

# Discourse Analysis Construction of Reality

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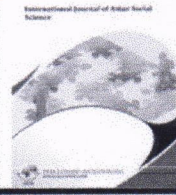
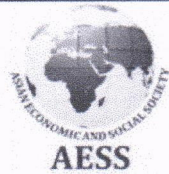
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## DISCOURSE ANALYSIS CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY OF THE BALIBO FIVE CASE IN THE BALIBO MOVIE

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### ABSTRACT

Film, apart from being known as an art work, is also known as an influential information carrier due to its emotional approach with the audiences. Few notice that film could be a medium for propaganda, because film constructs a reality instead of capture a reality. The film that will be the centre of this research is *The Balibo*, which was directed by Australian film maker, Robert Connolly. The film was inspired by the 1975's Balibo Five case that occurred in East Timor. The Balibo Five is a heart-wrenching tragedy where five Australian journalists were found lifeless in the city of Balibo, East Timor. Since that day, this incident known as *The Balibo Five case*. The Indonesian claimed that five of them were killed because they were caught in crossfire between FRETILIN and Indonesian armies. It was not until 2007 that New South Wales Coroner's Court (Australia)'s reinvestigation team proved that those five innocent people were not allegedly murdered but they were victims of intentional extermination. Through this thorough research, the writer is going to discuss the implicit, explicit or even a rhetorical purpose addressed by the director to the audiences by using van Dijk's Discourse Analysis.

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**Keywords:** Film, Construction of reality, The balibo five case, Australian journalists, East timor, Discourse analysis.

### Contribution/ Originality

This study contributes to the literature on the film as a propaganda tools to the public. Discourse Analysis is expected to peel the objective significance of an event. It is also the first study about the balibo five. This paper provides a logical description in analyze film to build up public opinion. This research is original and uses the film *Balibo Five* documents from online media.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human as a social creature needed an information supply to support their interaction with each other. Nowadays, information had growth rapidly and easily obtained. We can get information of an event just in a second, either through conventional media such as print media or electronic media, or via the internet which now is very easily accessible by using intermediary such as a cell phone or a personal computer.

However, as time goes by, there are plenty of ways used by any individuals, or groups to spread messages and information either by books, advertisement, television content or especially film. The mission of the director plays an important role in determining the form of film's messages in mass communication. But, generally a film may include various purposes, such as educational purpose, entertainment or information. The Film's hidden agenda work by using existing symbols mechanism in audience's mind in the form of contents of messages, voices, words, conversation, etc.

Oey Hong Lee, for example, confirming that film is the second mass communication tools that appear and grow during the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, or in the other words, during the time the prohibiting elements that lie between the developments of newspaper have been made vanished. Film did not capture the reality for what it is, instead, human as a social creature builds the reality based on what they saw. The plot of a movie is a construction of the maker who choose certain realities that fit his/her story well, as well as the producing the means for the audience (Sobur, 2009).

The film *Balibo* tells the story of the death of five Reporters in the conflict in East Timor, opening the long wound for Indonesia as well as Australia. Not only that, the movie *Balibo* was considered discrediting Indonesia with various facts that were presented in the movie had a duration of more than one hundred minutes. The *Balibo* movie was made with semi-documentary, and was dominated by the color of sepia that appeared to stress that this movie was the documentary films. However what must be taken into account is the historic background, this movie scene continued to leave the scene that still must be questioned by his factual aspect. The problem in this research was: How did the movie *Balibo* incident tell the death of five journalists from the perspective of the director who had Australia citizenship. The aim of this research was revealed how a backgrounder historic films did not always have accurate, although being made with the background of the history remember the movie and the reality was the opposite could.

The movie *Balibo Five*, directed by Robert Connolly, was released in August 2009. The movie was banned by the Indonesian Film Censorship Agency because it was considered to have the potential of inciting conflict and to disgrace Indonesia. The film could also open wounds between Indonesia, Australia and East Timor.

### 1.1. Film as Propaganda

Film began at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century as a technological novelty, but what it offered was scarcely new in content or function. It transferred to a new means of presentation and distribution of an older tradition of entertainment. Offering stories, spectacles, music, drama, humor and technical tricks for popular consumption. According to McQuail (2000) film was also almost

instantly a true mass medium in sense that it quite quickly reached a very large proportion of population even in rural areas.

The movie industry itself is often called "an industry based on dreams" because it has been such an imaginative, creative medium. It would be easy to assume the film industry is one of the biggest media businesses because the publicity surrounding movie celebrities captures a great deal of attention, perhaps more than any other medium, film mirror the society that creates them. Some film offer underlying political messages. Other film reflects changing social value. Still, other are just good entertainment. And all movies need an audience to succeed (Biagi, 2010)

In Indonesia itself, a film's role as a mass communication media had appeared by the time this Nation's arise. However, during The President's decree on July 1959, a mass communication experienced the transition between the liberals mass communication system –which wanted to be left- into a socialist mass communication system. That time, the mass communication's whereabouts –including film- were tossed around. But in the end, the existence of film as a mass communication was confirmed on Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara No.II/MPRS/1960 provision which saying "Film were not merely as commercial goods, but also an education and guidance medium"(Oey Hong, 1965)

Film actually considered more as an entertainment medium than as a persuader medium. But clearly, film has been a powerful influence or a persuader. The presence of public criticism and censorship institution show that film could be very persuasive medium (Rivers *et al.*, 2003). Film also believed has an ability to direct and lead the audience into a certain occurrence or event. With its own agenda, film most potentially to insert the elements of education, social value, historical and culture knowledge on its content.

There have been three other significant strands in film history. First the use of film for propaganda is noteworthy, especially when applied to national or societal purpose, based on it's great reach, supposed-realism, emotional impact, and popularity. The two other strands in film history were the emerge of several school of film art (Huaco, 1960) and the rise of the social documentary film movement (McQuail, 2000)

## 1.2. Construction of Reality

Construction of Reality basically were attempt to retelling (conceptualization) events or occurrences, things, even a political related issue is an attempt to construct a reality. In the process of construct a reality, language is the main instrument to retelling a reality. Language is conceptualization and narration tools. More than that, especially on mass media, language's existence were no longer merely as an instrument to describe a reality, but to interpret the purpose of media realities which will appear on audience's mind (Hamad, 2004).

On ontology constructivist paradigm, reality is social construction which created by individual. However, the truth of reality is truth is relative reality applicable according to specific context which is considered relevant by the society. Meanwhile, reality is people's creation through its constructive power towards their surrounding social life.

Shannon and Weaver stated, the theory depicted reality or a phenomenon, that was begun in detail the characteristics and the main components of a phenomenon. Beside depicting this

phenomenon, the scientist tended subjective because what was in the understanding of a scientist was affected by the personal background, skills senses, and the value or the basic conviction that was followed by the scientist. (Susanto Eko, 2010)

Based on those opinions, it's safe to say that film as mass media were construction of reality from individual or groups of people who involved on filmmaking process which enable them to construct film based on their ideology, comprehension, and also the experience that they're interpret on their own.

### 1.3. The Balibo Five Case

The Balibo Five occurred on late October 1975, it's all began with the Carnation Revolution on Portugal on 1974 that caused the decolonization through every Portuguese colony. One of the affected colonies was East Timor. FRETILIN (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente* or Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor ) is one of three party that was formed after East Timor became no man's land, FRETILIN saw an opportunities to liberate East Timor, with majority of population possess a mutual vision as FRETILIN. It has made FRETILIN as the number one party in East Timor. So that on 28 November 1975, FRETILIN declared the independence of East Timor.

Indonesia under Soeharto's reign started to smell out the fluctuation in East Timor. On July 1975, Soeharto held a meeting with United State's president, Gerald Ford, and Henry Kissinger, United State's Secretary of State.

As quoted on Selden and So Alvin (2004) Soeharto describing Indonesia as "a unified nation without territorial ambition which will not commit aggression against other country or use force against the territory of other country" Suharto nevertheless pointed out that for East Timor "an independent country would hardly viable, and that the only way is to intergrate with Indonesia, however those who want independences are those who are communist. Suharto concluded that "Indonesia doesn't want to insert itself into Timor self-determination, but the problem is how to manage the self-determination process with the majority wanting to be unity with Indonesia".

In this way, six months before the ordering the invasion December 1975, Suharto secured US acquiescence in the territory prospective incorporation by Indonesia. The expansionist impulse would be denied; the excuse, the communist threat. While the US department of state called the Timorese Independent movement "a vaguely leftist party". Kissinger labeled FRETILIN "a communist government in the middle of Indonesia"

This way, armed with Unites State's blessing, Indonesia started to assemble their military force on the border of East Timor either on land, air, even on sear border. The military aggression which may launch at anytime and the communism issue has turned on the world's spotlight into East Timor. Not a few foreign media journalist visited East Timor in order to coverage the ongoing story, so the world may know what was really happened.

Greg Shackleton (HSV - 7 or Channel 7's reporter). Garry Cunningham (Channel 7 's cameraman), Tony Stewart (Channel 7's audioman). Malcolm Rennie (TCN -9 or Channel 9's reporter), Brian Peters (Channel 9's Cameraman), five of many foreign journalist who visited East Timor. Both Channel 9 and Channel 7 were Australian television network. Five of them were

1 covering in the City of Balibo, East Timor on October 1975. But, unfortunately, all of them were declared lifeless. The Indonesian claimed that five of them were caught in crossfire between FRETILIN and Indonesia armies which caused their death. Later, this incident known as The Balibo Five case.

#### 1.4. Balibo Film

This hundred-minute movie by Robert Connolly tells about conflict, fact controversy, political escalation which flare up on East Timor by the time these tiny nation were invaded by Indonesian. This film took a timeline between 1999 and 1975. The story began with Juliana, a native East Timor woman's testimony on 1999, and then the time rewind into 1975, where we as audience watched the film as if it based on Juliana's testimony.

Later, this movie take Roger East's point of view, East was the Australia's veteran journalist whose been to East Timor. East were asked by Jose Ramos Horta to be East Timor's journalist and utter the voices of East Timor to the world and tells them about what was really happened. At first, East declined Horta's request, but he reconsidering it when he heard about five of Australian journalist that missing in East Timor.

In view of the curiosity and belief in findings the fifth of them, East follows they're trails in East Timor as he get closer to the truth the more information he gets about how Indonesian's invasion in East Timor, who helped Indonesian, etc

When East finds out himself that fifth of them were killed by an Indonesian, East decided to stay in Timor and accepting Horta's offer to run the East Timor's news office. But unfortunately, on early December, when Indonesian launch Operasi Seroja, as if the Indonesian armies could smell the presence of media, they're destroying East's office, and they drag East with them into the dock alongside with other citizen. The representation of Operasi Seroja was pretty cruel, where Indonesian armies executed the citizens without a certain reason, young, old, woman, man. The execution was done in public, in front of the others, even in front of their families, including in front of children.

In this film, we could can see the condition of East Timor during Indonesian's invasion, moreover the communist issue that the Indonesian government labeled to FRETILIN were denied by showing the member of FRETILIN who wear a cross necklace, which symbolize the majority of FRETILIN member is a Catholic. Besides that Indonesian government don't have any political good faith to carry out diplomatic negotiation concerning the allegation towards the FRETILIN party as a communist.

Latter, this film were banned by an Indonesian censors institution, Lembaga Sensor Film (LSF), this decision were supported by other government institution such as Culture and Tourism Minister, Jero Wacik. This film considered to disgrace Indonesia's name and might caused to open an old wound between Australia, East Timor, and Indonesia itself.

But, there's still lots more institution who supported The Balibo's screening in Indonesia. And since the movies cannot legally screened, there's a few institution, students organization, non-government organization who held an event to watched The Balibo. Everyone who supported the

screening of this movie felt disappointed towards the government, they said that every information shouldn't be isolated

### 1.5. The Balibo Film on Van Dijk's Discourse Analysis Table

#### Semantics

Semantics in van Dijk's scheme were categorized as an explicit or implicit purpose, a hidden agenda, and how a person write or talk about those purpose. In the other words, semantics not only define which crucial part of discourse structure, but also to lead to the other side of an occurrence. (Eriyanto, 2001)



Picture-1.1.

In this scene, Horta and East were just got shot by a helicopter, and they continue their journey after escaping the death. Horta finally asked East if he saw the helicopter were United State's.

Horta (H) : "Did you happen to notice that the helicopter that trying to kill us was american?"

East (E) : "No, I was too busy trying not to get shot"

H : "Well it was supplied by the American Government"

E : "And how did Indonesians pay for such marvelous machine of war ?"

H : "Pound, Roger, British money"

E : "And how did the very expensive American helicopter find us in the middle of nowhere?"

H : "Intelligence provided by your Australian government, they know you are here just like they told them about journalist"

This conversation between Horta and East indicate that Indonesian was helped by United Kingdom's government to bought the helicopter which provided by United State's government. Moreover, Australians also helped Indonesia by provide an intelligence to track every Australians in East Timor.



## Syntax

Strategy to show ourselves in a positive way but featuring the opponent negatively, it's also done by manipulated the syntax (sentences) as by using pronoun, rules of words, and the use of specific syntax category, using passive or active sentences, laying down the clause, using an complex sentences, etc.



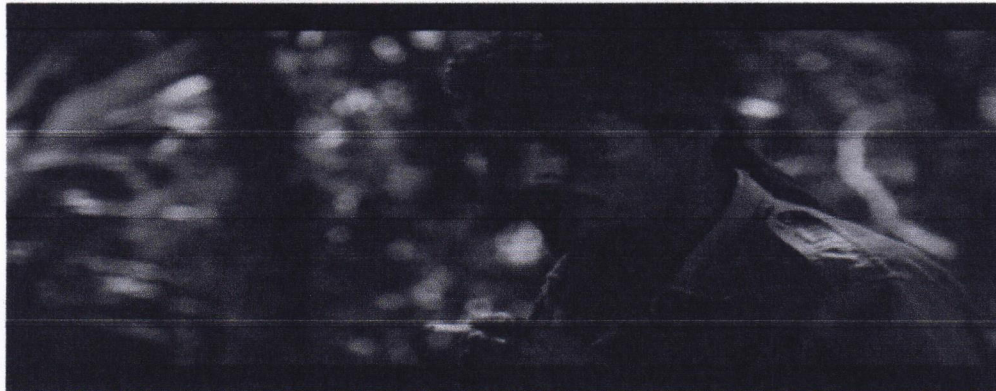
Picture-2.2.

Maniaty gave a statement to East:

*"Yes and the Indonesians are on the ground, they're not in uniform so you don't know who to trust. We're just sitting in Dili waiting for the invasion and we didn't know when it's gonna come and...."*

Maniaty's statement indicate that the Indonesian armies who surrounded East Timor is playing a trick by not wear any military uniform so that they can't be differentiate with the citizens and this was pretty troubling the citizens because of its uncertainty when Indonesians will attack. This condition caused both citizens and FRETILIN in guard, even Maniaty as a foreign journalist should be more careful with the possibility that Indonesia will attack at any moment.

## Syntax



Picture-2.2.

1

Sabika invited the journalists to come along with them while they patrol

Sabika (S) : "Brothers, we are going for patrol if you want to come with us get some film"

Greg Shackleton : "Can we film something?"

S : Yes, off course, off course you can film.

This scene represented the whole film where FRETILIN describe as a friendly one towards the journalist, and Sabika even called them "brothers" which indicate they're good relationship with each other. This is the opposite of presentation of Indonesian armies, where they even eliminate the journalist in East Timor.

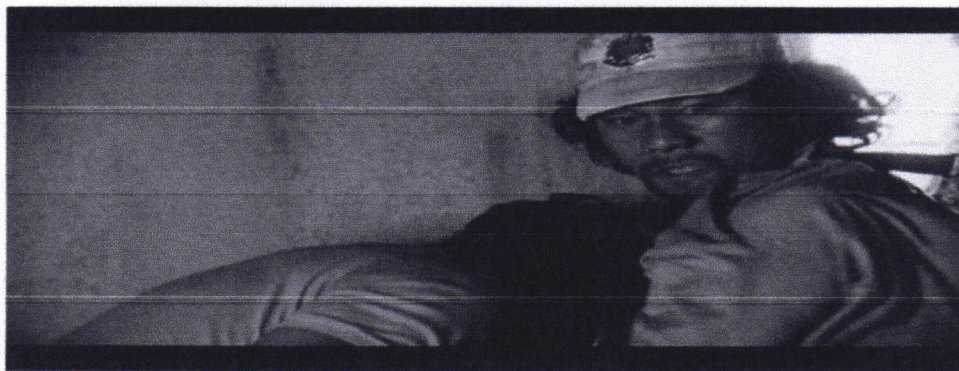
### Rhetorical

The strategy in this rhetorical level is the style of how someone talked or write. For example, by using hyperbolic words, or rambling words, rhetorical has persuasive function, and closely related with how the message delivered to the audience.



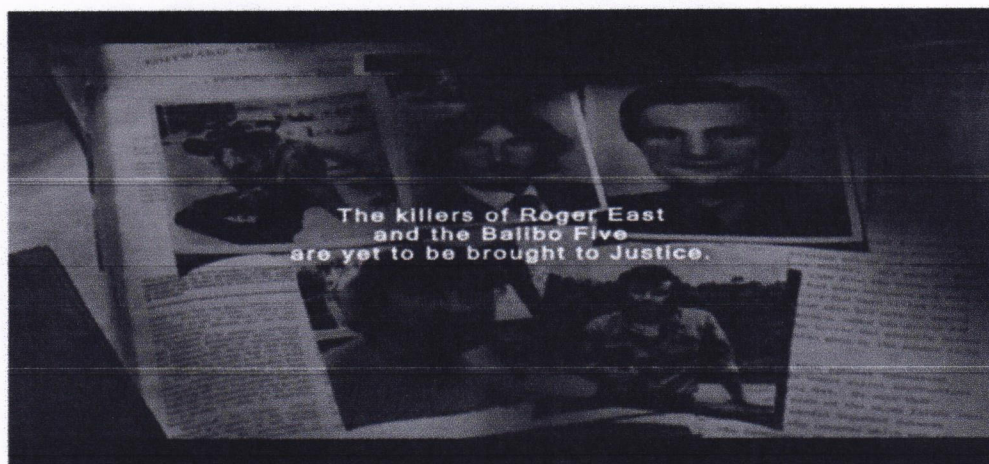
Picture-3.1.

Peters the one who tried to explain to the Indonesian armies that they were journalist were shot right in the head by a person that described as an Indonesian. And almost every Indonesians who invaded East Timor did not wearing an military uniform.



Picture-3.2.

Shackleton was stabbed to death by an Indonesian. This scene was pretty crucial considering that the Balibo Five case haven't even solved yet, there's still no bright spot about who is responsible for the murder of Balibo Five. The depiction of the Indonesian who killed fifth of them was as given an enlightenment about who should responsible for this act.



Picture-3.3.

By the end of the movie, Connolly puts a text by saying that until the murderer of Balibo Five and Roger East are yet to be brought to justice.

## 2. CONCLUSION

Even every movie with an entertainment purpose always had an implicit purpose in their content. In *The Balibo*, the filmmaker tried to tell the audience about what was really happened on that day. There are lots of scenes which Connolly believes as a fact was clearly shown. For example, an implicit critical for Australian government by Connolly, where there was a line that saying Australian government helped Indonesia to invade East Timor, and their careless act when five of their citizens went missing. Last but not least, critics against United State and United Kingdom when they also helped Indonesia to invade East Timor.

This movie supposed to be lesson for Indonesians regardless of whether right or not the fact that shown in this film which made by an Australian. But, keep in mind that this movie was made with a lot of preparation, an autopsy results, the witness' testimony.

The bottom line, Indonesia did invade East Timor, and explored the communism issue into FRETILIN to open their path to had East Timor annexation. A dark age of human rights violation during Indonesian occupation were the history we shall never forget, this could be a lesson for the next generation. Just like human being that learned from their mistakes, and so does every nation, or a country that learn from they're mistake in order not to do the same mistake twice.

Indonesians also need to lean to open their heart widely in receive a criticism, even in a film formed. This is just the same as learn to open a new possibility towards something new which might add new perception or insight.

1  
Avoiding, denying, and declining from the eye of the law won't make an occurrences disappear by itself, in the end, admitting what we did wrong and take a responsible for our act will be a noble attitude.

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