1ST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION, LITERATURE, AND ARTS (ICELA)

"Intercultural Communication through Language, Literature, and Arts"

May 17-18, 2017

PROCEEDINGS

CONVENED BY
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS
UNIVERSITAS NEGERI JAKARTA

BUNG HATTA BUILDING, 2nd FLOOR

Eva Leiliyanti dan Regina Nopia Helnaz
English Literature of Universitas Negeri Jakarta
leiliyanti@gmail.com dan reginahelnaz@ymail.com

Abstract


Keywords: Mass Rallies, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Discursive Contestation, Pancasila

Introduction

The mass rallies (Aksi Bela Islam) in Jakarta involving Christian Sino-Indonesian governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), who is running for the Jakarta’s gubernatorial election period 2012-2017, become widely discussed by public. The case began when he uttered comments citing Al-Maidah: 51 to the fishermen during his official visit to Pramuka Island (part of Seribu Island), to conduct a review of his program on Kerapu fish farming. On October 6, 2016, Buni Yani, a lecturer at the London School of Public Relations Jakarta ("Buni yani," 2016), uploaded Ahok’s speech video record in his Facebook account entitled ‘Penistaan Terhadap Agama?’ with the speech transcription but eliminating the word ‘by’ (“Pidato di kepulauan,” 2016). The video circulated in social media and generated strong response from ‘hardline Muslim groups’ (The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, and The Guardian, 2016) resulting in mass rallies called Aksi Bela Islam.

In the first series of rallies (October 14, 2016) led by Rizieq Shihab / FPI’s leader, demonstrators gather around the Jakarta City Hall demanding the imprisonment of Ahok due to his offending remark about Koran. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) responded the rally in the form of declaration signed by NU officials including Ma’ruf Amin (Rais Aam or the supreme leader in NU). The declaration requests for: first, all NU committee and followers to pro-actively appease and not
exacerbate the situation by spreading provocation and second, police to perform act according to
case law and fulfill citizen’s sense of justice without neglecting the presumption of innocence (Fathoni,
2016).

The second rally (November 4, 2016 / 411) with the escalating number of demonstrators
estimated to be more than 100,000 (Agence France Presse, 2016) initially ran peacefully but ended
in an uproar, with 10 people accused as the cause of riot detained by police. At midnight press
conference on State Palace, President Joko Widodo stated that the legal proceedings against Ahok
would be implemented firmly, quickly, and transparently. He also added that political actors had
taken part in the rally that day which made the demonstration became violent (Waluyo, 2016).
Following the rally, on November 2016, Ahok was named as a suspect in a case of alleged
blasphemy by the Criminal Investigation Police (Bareskrim Polri).

The case had caused fragmented opinions from Islamic organizations. Muhammadiyah’s
Central Board General Secretary, Abdul Mu’ti, stated that his organization did not approve the
upcoming demonstration in December and argued that law enforcement should not be intervened
either by authorities or mass. Nahdlulat Ulama Executive Board Secretary General, Helmy Faisal
Zaini, urged NU’s citizen not to demonstrate against Ahok’s case. Meanwhile, Deputy Secretary
General of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), the Indonesia’s Top Muslim Clerical Body,
Muhammad Olives Rasmin stated he did not encourage Muslims to join the protest about Ahok’s
alleged blasphemy case, but at the same time could not prohibit people from doing so (Rahayu,
Faiz, Hidayat, Paskalis, & Kodrat, 2016). Meanwhile, on November 28th 2016, MUI’s Chairman
Ma’ruf Amin appeared on the meeting attended by police chief Tito Karnavian and FPI’s leader
Rizieq Shihab, to discuss the third series of Aksi Bela Islam. The meeting resulted in agreement that
the rally will be held at the National Monument by doing joint Friday prayer, dhikr, and pray
(Amelia, 2016).

Aksi Bela Islam Series III (December 2, 2016 / 212) led by FPI and GNPF-MUI was a
response towards the Police Headquarters who had not detained Ahok yet. President Jokowi, who
was not present at the two previous rallies, along with the vice president Jusuf Kalla, unexpectedly
came and joined the Friday prayers with the masses. Similar to the previous rally, the fourth series
on February 11th 2016 (112) held by The Indonesian Ulema Council and several Islamic
organizations (FPI, FUI) was done in the form of joint pray and dhikr. But this time, three
prominent challengers of Ahok in the first round of gubernatorial election (Anies Baswedan,
Sandiaga Uno, and Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono) attended the rally and were seen hand in hand
during the pray and dhikr (Rudi, 2017).

Chief of MUI, Ma’ruf Amin, requested Muslims not to hold the 313 event. He argued that
the protesters’ aspiration towards Ahok’s alleged blasphemy case has been heard by the government
and therefore there is no need to hold another action (Sutrisno, 2017). PBNU’s chairman, Said Aqil,
strictly forbid Nahdliyin (NU’s followers) to join the rally but allow those who want to do so. He
deplored the demonstration proclaimed as on behalf of religion for the sake of defeating the
protesters’ opposing candidates to raise their favorable candidates (Rochmat & Fathoni, 2017).

Despite the controversy, Aksi Bela Islam continued to the fifth series on March 31st, 2016
(313) with protesters long marched to the State Palace demanding President Joko Widodo to
discharge Ahok from his position as governor of Jakarta. This time, leader of FPI, Rizieq Shihab were ascertained not to lead the rally. Yet, FPI did not prohibit the action led by Forum Umat Islam / FUI (Badriyanto, 2017). There have been 17 trials of Ahok’s alleged blasphemy case as of April 4, 2017. He was charged with Indonesia’s blasphemy law in Article 156 and 156(a) of the Criminal Code (KUHP).

As the first Christian Sino Indonesian to govern Jakarta, Ahok’s political move has faced challenges. Issues of prohibition to choose ‘kafir’ leader has appeared in the period of election. Organizations such as FPI and HTI have declared that it is ‘haram’ to choose non-Muslim / kafir leader (“Inilah Dalil”, 2013; Desastian, 2016). Sentiment over Sino-Indonesians, who in Suharto’s authoritarian regime had faced discriminations, reappeared again since Ahok’s name marked Jakarta’s political arena and can be overtly seen through label ‘Cina kafir’ (“Habib Rizieq”, 2014; Setiabudi, 2016; “Ahok Tersangka”, 2016).

Under Pancasila’s pluralist values, Indonesia recognizes 5 official religions (Islam, Christian, Hindu, Buddha, and Confucianism). Yet in this so called pluralist country, religious frictions are prone to happen. Such frictions can be seen from the case of Muslim-Christian conflict in Maluku and Poso in late 1990s (Fuad, 2007), violent attacks against groups considered as ‘deviant’ such as Ahmadiyah (Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 2014).

Ahok’s alleged blasphemy case is not something new. Laws prohibiting religious defamation and blasphemy were set out under 1965’s blasphemy law in article 156 and 156(a) of Indonesia’s criminal code carrying a penalty of five years imprisonment in maximum. Article 1 of Sukarno’s Presidential Decree No.1/PNPS/1965 was also implemented by Suharto to prohibit ‘the deviant interpretations’ of religious teachings and dissolve organizations practicing it. The law has led to imprisonment of several figures including the leader of Jamaah Alamulla (Lia Eden) in 2006, Shi’a cleric Tajul Muluk in 2012, and a civil servant Alexander Aan for declaring himself as an atheist in Facebook in 2012 (ibid).

Methodology

This research aims to decipher the religious, ethnic, and political discursive contestation in Aksi Bela Islam through the perspective of three mainstream Western media The Guardian, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal. Foucault (cited in Purvis & Hunt, 1993, p.488) describes that discourse is “the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power to be seized”. For Foucault, discourses are about what can be said or thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with authority (Pitsoe & Letseka, 2012). Departing from this basis, three articles from each media about Aksi Bela Islam were chosen to analyze how religion, ethnic, and political discursive contestation are being fabricated by the aforementioned media.

M.A.K Halliday’s transitivity system was deployed to elucidate the mechanism of each media to fabricate the case. According to Hallidayan’s perspective language carries three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and thematic. However, this paper focuses itself on the ideational meta-function and will not elaborate the other meta-functions. Bavali and Sadighi (2008) explains that the ideational meta-function concerns with grammatical structure for construing our experience of the world. This meta-function is scrutinized in terms of transitivity system. In the

*Intercultural Communication through Language, Literature, and Arts*
transitivity system, the process type is divided into six categories: material (physical actions in the real world), mental (inner experience such as perception, cognition, and affection), relational (state of being), behavioral (a combination of material and mental process), verbal (representing how thoughts are conveyed by sayers through language), and existential (phenomena recognized as to be or to exist).

Three articles from three media as the basis of analysis are as follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title of Article</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Islamists March in Jakarta, Demanding Christian Governor Be Jailed</td>
<td>November 4, 2016</td>
<td>The New York Times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


From the total of 98 clauses, it is found that there are 35 clauses representing verbal process, 31 clauses representing material process, 25 clauses representing relational process, 6 clauses representing mental process, 1 clause representing existential process, and no clause representing behavioral process.

The opening clause contends that the protesters are not only Jakartans, but Indonesians, implicitly mean that the protesters comprise of many people from Indonesian archipelago. Issue of religion is introduced in this clause by mentioning Ahok’s identity in circumstantial form as ‘the city’s first Christian governor in decades’. In addition, the next clause explicitly tells that the rally ‘was a show of strength by conservative Islamic groups who were offended by Ahok’s remarks about Quran’. At the end of the clause, it can be seen how religion and political issue are being contested. The writer adds the second attribute of the conservative Islamic groups that there is a political intention to weaken Ahok for the upcoming election.

Ahok’s ethnicity suddenly appears in a relational process in clause 3 (an ethnic Chinese Indonesian) and religion (the first Christian in nearly 50 years to govern Jakarta). Jakarta is mentioned as ‘capital of the world’s most populous Muslim-majority nation’. Looking closer to this clause, the ethnicity, religion, and political issue are being framed as if those three are contesting each other. Ahok is also positioned as a ‘political target by some Islamic organizations’, in which it is unclear who the Islamic organizations mentioned by the writer are. In clause 8, it is mentioned that those who accuse Ahok’s comments as blasphemy are regarded as ‘hard-liners’. The hardliners (later in clause 9 is elipted), do not only accuse Ahok, but also pressured police to investigate.

The protesters’ image is deciphered in clause 21 – 27. Initially, the protesters’ are framed as non-violent but then the writer uses ‘though’ to conjures up another action by the protesters which could potentially erupt to violence (marchers chanted the killing of Basuki). Yet, the next clauses
(24-25) eventually explain the violence that was expected before. Similar to the two other articles, The NYT also mentions Jokowi’s statement that there are political actors behind the rally who exploited the situation (clause 29).

Clause 31-33 use relational process to contend Ahok’s identity, most of them are rather positively-nuanced as (the grandson of a tin miner from Guangzhou, China; popular figure in Jakarta; very different from the soft-spoken Javanese politicians the capital is used to; Brash and blunt-speaking; known for publicly berating civil servants as incompetent and corrupt). The positive image is reinforced by the next clause which delivers opinion polls (unknown) in verbal process, which indicates that Ahok is ahead his two opponents for the election.

Clauses 38-40 suddenly jumps to topic of Islam in Indonesia, contrasting that although many Indonesians practice pluralistic brand of Islam, there are part of country who are conservatives and several violent radicalisms have occurred.

Clauses 41 to 42 justify that racial and religiosity issues are being used for political purpose to weaken Ahok in election. Moreover, it is also mentioned in clause 43 in verbal process (through the statement from unknown analysts) that rallies (known as Aksi Bela Islam), were used for political purpose as attempts to weaken him ahead of the election. The writer’s attempt to lead the readers in reinforcing the negative image of the opposition of Ahok can be seen through clauses 46-47. Using the conjunction ‘though’ the writer tries to give his/her own idea of the political image of Ahok’s oppositions (opponent candidates and the Islamic groups) by putting firstly the political relation of some of the Islamic groups (in relational form) to the campaigns of Ahok’s two opponents (specified in clause 48: Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono and Anies Baswedan) then contrast it with ‘though’ in the later clause saying that both parties had denied that.

Clauses 49-65 elucidate the arguments of the rallies as ‘tool’ for political purpose of Ahok’s opponents to ‘up the game’ in the tense arena of Jakarta’s gubernatorial election. Several statements from Marcus Mietzner and Tigor Naipospos (in verbal process) are added to support the image of the case the writer tries to construct. The alleged blasphemy as well as the mass rallies are seen as the game in the eyes of the writer. Even the police’s choice to question Ahok, according to (unknown) analysts, are seen as merely an attempt to abate the ‘Islamist critics’ such as his Christianity and label as ‘traitor’, intensified by the direct quotation from the marchers stated ‘Cut off a hand and foot and deport him’. The verb ‘deport’ in this sense suggesting as if protesters consider Ahok as non-native Indonesian. This idea is later explained in clauses 77-81, mentioning the discrimination towards Sino-Indonesians, which recalled the conflicted 1998 era.

After constructing Ahok’s image as a minority who is being the victim in the politicking arena of Jakarta’s gubernatorial election, the writer positively portrays Ahok (clauses 82-86) by mentioning his achievements (mass transit system, dispatch of a small army of orange-clad street sweepers, smart card program, and his famous slogan ‘Kerja!’). The article is enclosed with statements from member of Teman Ahok about the case as ‘the show of outrage over his remarks’ seen as ‘just as matter of perspective’ in which ‘he did nothing wrong’, therefore the protests would not hurt his chance in the election.

Article 2: The Wall Street Jurnal - Hard-Liners’ Show of Force Poses Thorny Challenge for Indonesia’s President

"Intercultural Communication through Language, Literature, and Arts"
From the total of 52 clauses, there are 25 clauses (48%) representing material process, 17 clauses (33%) representing verbal process, 7 clauses (13%) representing relational process, 3 clauses (6%) representing mental, and no clauses representing both behavioral and existential process. The article tells about how the rallies ‘Aksi Bela Islam’ could potentially pose challenge to Jokowi’s presidency.

The writer uses the phrase ‘hardline Muslims’ to describe those who called 200,000 protesters to join the 411 rally. The first paragraph shows four actors: President Joko Widodo, hardline Muslims, 200 demonstrators, and Christian governor. It can be seen that the first paragraph becomes the vocal point of the article that the rally was about religion. The preposition ‘against’ is used to contrast the conflict between ‘hardline Muslims’ and ‘capital’s Christian governor’. The phrase ‘the massive protest called by hardline Muslims against capital’s Christian governor’ of the clause is positioned as actor (one inseparable entity) which ‘stoked worries of deepening religious tensions (goal in plural). The phrase ‘in a nation long known for its moderate brand of Islam’ positioned as circumstance of place implies a possibility of a change of situation from moderate to the opposite.

The writers portray the demonstration as peaceful at the beginning (clause 6) and add conjunction ‘but’ after that to emphasize that the violence mentioned in clause 5 did happen in clause 7. Moreover, they also mention ‘minor clashes with police’ and ‘looting’ to describe the action done by demonstrators.

Clause 10 explains about Jokowi’s decision to postpone a visit to Australia due to a “situation requiring his presence” (Aksi Bela Islam and the political tension) in clause 11 with verbal process to emphasize the sayer’s (the presidential palace) statement in direct quotation. Yet on clause 13 the writer uses the word ‘instead’ to emphasize that the protesters are supposed to meet Jokowi but he wasn’t in state palace. The writers want to give portrayal to readers the inconsistency of Jokowi who postponed state visit due to the ‘special situation’ but instead didn’t show himself to the protesters.

After the demonstration, the police’s statement about Ahok’s case was revealed. Police plans to question Ahok (Mr. Purnama) on Monday. The writers put the statement of Police spokesmen that ‘it would mark the first time the police would allow the live broadcast of such a process’ in verbal process (clause 20) to indicate the intended message that the mass’ pressure can make police to allow the broadcast of the case without having to said it by themselves instead the statement comes from the police. In clause 22 the writers brought ethnicity issue by mentioning Ahok’s identity as ‘prominent politician among Indonesia’s often persecuted ethnic-Chinese minority’. The tense was added by statement in clause 25 ‘Some hard-liners had tried to block his ascent then, saying Muslims shouldn’t be ruled by a “kafir,” or nonbeliever.’ which justifies that those who are against Ahok and labelled him as kafir are considered as hard-liners by the writers.

The writers framed Ahok as “the blunt-spoken Mr. Purnama, 50 years old, also has irritated many with a brash, get- things-done manner” and contrast his character with “Javanese traditions of polite compromise” (clause 27) in which most of political elite represent that Javanese traditions. The writers’ then try to positively frame Ahok by mentioning Ahok’s apology and action to cooperate with police (clause 29-31) and added conjunction ‘but’ to emphasize that Ahok “has since
been the target of protests”, placing protesters as the party who cannot subject to law enforcement.

Religion’s issue is brought back to clauses 33-36 to emphasize that the moderate Islam influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism hold by Muslims in Indonesia has changed. The change is contrasted by mentioning headscarf (rare to widely-worn) to expanding Islamic schools. But at the same time, the writers also framed the case as not only religious-based but also political-based. Clause 37 in verbal process clarifies Jokowi’s statement that ‘political actors’ had taken advantage of the rally. It was mentioned that he didn’t elaborate but the next clauses (41 – 42) mentioned SBY who refuted the rumors saying he’s behind the rally but supported it “300%”. The scale 300% with double quotation mark is a form of exaggeration and triggers suspicion as if SBY was really behind the rally. Moreover, the next clause (44) mentioned SBY’s son who’s also running for the election against Mr. Purnama. Clauses 45-46 justify that the political members fielding another candidate (which is arguably Anies-Sandi) supported the rally. It can be perceived that both candidates (Anies-Sandi & Agus-Sylv) through the statement of their supporting politicians, are against Ahok by supporting the rally.

The writers lead readers back to pay attention to Jokowi’s move in this case (clauses 48 – 52). The writers want to criticize Jokowi by quoting from Sidney Jones that Jokowi’s slow response to diffuse the tension has resulted the hard-line groups to control the discussion. **Article 3: The Guardian - Jakarta protests: Muslims turn out in force against Christian governor Ahok**

From the total 39 clauses, there are 21 clauses representing material process, 13 clauses representing verbal process, 3 clauses representing relational process, 1 clause representing mental process, and 1 clause representing existential process. The article tells about the 212 mass rally. The title of the article suggests that the conflict is between Muslims (who turn out in force) with a preposition ‘against’ Christian governor Ahok. According to the writer, the 212 rally’s purpose which draws “at least 200 Muslim protesters” was to demand Ahok to be jailed from insulting Islam. In this sense, the writer framed that the protesters are those who felt that Ahok is insulting Islam (not only the verse or Koran but Islam as a religion).

The writer’s attempt to frame the image of both Ahok and protesters can be seen in clause 5. S/he positions Ahok as a target (in the form of circumstance) of ‘widespread anger’ in ‘the world’s most populous Muslim majority country’, suggesting that the protesters are angry Muslims and Ahok is implicitly framed not as the culprit. The image of protesters are added by mentioning their appearance (white Islamic skullcaps and robes, bringing waving banners read “jail Ahok, the law must be fair”. Meanwhile, Jokowi’s action to join the prayer on the rally is being contested with his position as “political ally of Ahok”.

Religion issue is brought back to clause 18 through the description of Purnama (the first non-Muslim governor in half a century). In this clause, the writer contends that Ahok’s alleged blasphemy happened because of comments he made about Koran in a political campaign. Ahok has not been detained and as the consequence, ‘conservative Muslim groups’ (in plural and no specific reference who the groups are) pushing for Ahok’s arrest.

The rallies, as the writer contends, can be seen as a test of religious tolerance for Indonesia where it is mainly the government’s failure to control the hardline groups who had attacked
minorities. Ahok’s identity is shown as ‘a member of Indonesia’s ethnic Chinese minority’. Yet the next clause contests the previous statement by using the conjunction ‘but’ and saying that the case is about politics from the perspective of critics (although there is no specific definition of who the critics are). The writer is playing safe by mentioning that the critics (who are unknown) accuse opponents (in plural, no specific names) of Ahok to be behind the case for the sake of reducing polls, leaving readers wonder who the opponents that the writer refers to.

Clause 37-38 implicitly implies that police’s decision to name Ahok as a suspect was a result of mass’ pressure. The closing clause clarifies that Ahok was not aiming to insult Koran but his opponents’ trick to beat him in polls by using Koranic verse. The verbal process is used to show statements from the protesters and authorities (Jokowi and police).

**Conclusion**

In the lens of the three mainstream western media, it can be concluded that Ahok is not framed as the culprit but as the ‘political target’ in this blasphemy case. The three media initially frames the case as religious-based (Muslim and Christian) by ‘hard-liners’ (The New York Times & The Wall Street Journal) as well as ‘conservative Muslim groups’ (The Guardian) but later promulgates that it is also about politics by the opponents to weaken Ahok in election. It can also be seen that the main issues being contested are religion and politics. Meanwhile, ethnicity issue appeared in the articles is not dominant and therefore can be regarded as merely additional.

Material and verbal processes dominated the articles. The material process is mostly used to describe the actions or outer experience of the figures in the rally. Meanwhile, the verbal process is mostly used to deliver statements about the case from Ahok and his supporters, authorities, protesters, as well as analysts and critics.
References


"Intercultural Communication through Language, Literature, and Arts"


