



Visualization of the 1997-1998 Monetary Crisis in Indonesia: Representation of Ideology in Editorial Cartoons in Kompas and Republika Newspapers

Noval Sufriyanto Talani*, Yasraf Amir Piliang

Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia

***Corresponding Author:** Noval Sufriyanto Talani, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia

Abstract: The study used a descriptive-qualitative method in analyzing editorial cartoons of Kompas and Republika newspapers depicting the 1997-1998 Indonesian monetary crisis. It is aimed at interpreting and elaborating the representation of the newspapers' ideology by utilizing Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory of visual grammar (2006). The result displays various visual representations of an editorial cartoon of the newspapers in illustrating the monetary crisis in Indonesia. Both newspapers' cartoons' narrative and conceptual structure represent different ideology between the newspapers. Through the cartoons, Kompas expresses critiques towards the Indonesian government, particularly of IMF intervention on Indonesian's economy. Conversely, Republika tends to side with the government, supporting the IMF assistance program to recover Indonesian's economic crisis. Moreover, the result shows that the difference between both newspapers' ideology does not only relate to the newspaper's difference in visual representation, but also to the newspapers' social relationships with influential people within Soeharto's New Order regime.

Keywords: Visual Representation, Editorial Cartoon, Monetary Crisis, Ideology

1. INTRODUCTION

The monetary crisis hitting ASEAN countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand in 1997-1998 began with the decline of the national currency exchange rate against foreign currencies, particularly against the US dollar. Over the time, the monetary crisis in Indonesia has accumulated into social and politic crisis, as asserted by Tarmidi [1] that during the time, the monetary crisis has worsened due to the accumulation of other crises, such as drought, forest fire, and riots in some regions. Eventually, the accumulated crisis was able to undermine Soeharto's New Order hegemony, as he resigned from the presidency on May 21, 1998. Some newspapers in Indonesia highlighted various events that occurred during the crisis.

Among the newspapers were Kompas and Republika, two newspaper giants that played their roles in highlighting events during the crisis. The events were not only published through news, opinions, and investigative reports; but were also published through editorial cartoons. Each newspaper comes with its own distinct style of editorial cartoons. By reviewing the visual representation of the newspapers' editorial cartoons, one can provide an elaboration of how Kompas and Republika responded and commented on the events during the crisis. Among factors contributing to the newspapers' distinct style of editorial cartoons is the relationship the newspapers have with influential figures in New Order regime.

Benedict Anderson [2] claims that Kompas is "the perfect New Order's newspaper" due to their obedience to the New Order government [3]. This is affirmed by the government's regulations in controlling the media contents and the government's authority to remove publications allegedly containing threats to security [4]. Despite its obedience towards the government, Kompas was acclaimed to be critical against the government in addressing problems within their editorial cartoons. The critical attitude has triggered misunderstandings and anger from the influential sides close to the New Order ruler [5], due to their interpretation of visual elements displayed by the editorial cartoonist.

On the other hand, the Republika newspaper was established in 1993 by members of the ICMI organization (Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association), unlike Kompas, which was founded in 1965 with the support of the Catholic Party. When Soeharto's power within government declined, he

consolidated with Muslim figures, particularly members of ICMI, such as B.J. Habibie (later replacing Soeharto in the presidency) [2]. This notion illustrates the close relationship between Republika with key figures in New Order government, particularly with Habibie who was the Ministry of Research and Technology and member of the ICMI board.

The newspapers' background implicitly describes their role in illustrating contents about the crisis in Indonesia and their stance towards the New Order government through the editorial cartoon. Editorial cartoons, like other publications, could express the newspaper's ideological stance within the messages. It contains specific framework, values, ideas, and principles which the cartoonist refers to when interpreting reality (monetary crisis), and articulating it into a cartoon. The cartoonist may involve certain ideological framework on how the reality is illustrated and represented into cartoon images [6]. Further, the study analyzes the visual representation of the monetary crisis in Indonesia during 1997-1998 in editorial cartoons of Kompas and Republika newspapers. It is intended to elaborate the ideological representation of editorial cartoons of both newspapers in addressing problems of monetary crisis in Indonesia during the period.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Visual elements employed in the cartoon are the cartoonist's construction on social reality to illustrate and address the monetary crisis in Indonesia. The cartoonist's interpretation of monetary crisis is then elaborated in the form of media content. Stewart and Kowaltzke argue that mass media proposes their constructed representation of reality to the public through contents, e.g. image, written ideas, spoken arguments, song lyrics, image sequences, or a single program. The representation of reality involves individual, social groups, ideas, and events [7]. Kress and van Leeuwen [8] define representation as a series of processes from the sign maker to create a representation of an object/entity. The complexity of representation produced by the sign maker is affected by one's cultural, social, and psychological background. The represented entity is not a single object; rather it is set as particular criteria of representation towards an object, in which the sign maker's interest plays major role in constructing the set criteria. Therefore, visualization of editorial cartoon illustrates certain criteria and ideology of the newspaper to represent parts of reality.

Gramsci [9] once argues that the press is the most dynamic part of an ideological structure, capable of imposing their influence and ideology towards public opinion either explicitly or implicitly. Hall refers to this ideology as the media's medium to signify an event with certain signs and to negotiate and advocate their constructed narration in public discourse. The notion indicates that editorial cartoon is capable of representing specific ideology, either the cartoonist's ideology or that of the newspaper. The context of ideology, in this case, does not relate only to specific ideas, beliefs, and awareness; but it also relates its mental structure and function [10]. The context within an ideology is also affected by social, political, cultural, and historical contexts that develop within the discourse. On top of that, the social discourse and communication also play an important role in constructing, re-shaping, and reproducing ideology.

As cited in Thwaites et al., [11] ideology is considered as the output of a discourse, as one can interpret social reality through particular means by discovering signs and texts. Ideology is then referred as a process of representing and effort of negotiating common material relationship within a discourse. That being said, ideology is said to be non-existent without signs as its medium of representation. Otherwise, a sign is not considered meaningful unless it is represented as something; its meaning is also non-permanent and negotiable. By that, meaning shift is the result of an ideological contest of a sign [12]. Moreover, the sign is considered influential in constructing, shaping, directing, changing, and reproducing an ideology. Further, Fiske [13] asserts that an ideology can be interpreted by analyzing the process of production of meaning and ideas. Henceforth, in order to elaborate the ideology of Kompas and Republika newspapers, particularly their stance in responding and giving comments to the discourse of Indonesian monetary crisis, it is crucial to analyze meanings represented in both newspapers' editorial cartoons.

3. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive-qualitative study employed visual grammar theory by Kress and van Leeuwen [8], particularly their analysis framework of narrative and conceptual structure, as an analyzing tool to identify and elaborate meanings represented in the editorial cartoons. This complies with Kress and

van Leeuwen who assert that an image contains certain ideology, as it displays the produced reality through visual structures “that relates to interests of social institutes in which the images are produced, published, and read.” The statement illustrates that the editorial cartoons represent certain ideology that operates through visual images, and from which, one can identify the newspaper’s ideological point of view towards responding to an event, a person, or a place. The study involved data, i.e. editorial cartoons of Kompas and Republika newspapers that illustrate Indonesian monetary crisis during 1997-1998. The data were captured in newspaper archives in National Library of the Republic of Indonesia.



4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Visual Representation of Indonesian Monetary Crisis in Editorial Cartoons of Kompas and Republika Newspapers

There are various visual representations of monetary crisis in Indonesia during 1997-1998 in editorial cartoons of Kompas and Republika newspapers. Among the issues are two key events during the crisis, i.e., weakening exchange rate of Rupiah (IDR) and the presence of the International Monetary Fund in handling the monetary crisis, in which both newspapers published editorial cartoons as a response. In depicting the crisis, the newspapers utilize visual metaphors not only to convert complex problems into simple, process-able notions but also to extend and emphasize the meaning of the event. The metaphor is the cartoonist’s ‘weapon’ to create attention-drawing and dramatic meaning to trigger public comments [14]. The study analyzes the representational meaning of four editorial cartoons from each newspaper containing visualization of the two key events.

By observing into visual and verbal entities in the cartoons in Table 1, one can provide an elaboration of the narrative structure that lies within the meaning in the cartoons. The entities are presented not to cancel each other out, but to support and complement each other. As observable within the image, symbols of a man that surfs and a man who is nearly drowned appears to be conflicting. On the one hand, a man is having fun (surfing); on the other hand, a man is struggling to save himself from drowning into the sea. The waves form an observable vector that helps connects both actors as the participants within the image. As asserted by Kress and van Leeuwen [8], one of the distinct features of narrative structure within an image is highlighted by the presence of vector line, either in the form of slope line, action, or the participant’s eye line within an image. The text “SITUASI MONETER” (monetary situation) as the verbal entity is the in-picture caption that operates as a contextual background within visual communication of the cartoon. The context constructs a conceptual structure to depict that some parties are taking benefits from the turmoil during the crisis. As a factual matter, monopoly within various aspects is considered one of the essential factors of crisis, in which there were certain speculators that make profits from the monetary crisis [1]. This is supported by several cartoons published by Kompas in the editions of July 25, August 23 and 30, and 6 September in 1997.

Table1. Representational meaning of editorial cartoons by Kompas

Visualization of Monetary Crisis	Representational Meaning
 <p>Source: Kompas, Saturday 1/11/1997</p>	<p>Some parties are taking advantage of the monetary crisis in Indonesia</p>
 <p>Source: Kompas, Wednesday 21/1/1998</p>	<p>IMF’s aid evokes more complex problems to Indonesia and is potential to damage the economy further, depicted as venom that is capable to ‘kill’.</p>

The editorial cartoon entitled Oom Pasikom (Mr./Uncle Pasikom) displays a family as the represented participants. Conversations between the families highlight the verbal entities in the image. The



Visualization of the 1997-1998 Monetary Crisis in Indonesia: Representation of Ideology in Editorial Cartoons in Kompas and Republika Newspapers

utterances “WAH! PILNYA PAHIT AMAT!” (“Wow! The pill tastes extremely bitter!”) by the father, “...BIASA... OBAT MEMANG PAHIT!” (“Medicines are usually bitter!”) by the mother, and “...RACUN JUGA PAHIT LHO...” (“Venoms are bitter too, you know..”) by the child are the verbal expressions that represent negative connotations towards the IMF as the message’s target. The hand position of Oom Pasikom holding the pill bottle with ‘IMF’ label, and his wife's hand and eye line formed a vector connecting the two participants. On top of that, the child’s eye line builds contact with the viewer and attracts the reader’s attention to grasp conclusion based on what IMF have done to tackle the monetary crisis. The cartoon appears to be the final argument of previous cartoons that respond to IMF’s intervention in Indonesia. For instance, cartoons in editions of October 29, 1997, and February 25, 1998, illustrate the IMF by metaphor as a syringe, referring to the IMF’s role as a financial donor to Indonesia. The information value the cartoonist is trying to construct is that the IMF’s aid triggers new problems (bitter taste of medicine).

Both cartoons in Kompas newspaper is categorized into the covert taxonomy, due to the characteristics of symmetric composition, plain and neutral background, and the presence of verbal entities inside the image. The covert taxonomy implies that someone is taking advantage beyond the problems that arise due to IMF’s intervention. The cartoonist does not explicitly point out the actor and what are the consequences behind IMF’s aid to Indonesia. Hence, the conceptual process of visual structure of the cartoon produces information concerning some parties that inflict loss to Indonesia during the turmoil. What is more, the IMF’s intervention is implicitly associated with venom, as something potential of ‘killing’.

On the other hand, Republika, through its editorial cartoons, also lays its concern on the problem. Table 2 compares the illustration of Indonesian monetary crisis between Kompas and Republika. Republika focuses its viewpoint on the monetary crisis on weakening exchange rate of Rupiah. The slope position of IDR 20,000 and IDR 5,000 notes operates as vector and highlights the text “kondisi-mu” (your condition/exchange rate) and “melemah” (weakening) in utterances “DICARI SUSAH... KONDISI-MU PUN MANGKIN MELEMAH...” (“you are hard to find, and your exchange rate is weakening...”) Kress and van Leeuwen state that image and text have supportive relation to each other, or referred as ‘attribute’. Images act as an attribute of the text. The text “kondisi-mu” (your condition/exchange rate) and “melemah” (weakening) refer to the impact of the monetary crisis, in which the exchange rate of Rupiah (IDR) weakened within stock exchange. The cartoon represents economic crisis experienced by poor people, signified with the setting of participants as scavenger and newspaper seller.

Table2. *Representational meaning of editorial cartoons by Republika*

Visualization of Monetary Crisis	Representational Meaning
 <p>Source: Republika, Sunday 7/9/1997</p>	<p>The condition of poor people during the weakening exchange rate of Rupiah (IDR)</p>
 <p>Source: Republika, Sunday 9/11/1997</p>	<p>The presence of the IMF to deal with the monetary crisis in Indonesia, along with the unhealthy state of Rupiah exchange rate</p>

Different from a previous cartoon illustrating Rupiah notes, the cartoon in an edition of October 9, 1997 displays metaphor of Rupiah weakening as a sick patient. The metaphor is highlighted by label “RUPIAH” in the right stomach area of the sick patient. The vector is formed by the position of the left hand, index finger, the child’s eye line, and eye line of the men with suits who hold the paper with

'IMF' label. The formed vector constructs relationship between participants in the cartoon. Vector formed by participants' eye line is referred by Kress and van Leeuwen as a reaction to describe the function as a reactor as well as the phenomenon itself. Within this context, it is implied that IMF's intervention to Indonesian monetary crisis is highly appreciated.

This cartoon was published by Republika as a response to the signing of the IMF aid program on October 31, 1997 [1]. The cartoon illustration is contrasting with those of Kompas newspaper, in which Kompas skeptically addresses the IMF aid to be more potential of triggering more complex problems to Indonesia economic condition. The notion is supported by the evidence that the assistance provided by IMF has seemingly contributed very little in tackling Indonesian monetary crisis. To worsen, the Rupiah exchange rate towards US Dollars dropped even significantly. The cartoon is categorized as covert taxonomy, due to its symmetrical arrangement of visual elements with a neutral background and supported by the verbal entities in the image. It represents the informational value of Rupiah currency rate and expectations to IMF to intervene in solving the crisis, as the IMF's primary goal is to recover trust towards Rupiah to increase its exchange rate.

4.2. Representation of Ideology of Kompas and Republika Newspapers

The way Kompas and Republika editorial cartoons illustrated the monetary crisis in Indonesia during 1997-1998 is categorizable into three types of cartoon discourses, i.e., non-monologue, monologue, and dialogue [15]. Editorial cartoons of Kompas (in Table 1) are categorized into non-monologue and dialogue cartoon, while cartoons by Republika newspaper (in Table 2) are classified as monologue cartoon. A non-monologue cartoon is that without interaction between participants. It is identifiable by observing the presence of utterances in speech bubbles within the image. Conversely, a dialogue cartoon is highlighted by statements given by each participant.

By analyzing the discourse of monetary crisis constructed through editorial cartoons, one can identify the difference of representation and standpoint of each newspaper in responding to the crisis. That being said, it indicates that both newspapers imply their constructed criteria and interests in illustrating reality through a cartoon. The use of metaphors within cartoon is highlighted by Stewart and Kowaltzke who mention that the reality illustrated in cartoons is not the 'whole' one. From the data, it is observable that Kompas emphasized its stance as the 'watchdog,' laying critiques to the government's policies during the crisis, particularly those that support IMF's intervention.

Indonesian mass media were facing hard times during the New Order era. The government put extra control on contents published and banished those who are assumed very critical. From the context, it is highlighted that Kompas' critiques were expressed very discreetly in order not to trigger the government's attention. The newspaper did receive a warning on several occasions, however, the discrete method of expressing critiques allowed them to survive up until today. Despite the extreme authoritarian of the New Order, Kompas' editorial cartoons were ideologically protesting the parties who took benefits in times of crisis. The critical approach the newspaper has is not unreasonable since the parties were allegedly close to those with power within the New Order regime's body. Moreover, as expressed in their cartoons, Kompas also criticized the regime of its policy that facilitated IMF's intervention in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, Republika's cartoons indicated their tendency of standing with the government. Some of the cartoons indeed responded to the weakening exchange rate of Rupiah. However, Republika tried to build optimism towards Rupiah and that the New Order regime under Suharto's leadership could overcome the crisis in Indonesia. Contrasting with Kompas that perceived IMF intervention as problematic, Republika explicitly illustrated the IMF as Indonesian economy's savior. One cannot deny that the newspaper's positive stance towards the regime has something to do with political elites inside the regime who also possess a vital position as the newspaper's executive board. This is in line with Thwaites et al. who argues that ideology is the process of representing one's interest to negotiate within the social relation, in this context, through the editorial cartoon.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, it is concluded that the visualization of the Indonesian monetary crisis in 1997-1998 through editorial cartoons of Kompas and Republika newspapers does not only represent the events that occurred or the people involved but also represents the newspapers' ideology. The way the two newspapers responded to the crisis is manifested into various visual representations in the cartoons produced. From the analysis of the cartoon's narrative and conceptual structure, the representational meaning of the editorial cartoons of Kompas and Republika operate as a means of constructing, disseminating, and reproducing ideology. Both newspaper's difference in ideological stance towards the government is elaborated by looking in both cartoons' visualization of the weakening state of Rupiah and the involvement of the IMF in Indonesia. Henceforth, in understanding the ideological position of a newspaper, one can investigate through visual and verbal entities the cartoons display and their social relation with certain individuals or parties that involved in the events they highlight.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to thank the Directorate of research and community outreach, Ministry of Research and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemristekdikti RI) who has funded this study.

REFERENCES

- [1] Tarmidi, Lepi T., *Krisis moneter Indonesia: Sebab, dampak, peran IMF dan saran*, Buletin Ekonomi Moneter dan Perbankan, Maret, (1999), pp. 1-25.
- [2] Sen, Krishna dan David T. Hill, *Media, budaya, dan politik Indonesia*, (Srikit Syah, Trans), Jakarta: Institut Studi Arus Informasi (2001).
- [3] Keller, Anett, *Tantangan dari dalam: Otonomi redaksi di 4 media cetak nasional*, Kompas, Koran Tempo, Media Indonesia, Republika, Jakarta: FES Indonesia (2009).
- [4] Price, Monroe E., Beata Rozumilowicz, Stefaan G. Verhulst (Eds.), *Media reform: Democratizing the media, democratizing the state*. London and New York: Routledge (2005).
- [5] Talani, Noval S., *Political transformations in Indonesia: Representation of the New Order transitions in Kompas editorial cartoon*, in Subekti W. Priyadharma, Ira Mirawati, Nunik M. Hartoyo (Eds.), *Indonesian media and social transformation: Reports from the field*, 14 emerging scholars, Bandung: Bitread, (2018), ch. 4, pp. 247-277.
- [6] Eriyanto, *Analisis framing: Konstruksi, ideologi, dan politik media*, cetakan VI, Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta, (2011).
- [7] Stewart, Colin and Adam Kowaltzke, *Media: New ways and meanings 3E*. Australia: John Willey & Sons, (2007).
- [8] Kress, Gunter and Theo van Leeuwen, *Reading images: The grammar of visual design 2nd edition*. London and New York: Routledge, (2006).
- [9] Durham, Meenakshi G. and Douglas M. Kellner, *Media and cultural studies: Keywords Rev. ed.*, USA: Blackwell Publishing, (2006).
- [10] van Dijk, Theo, *Ideology: A multidisciplinary approach*, London: Sage Publication, (1998).
- [11] Thwaites, T., Davis L., dan W. Mules, *Introducing cultural and media studies: Sebuah pendekatan semiotik* (Saleh Rahmana, Trans), Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, (2009).
- [12] Barker, Chris, *Cultural studies: Teori & praktik*, Cetakan ketujuh (Nurhadi, Trans.). Jakarta: Kreasi Wacana (2011).
- [13] Eriyanto, *Analisis naratif: Dasar-dasar dan penerapannya dalam analisis teks berita media*, Jakarta: Kencana, (2013).
- [14] Sunarto, Priyanto, *Editorial cartoon visual metaphor in Jakarta Newspapers at 1950-1957*, *Tawarikh: International Journal for Historical Studies*, 3(2) 2012, pp. 211-234.
- [15] Wijana, I.D.P., *Kartun: Studi tentang permainan Bahasa*, Yogyakarta: Ombak, (2004).
- [16] Triwardani, Reny, *Pembreidelan pers di Indonesia dalam perspektif politik media*, *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 7(2) 2010, pp. 187-208.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Noval Sufriyanto Talani, Become a lecturer at Universitas Negeri Gorontalo since 2008 and joined the Department of Communication Studies in 2013. He completed his undergraduate studies at the Universitas Komputer Indonesia in Bandung, West Java. Completed Postgraduate studies at Universitas Islam Bandung (Study of Communication Studies) and also at the Postgraduate School of Institut Teknologi Bandung (Study of Design).



Yasraf Amir Piliang, Professor in Faculty of Fine Arts and Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). He is a philosopher, cultural thinker, academic, social observer, and founder of Yasraf Amir Piliang Institute, an institution that studies contemporary culture. Yasraf obtained a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of Fine Art and Design, Institut Teknologi Bandung (ITB). Then the Master of Art (MA) from the Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design, London, England, and a doctorate from the Faculty of Fine Art and Design, ITB.

Citation: *Noval Sufriyanto Talani, Yasraf Amir Piliang. "Visualization of the 1997-1998 Monetary Crisis in Indonesia: Representation of Ideology in Editorial Cartoons in Kompas and Republika Newspapers" International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE), vol 5, no. 10, 2018, pp. 152-158. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2349-0381.0510013>.*

Copyright: © 2018 Authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.