

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In media discourse, Fairclough (1995) introduces representation as one of the aspects that considered to be simultaneously taking part in a text. Among several points that become the focus of representation, linguists are acquainted with the term Social Actor Representation. Social actor representation refers to the way in which people acting a certain position in a social context, referred to as a 'social actor' that is portrayed through the use of language in a text. Text producers include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in relation to the readers for whom they are intended (Leeuwen, 2008).

Studies have been conducted to examine the ways media representing social actors. Al Fajri (2017) investigated the representation of the protesters in both local and international press by using Halliday's Transitivity (1994) and van Leeuwen's social actor representation (SAR) model (1996). Additionally, a study on social actor representation in the case of Islamic Defender Front's (FPI) rejection of Lady Gaga's performance in Indonesia was conducted by Bustam, Heriyanto and Citratesmana (2013). Furthermore, a study which examined the representation of social actors in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Integrated Annual (IA) reports was conducted by Bernard (2018). In 2012, a study on the ways media controllers in the

West give a positive self-representation and negative other-representation in the case of the Iranian nuke program was conducted by Rashidi and Rasti. The findings of the studies revealed that media with tendency to support certain figure(s) would give lesser portion, negative and to radical coverage towards the social actors from the contra side of the media. Such strategies applied to construct the image of certain social actors, which received support from the media, to appear less in the event so that the focus of discussion circulating around the contra side.

The present study, however, will look at the representation of social actors in political protest reported in news discourse by international media. It is found that demonstrations and civil actions received negative press coverage which highlights violent incident that occurred instead of focusing on the causes of the protests (McLeod & Hertog, 1992 as cited in Al Fajri, 2017). Moreover, protesters are often constructed as perpetrators of violent actions while police or state authorities are primarily portrayed as casualties of such violent acts and non-violent protectors of civil order (Al Fajri, 2018). Referring to Fairclough (1995) that media mirror realities in ways which suit the interest or objectives of the producer, it comes to the writer's attention that social actor representation of an event is influenced by political stance of news institutions. It goes with the consequence that the representation of the same event from one media can be different from others.

As argued by Fairclough (1995) that media text does not construct news to reflect the reality. Instead, media text produces a reality based on the social position, interest, and objective of the producer. Consequently, any part of any text used in media will be simultaneously representing, setting up identities, and setting up relations (Fairclough, 1995). One of media which has such a strong influence to shape public knowledge of the information is newspaper (Fairclough, 1995). Newspaper actively forms public perception through the use of language which is conceivably purposively employed to achieve certain purpose which can be either supportive or marginal towards certain groups, ideology, or people (Evayani & Rido, 2019). As language is seen as a potentially manipulative instrument which can be used to construct reality by certain group or community, the use of language in discourse may contribute to supporting and legitimizing a constructed reality that can lead to social problems such as allegation or repercussion. Hence, there is an urgent need to conduct a study on media language and discourse to address social problems.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Referring to the background of study, this study addresses the following research question:

How are social actors in news reporting Indonesia protest represented by international media?

### **1.3 Research Objective**

The present study is objected to reveal the mechanism of social actors representation used by international media in news reporting Indonesia protest and to describe the function of the strategies used in the news.

### **1.4 Uses of the Study**

#### **1.4.1 Theoretical Use**

Theoretically, this study provides a body of knowledge concerning social actors representation and Critical Discourse Analysis. Furthermore, this study is conducted to enrich the knowledge and comprehension of readers regarding how social actor representation theory is applied. In a more general scope of Linguistics, this research demonstrates how analysis in the level of critical discourse is conducted.

#### **1.4.2 Practical Use**

Practically, this research can give contributions to some parties. For lecturers from Linguistics major, this research can be a platform to explain media study using CDA approach. For university students taking the CDA course, this study brings knowledge to broaden their understanding regarding CDA and to be a reference for students whose intention is to conduct research on social actor representation. For other researches, the finding and the discussion of this study expectedly can be a reference to conduct further research on the same topic. Lastly, this study is expected to bring more awareness to the

readers that news articles reported reality which is produced to suit the news portal's interest. Therefore, readers can be thoughtful in taking what is written by the news articles.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The research will employ van Leeuwen's (2008) theoretical framework of social actor representation. The study will focus on investigating the protesters and the government in the news reporting Indonesia protest published by *The Jakarta Post*, *South China Morning Post*, and *The New York Times*. To have a more specific discussion, the writer limit the topic of the articles under the theme 'protest against revised criminal code, eradication of sexual violence bill, and Indonesia's Corruption Eradication Commission bill' which were published in between August 2019 to October 2019. Due to limitation of time in conducting this study, the writer will focus on analyzing the language that media used to portray the social actors in the news articles based on the category of backgrounding, activation, subjection, individualization, assimilation, functionalization, and nomination.