Indonesian Online News: Where Does the Bias Go?

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Abstract

The shift from printed articles to online articles makes online news even more important for us. This saying is also applied in Indonesia, as people in Indonesia have started to turn toward online news rather than printed ones. Due to the interest Indonesians have gathered toward online news, it is important for online news to be as objective as possible, as it becomes a primary source of information and the latest updates. For this reason, this research delves into the world of Indonesian online news to see how objective it is. This research uses Kompas.com as its subject of research, and propaganda model becomes the primary theory with critical discourse analysis (CDA) as its framework. Propaganda model uses ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and fear as aspects used to measure the mass media, in this case Indonesian online news. This research also uses ideology where power comes into play. Through propaganda model, ideology, and CDA, this research finds out that despite of the objectivity that is supposed to exist in Indonesian online news, in this research is Kompas.com, only subjectivity and bias can be seen from it. The bias and subjectivity stem from various aspects. Through propaganda model, this research finds out that those aspects are ownership, sponsorship, personal beliefs, and profit. Despite the fact that Kompas.com is supposed to be neutral, there is little neutrality in their articles, as their articles are generated based on the bias made by the aspects mentioned. Although this research only uses Kompas.com, Kompas.com becomes an example of how little objectivity Indonesian online news has. Being the source of information, it is expected to be objective and neutral. However, instead of being neutral, Indonesian online news is biased with certain factors affecting the way the news is written. Instead of having accurate and objective online news, it is written with bias and in non-neutral way.

Keywords: *Kompas.com, CDA, propaganda model, bias*

Introduction

News today is not like it was before. Long ago before the internet, printing press, and other readable materials came into existence, relying news was like an endless chain of journey and hard work. News, similar with French's *nouvelles* and German's *neues*, is defined as new piece of information that is delivered to others, delivering the latest information as soon and as early as possible (Stephens 1988: 13). For years the world relied on newspaper for the latest information, and it stayed that way for a while. Everything changed when technology became more innovative with the invention of television, cellphones, radio, computers, laptops and other technological things. As technology keeps progressing day by day, many turns to news source that is easier for them to reach, and that is no other than online news. With many people having access to the internet easily these days, it is not a surprise anymore that many of them prefer to look at the latest news online rather than through television or radio.

With many people accessing their latest information through online news, it is necessary to understand what online news is. From the explanation above, it can be assumed that online news is an article retelling a certain

event/incident through online means such as websites, comments, and so on. According to De Wolk, online journalism is "quality news or information posted on the internet (particularly the world wide web) (2001). According to Pavlik, the term is contextualized journalism. It means that the media written online can be presented better due to the various technological development that can be used for the news presentation instead of using the traditional paper and printing (Pavlik, 2001: 217). As it can be seen, there are various definitions of online news. However, these definitions agree with one thing, and that is the fact that online news is presented in a virtual reality that cannot be accessed physically, from world wide web to application.

Seeing how online news is starting to become a part of the modern lifestyle, it is important to understand that online news is indeed important in Indonesia. Rizki Ubaidilah told/stated his opinion regarding online media through Kompasiana:

> *"Media online kini telah menjadi salah satu media komunikasi yang mulai mendapat banyak perhatian dari masyarakat. Keberadaannya juga mulai menjadi favorit bagi seluruh lapisan masyarakat."* (Ubaidilah, 2016)

> *"Online media has become one of the means of communication that is taken seriously by the society. It has also become one of society's favorite place to look up for."* (Ubaidilah, 2016)

Ubaidilah emphasized that online news can be enjoyed by any class in the society. A simple real-life example can be taken from Line Application. Line is a social media that is used for one-to-one or a group conversation in the cellphone. However, Line has another section in its application entitled Line News. In Line News, articles from various websites are provided. With just a click, Line users can read the article from the website. This is an extremely simple example, but it is an example that is done by many people. According to a survey done by Jakpat in 2016, there are 30 million Line users in Indonesia, and 86% of them are active users (Jakpat 2016). 30 million people are Line users, meaning that 30 million have access to Line News with just a simple swipe and click. 30 million might not be nothing compared to the number of population in Indonesia, but it is no small number. Moreover, this is only Line application. There are other applications such as BB, Babe, and others. All of the news in the applications also has their individual websites, meaning that people can go directly to their websites without having to use application as its medium. This is how influential technology is, and seeing the influence technology has, it makes sense for news to appear online. This is why online news are important, especially in Indonesia.

It has been established that Indonesian online news is the perfect information giver for our society today. It gives the latest information, and is easy to be accessed for the current generation whose technology has dominated many aspects of their lives. However, this where things come into play. As the information giver for society in Indonesia, it is important for online news to deliver news the way it is. The news should be delivered according to how the event actually happened without any interference (Warren 1999: 203). This means that no matter who the reporter is friend with, no matter who owns the publishing company, no matter who funds the company, the news should be reported objectively. The news delivered should be honest, unbiased and isolated from any side (Calcutt& Hammond 2011: 97 – 114).

Unfortunately, there is no such thing as neutral media. Newton said that media is always biased because journalists are unable to present all the facts about in the news, selecting facts considered necessary for them (as cited in Goodin and Reeve 1989). Because of that, finding an unbiased media becomes hard to do or maybe impossible. However, sometimes we do not realize the bias in media because they are not implicitly stated in the news. This is where the research comes into play. This research would like to see the reason why online Indonesian news is biased. There is always a reason behind their bias, and the researcher would like to find out what the reason of the bias. The researcher would also like to find the subtlety of the bias and see how

clever media insert their bias within their news.

To discuss biases in newspapers, this paper employs critical discourse analysis using propaganda model as the framework. The researcher also used propaganda model that was proposed by Chomsky and Herman. Propaganda model is used to read the elements of ideology in Kompas.com, and ideology within the subject is read through Propaganda Model. First, the researcher found the elements of propaganda model in a specific online media portal. After finding the elements of propaganda model, the researcher tried to find out how ideology and power/relations come into play in the bias within online Indonesian news.

The online media that is chosen for this research is the portal Kompas.com. Kompas.com is the primary subject of this research that represents all online Indonesian news. The researcher used Kompas.com due to the fact that the parent company (Kompas) has existed in Indonesia since 1965. It has survived Soekarno era, Soeharto era, and continues to remain steady in the modern era. The circulation of its newspaper is around 500,000, and 66% of that number circulated in Greater Jakarta in 2014 (Kompas 2015). Being a publishing company that has been around for 52 years with its newspaper circulation reaching over half a million, Kompas becomes the pioneer of media that is continued to be trusted by the people. As one of the oldest publishing company that is considered to be trustworthy by society, it is necessary to see whether Kompas is unbiased or not when it comes to delivering their online news.

Theories

There are many definitions of ideology, but the one that is used in this research in its analysis is done by Karl Marx. Marx argued that ideology is just a false consciousness that is planted by the ruling class (superstructure) to control working class (base) (Marx 1978). Despite of its being proposed in the 80s, it still can be applied today.

Marx's ideology can still be seen today in the work force. Employees (base) work for their employers (superstructure), and employees are given the ideology that they should obey their employers no matter what. Such ideology becomes an ideology that is considered as normal and acceptable today.

If we use Critical Discourse Analysis and propaganda model, we can see how ideology affects Indonesian online news. CDA allows this research to understand the hidden meaning behind the online news published, and Propaganda Model is used to measure whether the ideology affects Indonesian online news or not.

Another theory that is used to analyze news deliverance and read the ideology in Kompas.com is Propaganda Model. Proposed by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman in Manufacturing Consent, propaganda model is a theory stating that news deliverance is not objective (1988). In fact, news deliverance is affected by 5 factors called 5 Filters of Mass Media. Those factors are ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and anti-Communism or fear.

In the book *Manufacturing Consent*, Chomsky and Herman explained the history of ownership and the need of huge amount of investment for media companies. The book explained that in the first half of the nineteenth century, the media managed to unite the working force, forcing the investors and business owners to meet their demands. To retaliate this, the government pushed a huge amount of taxes for publishing companies, and the machinery to produce the newspapers or magazines were sold at a ridiculous amount of price (pp. 3 – 5). Investors were needed to meet the total amount of asset necessary to publish the newspapers and magazines. The chart provided on page 9 shows the holding powers within media corporations in 1986. Of course, such traditional is applied not only in America but also in many parts of the world.

Being largely dependent upon investors and owners, it makes sense for publishing companies and newspaper publishers to be careful with what they are writing about. With one little move, the publishing company can lose the assets needed to stand. As Chomsky and Herman has said: "they [media firms] are

controlled by very wealthy people or by managers who are subject tosharp constraints by owners and other market-profit-oriented forces" (p. 14).

Sometimes investors are not enough to cover production costs in publishing companies. The goal for the business is to earn as much as they can while let go as minimum as possible. This is where advertisements come into play. Before advertisements arrive, publishing companies only depend on the price of newspapers to cover the costs and other spending. However, by using advertisements, companies can lower the price of their products while earning more than they used to. The book took the example of the collapse of *Daily Herald, News Chronicle,* and *Sunday Citizen* in Great Britain during the 1900s (p. 15). *Sunday Citizen* only gained one tenth of the net advertising avenue of *Sunday Times*. Although *Daily Herald*'s audience is more than those of *Guardian*, the one who is standing until now is *Guardian*.

As it can be seen, advertisement plays a big role at providing income for media corporations. By gaining income from advertisement, media corporations can lower the price of the products, gaining more readership and viewers. More audience means more income. Combined with the income from advertisement, the total income would be doubled than those who publish without or with little advertisements. This is why being on the "good side" of advertisements is important for media corporations. Losing advertisements means losing income, and that is what media corporations would like to happen the least.

It is important for all media corporations to cover important issues or issues that can gain readership the most. The rivalry among media corporations is a serious issue, therefore catching up with each other on the "hottest" topic becomes a fairly common sight to see in the media. However, that becomes one of the main problems in media corporations. Human resource is not unlimited, and they cannot be in all places at the same time.

That is why it is important for journalists or reporters to have sources in several places. By having sources, news writes do not need to be at the location of the event. They can contact their source and ask the source regarding the event that happened. The person giving the details regarding the event becomes the primary source of the published news. Having source gives lots of benefits. Having sources makes it more efficient at gaining the latest information, and it cuts the cost of investigating news.

Once again, the benefit becomes the downside in delivering news. Again, sometimes the media needs to be on the good side of their sources in order to hold their sources until the end. Chomsky and Herman used the example of using Defense Department as the media source. Defense Department once refused to participate in a discussion because experts from Center for Defense Information were planned to appear on the program (p. 22). Although this is an example of one issue only, it shows how big the control of sources is, especially if the source is an influential source.

According to Chomsky and Herman, flak is the negative response the media received (p. 26). The response can be in many forms, from letters, protest rally, to press conference. No matter what the form is, the goal of flak is go against the news that is published by the media.

An example in Indonesia is the flak against news written regarding the case of Sidoarjo mud flow that happened in 2006. The mud flow happened in drilling location owned by PT Lapindo Brantas. The victims of the mud flow protested by marching from Sidoarjo to Jakarta in 2012. The protest rally became one of the hottest topics during that time. From newspaper to TV news, almost every media (except those belonging to Bakrie) reported the protest rally. However, later on, in a talk show that aired in TVOne (which belongs to Bakrie who also owns PT Lapindo Brantas), a Lapindo victim mud flow apologized to Bakrie, crushing the 25-day rally into something futile.

Sidoarjo mud flow is a perfect example of how flak works. Media Corporation belonging to Bakrie avoided the topic of Sidoarjo mud

flow negatively, while other media reported it. Bakrie's group responded to media report by the talk show which put Bakrie in a positive spotlight, although TVOne's independency was questioned by the society at that time (Daniel H.T. 2014). Of course, not all flaks become a huge issue just like Lapindo mud flow. However, the example given above shows that flak is something that should not be underestimated.

The last filter is the concept of fear/anti-Communism. So far, Communism is regarded as something evil that should be avoided at all cost:

> *"Communism as the ultimate evil has always been the specter haunting property owners, as it threatens the very root of their class position and superior status. The Soviet, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions were traumas to Western elites, and the ongoing conflicts and the well-publicized abuses of Communist states have contributed to elevating opposition to communism to a first principle of Western ideology and politics."*–
> (Chomsky and Herman, 1988: 29)

Such thing is also applied to Indonesia. For many people in Indonesia, the concept of Communism is something that brings back negative feelings. An example of such thing is Sri Bintang stating that PDIP (political party) should be disbanded rather than HTI because she thinks PDIPD believes in the concept of Communism (Simanjutak 2017). Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) made a statement saying that Moslem organizations should educate their members regarding the danger of Communism (Kurniasari, 2017). Communism nowadays is regarded as the evil of society that should be avoided at any cost. And yet, nobody until now understands what kind of Communism that should be feared.

Such fuzzy concept of something "evil" is the main issue here. The concept of Communism here is unclear, and yet people fear it. Using a fuzzy concept of "something evil" or "fear" as the main enemy is an effective tool for biased news deliverance. Media, having the need to be necessary by the society, have no choice but to go with the flow of society's idea. Going against the society would lose audience, which means the loss if profit. Rather than losing profit, media would rather gain more even if they have to go with the flow of society's concept – a fuzzy concept of fear that is detested by all.

There are several books and journals that can be used to learn about media and the bias within. An overall understanding of media can be read in *Media Essentials: A Brief Introduction* (2018) by Richard Campbell, Richard Martin, and Bettina Fabos. The understanding of media bias can be read in Tully's, Vraga's, and Smithson's journal titled "News media literacy, perceptions of bias, and interpretation of news" (2018). Media bias in other countries can be seen from "Media Bias in China" by Wu (2018). However, a complete understanding about Indonesia's media and the problems within are thoroughly explained by Dudi Sabil Iskandar in his book titled *Keruntuhan Jurnalisme* (2015).

Methodology

The nature of this research uses non-empirical data, interpretation, and the understanding of social issue surrounding Indonesia. The nature of the research makes it unable to use the traditional means of quantitative research. Flick (2014) stated that society makes it unable to interpret through data only, as it grows with other factors that cannot be measured by number. As this researcher has a similar condition described by Flick, the research uses qualitative research as its methodology.

The data were collected through several steps. The first step was understanding the nature of the research, the topic, and their relations with the theories. After that, the researcher gathered the data by searching news related with Jakarta governor's election in 2017 by using Google. The terms used for Google are "Ahok Kompas," "Anies Kompas," and "pemilihan guberbur Jakarta 2017 Kompas" (Jakarta's 2017 governor election). Other key terms the researcher used are "Oppo Kompas," "UPH Kompas," "Reservasi.com Kompas," "Unilever Kompas," and "promosi "Kompas." The researcher took random news regarding the governor election and

sponsorship. However, the researcher made sure that the articles were published in 2017 for the governor election. Other articles were taken randomly at random years.

Capital and Ideology

Before we go further in analyzing Kompas.com, let us take a look at history of Kompas overall. It all started when General Ahmad Yani expressed his wish to publish a newspaper that is neutral and independent. His friend Frans Xaverius Seda, pointed P.K. Ojong and Jakob Oetama (who published *Intisari* during that time also) as the start of the desired newspaper. Meanwhile, in 1964, Soekarno pushed Partai Katolik to create a newspaper that can rival those of PKI's. Because of that, some people from *Intisari* were recruited to create the newspaper. P.K. Ojong and Jakob Oetama had a meeting with leading Catholic figures, and all of them agreed to build Yayasan Bentera Rakyet for the newspaper (Dhakidae 1991: 230 – 254). Even though the newspaper's aim was to rival PKI's media, some leading Catholic figures including Jakob Oetama preferred to be neutral due to the heated political situation during that time. Nevertheless, they followed the instruction that was given to them (Oetama as cited in Ishwara, 1980).

However, the publication of the newspaper entitled Bentera Rakyat was not easy. PKI was unwilling for the newspaper to be published, but Bung Karno gave them the permission to be published. However, permission from Panglima Militer Jakarta could only be gotten if the institution could get 5000 signatures of future subscribers. To get them, the journalists went to Flores because the majority of people living in Flores were Catholics (Dhakidae 1991: 237 – 244). However, the name of the newspaper was changed from Bentara Rakyat to Kompas by Soekarno (Kompas). When 30 September Movement happened, Kompas mysteriously stopped publishing and started publishing again in 6 October 1965.

Kompas, now under a media conglomerate named Kompas Gramedia Group, continues on. P.K. Ojong passed away on 31 Mei 1980. In 2006, Agung Adi Prasetyo became the CEO of Kompas Gramedia Group. However, on 10 August 2015, Lilik Oetomo replaced Prasetyo as the CEO of Kompas Gramedia Group. Lilik Oetomo is the president PT Grahawita Santika. Many believed that Agung resigned because KGG leans toward business and property instead of media now, and it can be seen from Lilik Oetomo's rise as KGG's new CEO (Ramli 2017).

According to 5 filters of mass media, ownership plays a big role at the writing and deliverance of news. Although the owners of KGG shares are unknown, the history of KGG above can show how ownership does affect the news. If we take a look at the history, Catholics and Christianity play a big role at building the foundation of KGG. Moreover, the fact that P.K. Ojong was a Chinese descendant should be taken into consideration. Seeing how the majority of KGG owners are Catholics, it makes sense for Kompas.com to deliver neutral to positive news regarding Ahok. Below are examples of titles of the news published in Kompas.com:

"Sudah Bermaafan, Bamus Betawi Berterima Kasih kepada Ahok" (12/6/2017)
"Survey SMRC, 76% Warga Jakarta Puas akan Kinerja Ahok" (12/4/2017)
"Isi Waktu Sel Tahanan, Ahok Olahraga Bergelayut" (16/5/2017)
"Tiga Ahli PBB Desak Indonesia Bebaskan Ahok" (22/5/2017)
"Populi Center: Agus-Sylvi 21,8%, Ahok-Djarot 40%, Anies-Sandi 30,3%" (6/2/2017)

"Ending in Truce, Bamus Betawi Expresses Thanks to Ahok" (12/6/2017)
"SMRC's Survey Stated that 76% of Jakarta Citizens are Satisfied with Ahok's Work Performance" (12/4/2017)
"Ahok Spends Time Exercising while in Jail" (16/5/2017)
"Three UN Experts Urge Indonesia to Release Ahok" (22/5/2017)
"Populi Center: Agus-Sylvi 21,8%, Ahok-Djarot 40%, Anies-Sandi 30,3%" (6/2/2017)

Those titles are news about Ahok taken randomly at various times, starting from him nominating himself for Jakarta governor election to him being jailed for the accusation of religion blasphemy. Out of 5 news items, only 1 news item gives a neutral impression, and that 1 news item does not create a negative image for Ahok. According to Hewstone, one might side to a certain group due to the fact that the person is a part of the group itself. Hewstone explained further that a person who shares an attribute with another person (in-group), both of them have the tendency to favor positive behavior and tries to give an excuse for each other's behavior (1990: 311 – 335). If we look at KGG's history and Ahok's background, it can be understood why the news in Kompas.com has the tendency to favor Ahok. The founders of KGG were mostly Catholics, sharing the belief of Christianity with Ahok. Ahok is also a Chinese descendant, the same with the late P.K. Ojong. When people think that Kompas.com sides with Ahok, that is no longer a "conspiracy theory;" it is a fact that they favor Ahok.

However, Kompas.com does not express their positive opinion regarding Ahok explicitly. After all, there are many rivalries within the media business, including the ones done online. The group needs to generate profit, even when they have to "deny" what they believe in. This is according to the definition of capitalism, where the overall goal of a system is to bring profit (Scott and Marshall 2005). If Kompas.com were to stay true with their ideology regarding Ahok, they would not be able to generate profit from the opposing party. That is why Kompas still writes neutral news regarding Ahok such as "Polisi: Buni Yani Tidak Lihat Video Lengkap Pidato Ahok di Kepulauan Seribu", "Akan Dieksekusi, Ahok Kemungkinan Dipindahkan ke Lapas Ini...", and "ACTA Nilai Ahok Batal Banding sebagai Strategi untuk Ajukan PK". Kompas.com tried to bring audience from both sides click on their news and so that they can bring more profit for the group.

Generating profit also seems to be the main goal for advertisements in Kompas.com. By the time this paper is written, there are 6 advertisements that dominated Kompas.com in desktop and mobile version. The advertisements come from Reservasi.com, Oppo, Sekolah Pelita Harapan (SPH), and Unilever. Below is the table that contains the news and the sponsors of the advertisements:

Table 1. News and Sponsors List

Sponsors	News
Reservasi.com	*"Persiapkan Libur Lebaran dengan Promo Cicilan 0% Dari Reservasi.com" (6/6/2017)* "Pepare Your Eid-Al-Firt Holiday with Reservasi.com's Promotion with 0% Interest" (6/6/2017)
Oppo	*"Penjualan Perdana F3 Pecahkan Rekor Oppo di Indonesia" (15/5/2017)* *"Oppo A57 Resmi Dijual di Indonesia, Usung Kamera "Selfie" 16 MP" (27/4/2017)* *"Salip Oppo, Huawei Vendor Smartphone Nomor Satu di China" (26/04/2017)* *"Video 23.000 Ponsel Oppo Dipreteli dan Digilas untuk Dimusnahkan" (20/05/2017)* "F3's Initial Sales Broke Oppo's Sales Record in Indonesia" (15/5/2017) "Oppo A57 with 16 MP "Selfie" Camera Officially Sold in Indonesia" (27/4/2017) "Surpassing Oppo, Huawei becomes Number One Phone in China" (26/04/2017)

	"Leaked Footage of 23.000 Oppo Cellphones being Crushed" (20/05/2017)
Pelita Harapan School	*"Sekolah di Dalam Mall, Konsep Pendidikan Baru di Bogor" (14/05/2017)* *"Pelita Harapan Rangkul Siswa Kurang Mampu" (17/11/2009)* *"UPH College, Terobosan Baru Dunia Pendidikan Indonesia" (13/10/2009)* *"Drama Musikal Klasik di Karawaci dan Usmar Ismail" (15/3/2008)* "School in Mall: A New Education Concept in Bogor" (14/05/2017) "Pelita Harapan Embraces Underprivileged Students" (17/11/2009) "UPH College, a New Breakthrough in Indonesia's Education System" (13/10/2009) "Classical Music Drama in Karawaci and Usmar Ismail" (15/3/2008)
Unilever	*"Unilever Optimistis Pertumbuhan Bisnis Lebih Baik pada 2017" (11/01/2017)* *"Unilever Komitmen Terus Tingkatkan Investasi di Indonesia" (6/06/2017)* *"35 Tahun Melantai di Bursa, Aset Unilever Tumbuh 110 Kali Lipat" (11/01/2017)* *"Gandeng Tokopedia, Unilever Melebarkan Sayap ke Dunia Digital" (21/02/2017)* "Unilever Optismistic regarding Business Growth in 2017" (11/01/2017) "Unilever Committed to Improve Indonesia's Investation" (6/06/2017) "35 Years in Stock Exchange, Unilever's Value Increases 110 Times the Original Value" (11/01/2017) "Univeler Expands its Wings into the Digital World by Partnership with Tokopedia" (21/02/2017)

On the news about the sponsors above, it can be seen that *none* of the news regarding the sponsors are written negatively. The only news where the sponsor wasn't put into the spotlight is the news about Oppo where Huawei surpassed Oppo in China, and that news was based on survey and sales count. Kompas.com's preference to Oppo can also be seen in the last news of Oppo's, which is a quip for Samsung. Such treatment for advertisements is in accordance to the 5 filters, where the news should treat the advertisers carefully in order not to lose sponsor and profit. Even when the journalist has to quip another product indirectly, he has to do so for the sake of profit.

When we see the analysis done, we see that Kompas.com leans towards profit and generating income. Despite the fact that KGG is siding with Ahok, they are not able to let go of the fact that they need to generate income. They think they need to create profit, and this leads to Kompas.com news "sucking up" to both pro and anti-Ahok. This is in accordance with Marx's statement of ideology where we think that a system is "right", and we need to be in accordance with that system. In this case, the system KGG upholds is the profit-oriented system that revolves around money. The idea of "generating income as much as possible in every way possible" becomes the ideology that is accepted by the working class in KGG, even if they have to throw away their beliefs and time for it. Journalists who do not agree with Kompas have no choice but to write positive news regarding Ahok and vice versa. It is the nature of employer-employee relationship that needs to be obeyed by the working class in KGG. Because of that, the journalists and reporters have no say about the news they wrote. They do as they are told and write what they have been told to write. Moreover, the working class in KGG accepts such system. They believe that keeping silent and do whatever they are told as their truth. They accept it as a daily part of their lives instead of rebelling against such system. The news

published in Kompas.com is a silent proof of the working class' obedience. If they rebelled to the system who believes that generating income and keeping silent is correct, why would the articles be published in Kompas.com?

Production and Ideology

The golden rule to please source is to make sure that the leading figures the source admires are not written negatively. However, when a media writes about two different political figures, that is where the conflict in writing comes in. Sometimes it is hard to know which political figure is favored by which source, especially if a media corporation has different sources. To make it more complicated, different sources mean different favored political figures. The best approach for such problem is to write the news as neutral as possible. However, it is a fact that being neutral is impossible for media. If a media cannot be neutral, what should be done in order to look as neutral as possible?

Before we delve further in people's reaction regarding Kompas.com, let us take a look at the news that were published by Kompas.com about Anies and Ahok on Table 2:

Table 2. News Titles in Kompas.com

Ahok	Anies
Luhut Ingatkan Anies-Sandi Bakal Dituntut Pengembang Reklamasi (23/05/2017) Luhut Reminds Anies-Sandi regarding the Development of Jakarta Bay's Reclamation (23/05/2017)	*"Teman Ahok" Puji Ketegaran Ahok dan Keluarga (23/05/2017)* "Teman Ahok" Praises Ahok and his Family's Resilience (23/05/2017)
Prabowo Optimis Anies-Sandie Menang Pilkasa DKI (19/04/2017) Prabowo is Optimistic Anies-Sandie will Win the Jakarta Governor Election (19/04/2017)	*Tawa Ahok-Djarot… (19//04/2017)* Ahok-Djarot's Laugh… (19//04/2017)
Hidayat Nur Wahid: Kemenangan Anies-Sandi adalah Kemenangan Akal Sehat (11/06/2017) Hidayat Nur Wahid: Anies-Sandi's Victory is the Victory of Sagacity (11/06/2017)	*Sudah Bermaafan, Bamus Betawi Berterima Kasih Kepada Ahok-Djarot (11/06/2017)* "Ending in Truce, Bamus Betawi Expresses Thanks to Ahok" (12/6/2017)
Luhut Minta Anies-Sandi Tanggung Jawab Jika Jakarta Tenggelam karena Stop Reklamasi (8/05/2017) Luhut Demand Anies-Sandi's Responsibility if Jakarta Bay Sinks due to the Halt of Land Reclamation (8/05/2017)	*Pendukung Ahok Bawa 10.000 Balon ke Balai Kota (8/05/2017)* Ahok's Supporters Bought 10.000 Balloons to Town Hall (8/05/2017)
Anies: Kirain Sudah Bebas Banjir (16/02/2017) Anies: I thought Jakarta is already Free from Flood (16/02/2017)	*Ahok Tidak Ingin Banjir di Jakarta seperti Sinetron yang Berkepanjangan (16/02/2017)* Ahok Does not Want Jakarta Flood to Stay in the Long Run (16/02/2017)

The titles of news compiled above are an example of Kompas.com's approach to look as neutral as possible. They do not explicitly state that they do not favor a certain political figure. In fact, Kompas.com always writes the news in both sides. However, they implicitly state it through another person's statement or the statement of the person itself. If we compare news published regarding Anies, they do not sound as pleasing as the ones published regarding Ahok. After all, Luhut kept reminding Anies regarding Reklamasi, and Anies gave an impression of an unpleasant person when he quipped Ahok in news number 5. Although Prabowo claimed to be optimistic, the fact that Anies is in one faction with Prabowo can no longer be hidden, and not many people like it. Hidayat Nur Wahid claimed that Anies' victory is the victory of moderate Moslem, but such statement only gives a reverse effect, as the statement made many people find out that Anies is suspected to be a radical Moslem.

The tone in Ahok's news is different from the one in Anies'. In Ahok's news, Ahok and his family are portrayed as saints because they are able to stay strong despite of the turbulences they are going through right now. Although Ahok lost the election, he still sounds like a positive person because he laughed despite of the result of the election. Ahok also looks like a forgiving person with charisma, as he made the organization that despised him thanked him. He also has "fun" followers because they bought balloons to the town hall (despite the fact that it is actually a protest rally). Unlike the opposite political party, Ahok seems like a responsible person who does not quip others easily as he does not blame others for the flood in Jakarta in February.

Through words and framing, Kompas.com managed to conceal their favored political party and made themselves look neutral. They do this because they tried to please their sources as much as possible. By making themselves "neutral", Kompas.com cannot be accused of being subjective by both the sources and the readers.

Of course, making themselves "neutral" does not mean that nobody protests against KGG. In fact, KGG received many flaks because of the news they wrote both in Kompas.com and newspapers. One example of flak was when a group of FPI members went to KGG's headquarters at the end of June 2016. They protested that KGG always put the Moslems in a negative spotlight. However, it was later on revealed that most of the research done by the FPI members were inaccurate (Shofwan 2016). However, flaks appeared again when Kompas.com started delivering positive news regarding Ahok. This time, most of the flaks were in the form of online opinions. Just write "Kompas pro-Ahok" in Google Search, and you will find such titles in the result:

> *"Antara Fakta dan Berita Palsu soal Demo 4 November, Ahok, Kompas TV, dan Lainnya" (BBC)*
> *"Sombongnya Kompas Cetak Tantang Banjir di Jakarta" (Nahimunkar.com)*
> *"Artikel yang kontra terhadap aksi 212" (gimmarkowa.pl)*

> *"Between Facts and Hoaxes on 4 November's Protest: Ahok, Kompas TV, and Others" (BBC)*
> *"Kompas' Arrogance Regarding Jakarta Flood." (Nahimunkar.com)*
> *"Article that Contradicts with 212 Action." (gimmakorwa.pl)*

The first news tried to clarify whether Kompas TV reporter was the one who provoked the 4 November rally and turned it into a riot. The second article criticized Kompas and the news they published regarding the flood in February, and the last article listed Kompas.com and its group as one of the media who was against the 212-peace protest. The examples of flaks given above are examples of the balance for the bias that is presented by Kompas.com and its group. By going against the implicit bias that is presented by Kompas.com, the flaks become another way for the society to see the bias that are hidden within the news of Kompas.com and other KGG media. Although the flaks are considered as negative response by Kompas.com and KGG, in another way it becomes the gateway of truth for society, as it presents the hidden bias Kompas.com and KGG tries its best to hide.

The reason why Kompas.com and KGG are criticized often is because of the bias it has towards Ahok. Ever since the case of religion blasphemy Ahok is accused of doing, not many Moslem sympathize with Ahok. FPI's ulama in Jakarta shows this when he testified in one of Ahok's trials. The reason why he does not sympathize with Ahok is the fact that Ahok did blasphemy toward his religion (Islam) and that Ahok is too frank with people (Siswanto as cited in Riana 2017). It can be understood why people do not favor Ahok's frankness and quirky ideas during his time as a governor (recording and releasing videos of meetings in YouTube and others). What Ahok did is different from the rest. This is the first time in modern time where Indonesia has a political figure that is different from the rest. This resulted in many people fearing Ahok, seeing him as a change that is not prepared to be accepted by many people. For this reason, people treat Ahok as "fear", something that needs to be rejected and removed no matter what. Because of this, many people protested against Kompas.com and KGG. When a media is biased towards the "fear" of society, it would be rejected and criticized.

Conclusion

From the analysis above, we can see that Kompas.com is indeed biased toward its beliefs. Kompas.com leans toward Catholics, Christians, and other ideas that are not in the same wavelength with many people. This is due to the system Kompas Gramedia Group was built upon. It was started by a Catholic political party with most of its members being writers of a Catholic magazine. Even though time has passed on, the root of its foundation has seeped in so deep to the point where it becomes the bias of KGG. However, they do not show their bias explicitly. They hide their bias and implicitly presents it through implicit meanings within their news. Those who are not aware of the bias will not be aware which side Kompas.com and KGG favors.

At the same time, Kompas.com and KGG are demanded to follow the demand of their ideologies. They are trapped with the ideology of profit, where it is necessary for them to gain readership as much as possible no matter what. They also need to please their source by having the need to be as "neutral" as possible. There is also the problem of flaks where, if the case becomes serious, can make Kompas.com and KGG lose readership. In fact, it has been done so through the protests done and the online opinions written regarding the group, especially now that many believe that KGG is biased toward "the fear" (Ahok). Demanded to produce profit and gain trust from their sources, KGG is willing to throw away the rooted system it has and is slowly leading toward the path where profit becomes the most important aspect of all. In here we see a clash of ideologies, one being a system that has been implemented since a long time ago, one being the false ideology that turns profit into god. The working class of Kompas.com and KGG also become the victim of this, since the false ideology is pounded into their heads. Now, sacrificing personal beliefs and time for the sake of news we do not agree becomes something that is considered as normal, and there is no resistance regarding such life.

Although this research only uses Kompas.com and KGG as its subjects, this is something that should be taken seriously. Kompas.com is a part of KGG, one of the largest media corporations in Indonesia. Moreover, it has been standing since 1965, and many people turn to Kompas.com and its families for "objective" news and reporting. If one of the most trusted media becomes something that cannot be trusted due to its trickery and bias, what about the rest of the media?

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