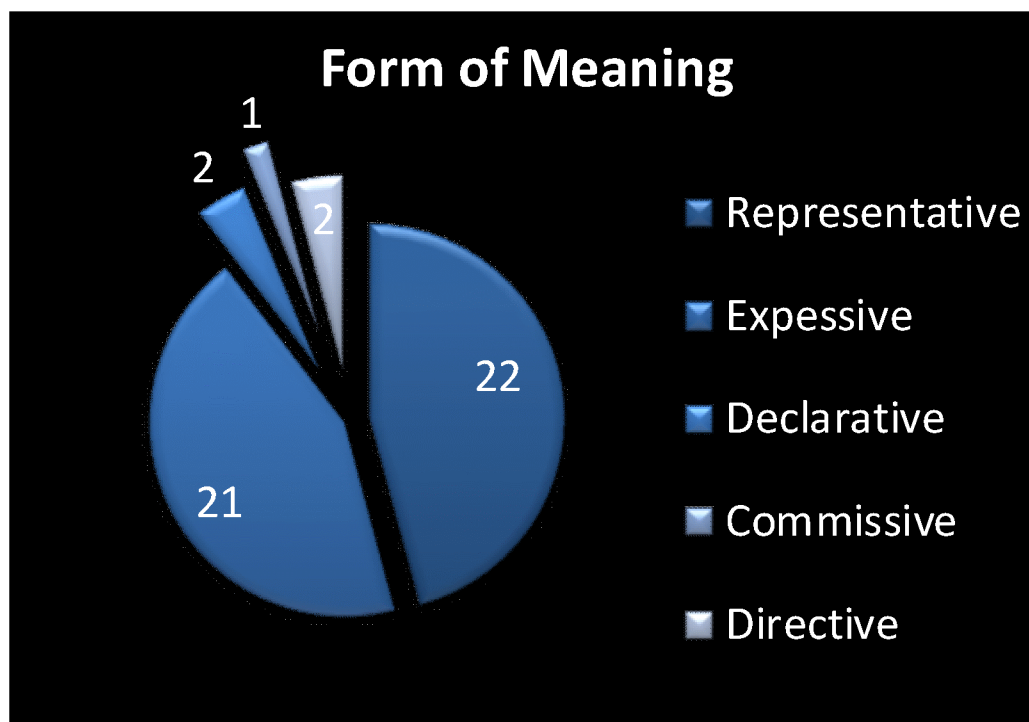


Chart 2: Form of meaning of utterances in *Peanuts* comic strips

IMAGES	Horizontal	Point of View		Social Distance		
	Angle	Frontal	Oblique	Far Personal	Close Personal	Public
	40	8	32	5	22	5
TOTAL	40	40		40		

Table of Kinds of Visual Images

All kinds of forms of utterance and meaning types can be found in the utterances of the characters of the comic strips. The structural forms of the utterances found are declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory. There are 23 utterances that are uttered using declarative structural form. There are six utterances use this structural form. From all utterances in the dialogues, there are only two utterances using imperative form. There are sixteen utterances in the dialogues which are exclamatory.

Meanwhile, the meaning forms of the utterances found are representative, expressive, commissive, declarative and directive. There are twenty two utterances found having this type of meaning form. Twenty one utterances among the other forty seven are having expressive meaning. one utterance having declarative meaning. Similar to declaration meaning type, commissive meaning type is also found only in one utterance in the dialogues of PCS. Yet, there are only two utterances found having directive meaning.

Then, the images in the comic strips are drawn using one type of angel, two types of point of view and some types of social distance. Specifically, the author of the comic strips draws the images in every panel using horizontal angel with both frontal and oblique point of view. Moreover, every image in each panel is drawn based on various types of social distance; they are far personal distance, close personal distance and public distance.

Afterwards, each PCS and the news in TJP tell story or report about the characters. The similarity of the storylines and the ideologies shared shows the goal of the publishing. In short, nine PCS intend to satirize TJP selected news reported in the same edition.

5. Discussion

Interpreting a speaker's/writer's intended meaning in producing discourse can be done by knowing the General Socio-Cultural Knowledge. GSCK is one of the aspects of processing intended meaning as stated by Brown and Yule (1983) who declare,

“We have isolated three aspects of the process of interpreting a speaker's/writer's intended meaning in producing discourse. These involve computing the communicative function (how to take the message), using general socio-cultural knowledge (facts about the world) and determining the inferences to be made.”

GSCK of the world underpins the reader's interpretation of the meaning of a piece of discourse. This research finds that the GSCK has built the interpretation of intended meaning by knowing the form of utterance and the form of meaning of the utterances in the dialogues of PCS.

The first step done in the research is to find the basic act of utterances in PCS. As supported by Yule (1996) who state, “Locutionary acts concern with the basic act of utterance, or producing a meaningful linguistic expression. Therefore, to describe the locutionary acts in the utterances, the researcher uses four types of sentence to describe how the locutionary act applied. They are interrogative, declarative, exclamatory and imperative (Warriner, 1958). These four forms are found in the utterances in the comic strips. This research finds that there are twenty three utterances that are uttered using declarative structural form. Those utterances are ended by period. There are sixteen utterances are in the form of positive statements, while the other seven are in the form of negation. In addition, all of them declare the proposition of the condition. Afterwards, there are six utterances use this structural form in questioning form with question mark. Moreover, imperative sentence or utterance is used normally for command or request. From all utterances in the dialogues, there are only two utterances using imperative form. Lastly, there are sixteen utterances in the dialogues which are exclamatory. This form of utterance express is the way how to express strong feeling toward something which may use declarative, interrogative, and imperative form.

The meaning forms of the utterances are found by describing them using five categories of speech acts based on the interpretation of illocutionary act, they are representative, expressive, declaration, commissive, and directive (Mey, 1993:163). Specifically, there are twenty two utterances found having representative meaning form. This type of meaning requires statements of facts, assertions, conclusions and descriptions the speaker representing the world as she/he believes it is (Yule, 1996:53).

Then, expressive meaning is found. This type of meaning requires statement that expresses sincerity condition of the speech acts. As Mey (1993:165) states, “These speech acts express an inner state of the speaker, insofar as it is essentially subjective, says nothing about the world.”. There are twenty one utterances among the other forty seven are having expressive meaning type. They states how the speakers feel with the condition in the stories of PCS.

Moreover, directive meaning type which is the statements that try to make the hearer fit with the propositional content found. Mey (1993:164) also states, “These speech acts embody an effort on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to do something, to direct him or her towards some goals (of the speaker, mostly).” There are two utterances having this type of meaning. Both utterances are uttered by the speakers to get the hearers to do their command.

Afterwards, declaration meaning type, that is about statements which change the world via the speakers’ utterance is found. In the words of Mey (1993:164), “These speech acts embody an effort on the part of the speaker to get the hearer to do something, to direct him or her towards some goals (of the speaker, mostly).” Yet, there is only one utterance having this meaning type.

Finally, commissive meaning type is found in only one utterance. This type of meaning requires the speakers to commit themselves to some future action. Additionally, Mey (1993:pp 120-121) claims that commissives operate a change in the world by means of creating an obligation; however, this obligation is created in the speaker, not in the hearer. The utterance found shows the expression of what the speaker intends. In sum, the five types of meaning are found in the utterances of the dialogues of PCS.

Supported by Fairclough (1989:114) who states that there are some words that are ideologically contested, the focus of ideological struggle, and this is sometimes evident in a text. It is called as the ideologically contested word. If this ideological contested word is found, it will be easier to catch the ideology of an utterance. Thus, the exploration of the texts of PCS dialogues and TJP news and article, show the ideologies are found based on the vocabularies which have ideological struggle implicitly stated in the texts.

The kinds of visual images here found to see whether the author also shares intended meaning of PCS story in the images. As supported by Kress (1990:23) who says, "Viewing an image first and foremost being located in a particular social way by and in relation to the image.", the images are analyzed by seeing how they are drawn based on the angle, point of view, and social distance.

More specifically, an angle is the difference in direction between two lines or surfaces which is measured in degrees. There are two kinds of angle. They are horizontal angle and vertical angle. In PCS, the images are drawn only using horizontal angle. It can be matched with what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) in Chandler (2000) argue that the horizontal angle represents 'whether or not the image-producer (and hence, willy-nilly, the viewer) is "involved" with the represented participants or not'. Clearly the images in PCS represent the involvement and devolvement of the viewer by having two types of point of view, frontal and oblique.

Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) in Chandler (2000) state that the image point of view is the way how every single represented participant is drawn. They can attach the image maker or reader into the story and can detach them as well. Based on the function of relation, the images of PCS are found having two kinds of point of view; they are oblique point of view and frontal point of view. In PCS there are thirty three images in the panels are drawn using oblique point of view. Then there are only eight images in the panels are drawn using frontal point of view.

Moreover, the investigation of social distance of the characters in PCS in doing face to face communication find that the images have far personal, close

personal and public distance. Meanwhile, Hall (1966:110-120) declares there are also close social and far social distance which are not found in PCS images. Specifically, close personal distance means one is close enough to be able to hold or grasp the other person, and it is the distance between people who have intimate relation with one another. Far personal distance extends from a point that is just outside easy touching distance to a point where two people can touch fingers if they extend both arms: subject of personal interest and involvement are discussed at this distance. Finally, public distance is the distance between people who are, and are to remain strangers. There are five images in the panels having far personal distance, twenty two images having close personal distance, and five images having public distance.

The goal of the comic strips can be seen in term of power relations enacted. In the words of Fairclough (1989: 49):

“The power relations in the mass-media discourse, people can see media power relations as relations of a mediated sort between power-holders and the mass of the population. And the mediated power of existing power-holders is also a hidden power, because it is implicit in the practices of the media rather than being explicit.”

Therefore, it can be seen that *The Jakarta Post* newspaper as the *power holder* or the institution has power to publish the comic strips whether their messages mean to *satirize* one of the news reported in the same edition in that newspaper and to be read by the *mass of populations* or the readers of TJP newspapers. As supported by (Thrall, *et.al* 436) in Harris (1990), the essence of satire is aggression or criticism, and criticism has always implied a systematic measure of good and bad. It can be seen from ten PCS, nine of them intend to satirize the news reported in the same edition with each of PCS in TJP. Meanwhile, one of them has no intention to touch on the news.

6. Conclusion

All kinds of forms of utterance and meaning types can be found in the utterances of the characters of the comic strips. On average, each comic strip

consists of four to five utterances which have structural form and meaning form beyond them. The structural forms of the utterances found are declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Meanwhile, the meaning forms of the utterances found are representative, expressive, commissive, and directive.

Besides, the ideologically contested words or the focus of the conversation in the comic strips exist in each utterance. Specifically, the ideologically contested words consist of one to four words in average. Some of them are noun phrase and verb phrase, while the others are only one single word. These words are finally helps to conclude the messages or the ideologies hidden in PCS and in the news in TJP.

The images in the comic strips are drawn using one type of angle, two types of point of view and some types of social distance. Specifically, the author of the comic strips draws the images in every panel using horizontal angle with both frontal and oblique point of view. Moreover, every image in each panel is drawn based on various types of social distance; they are far personal distance, close personal distance and public distance.

In terms of how GSCK applied, the results show that each aspect of GSCK like finding the form of utterance, meaning form of utterance, and ideologically contested words in the utterance can build the knowledge to know the intended meaning of PCS in TJP. Moreover, the way how the author of PCS draws the images also helps to know whether the author uses the characters of PCS to convey the message. Thus power relation enacted among TJP, PCS, and the readers can be seen. Finally, after getting the knowledge about GSCK and visual images, it is also known that each PCS and the news in TJP tell story or report about the characters. The similarity of the storylines and the ideologies shared show the goal of the publishing. In short, nine PCS intend to satirize TJP selected news reported in the same edition.

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