

How Islam is Represented in The United States Newspapers Published in COCA

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Abstract—This research is entitled “How Islam is Represented in The United States Newspapers Published in COCA”. The objects of this research are the adjectives that collocate with the word ‘Islam’ taken from newspapers in the United States obtained from COCA. The objectives of this research are to analyze what are the adjectives used by the U.S newspapers in describing Islam and to describe how Islam is represented in the U.S newspaper. The analysis of this research was done by using statistics descriptive method proposed by McEney and Hardie as corpus linguistic approach. This study uses Van Dijk’s theory of critical discourse analysis and uses the other theories of media discourse analysis from Garret and Bell. This study shows that according to COCA, the newspapers in the U.S. have been collocating the word “Islam” in their news with these adjectives such as ‘radical’, ‘militant’, ‘fundamentalist’, ‘political’, and ‘holy’ for 624 times. Based on this finding, it can be concluded that American citizens appear to be so suspicious for Islam; they thought about Islam as an awful religion.

Keywords—COCA; corpus; critical discourse analysis; Islam; representation; the US newspapers

I. INTRODUCTION

Islam is a religion with the second most adherents in the world; according to Hackett and McClendon, there are 1.8 billion Muslims (the adherents of the religion of Islam) are spread worldwide in 2017 [1]. Islam is often associated with a peaceful religion that upholds the great values of ethics. This monotheistic religion also provides a considerable influence on political, social, and cultural views in human life. According to the survey conducted by Pew Research Center in 2012, Islam is also known as a fast-growing religion in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. Pew Research Center also provides that Islam is a well-received religion in Africa and Asia.

However, Islam has been negatively known in America and in other western countries recently: Islam has begun to be seen as a radical religion since the terrorist attacks carried out by Al-Qaeda against the United States on

September 11, 2001. The terrorist destroyed the World Trade Center (WTC) building in New York and according to History that massive terrorist attack took the lives of nearly 3000 people [2,3]. Since then, the world’s perspective, especially the U.S. perspective, of Islam began to change to negative: Islam has been portrayed as a religion that breeds

terrorism, violence, and global threat [4]. Moreover, with the presence of a radical group called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the representation of Islam in the world’s perspective is getting worse. Due to the negative depiction of Islam, a new social phenomenon called Islamophobia began to appear among the people. Weedon in Saeed defines Islamophobia as an ‘unfounded hostility towards Islam ... unfair discrimination against Muslims individuals and communities’ [5,6]. Many Muslims, particularly American Muslims, were victims as the consequence of this dangerous propaganda [7]. Islamophobia continues to thrive in American society, and it is also supported by the growth of mass media. The onslaught of bad news about Islam or Muslims in the U.S media only adds the bleak perspective of the U.S against Islam, and this obviously can affect the world perspective towards Islam itself. It is no secret that the mass media of the U.S has its own power that can affect a global perspective on something.

The rise of negative portrayal of Islam is strengthened by the mass media, and newspaper is one of them. The U.S newspapers such as USA TODAY, The New York Times, and The Seattle Time are great medium for leading public opinion to something particular. Moreover, those newspapers are the most popular daily newspapers in the U.S [8]. Alghamdi defines that media will select several events from the numerous events and issues in current affairs to be reported and media also will choose the way in which the issues are going to be reported, so the media will have a fundamental influence on readers’ perceptions of selected events or issues [7]. Since the incident of 9/11, the incident when the terrorist attacked the WTC building, the U.S.’s media tends to inform the negative things about Islam, and it is still ongoing until today. Based on that phenomenon, the author is interested in digging more information about the representation of Islam in the U.S media, particularly in the newspaper. The objectives of this research are to find out what are the adjectives used by the U.S newspapers in describing Islam and to find out how the U.S. newspapers represent what Islam is. Linguistically, the representation of Islam in the U.S newspaper can be seen from the use of adjectives attached before or after to the word ‘Islam’. Journalists certainly have a certain tendency to determine what adjectives are suitable to be juxtaposed with the word “Islam” in the news they make. An adjective has an important role in describing something because an adjective

can occur within the noun phrase and can function in attributive position.

In order to know the representation of Islam in the U.S. newspaper, the authors have analyzed any adjectives that adhere to the word 'Islam' in the article written the US newspapers by using corpus linguistics approach. After the adjectives are obtained, the authors analyzed them by using the critical discourse analysis approach. To do so, this research depends on Van Dijk's analytical approach to critical discourse analysis and media discourse in order to give more insight on how ideologies and opinions are constructed and expressed within news discourse [9,10].

A research that is focused on how Islam was portrayed in the media was previously researched by Emad A. Algamdhi in 2015. That research uses Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis theory and it focuses on how Islam is represented in western media. That research shows that the western media portrays Islam over-dramatically; they illustrate that Islam is a religion that is full of threats and worthy of fear. Algamdhi's research can explain how Islam is represented in western media well, but this research is still not specific. The use of the term 'western media' in that research seemed too broad and not specific. In addition, the media researched was not specific to only one type of mass media. Based on that case, the authors specified the type of mass media to be researched and specified the media from which country to be studied in this research. The authors choose newspapers from the United States as the data source. In this study, the authors also present what types of adjectives that appear the most in the news about Islam in the United States newspaper. That point was not presented in the previous research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Garret and Bell state that media is a rich source of data that can be easily accessed for research and teaching and it also can give us a clear insight into social meanings and stereotypes conveyed through language and communication [11]. Garret and Bell also state that media usage influences and reflects people's attitude towards language, and media also can reflect and play an essential role in forming and articulating cultural, political and social life. Therefore, the study of media discourse is interesting to be studied more deeply. According to Algamdhi, media discourse has been a focus of critical analysis conducted by scholars from various disciplines [7]: semiotics, pragmatics, and discourse studies.

Analyzing text in media such as text in newspaper actually can be done by using critical discourse analysis approach, since critical discourse analysis is a textually-oriented interdisciplinary approach to the study of social problem. Van Dijk states that Critical Discourse Analysis studies what structures, strategies, or properties of text, talk, verbal interaction or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction [10]. By using this approach, the authors aim to examine the implicit news in media, particularly the implicit news about Islam in the U.S. newspaper. Thus, the authors manage to find out how Islam is being represented in the U.S. media. According to Van Dijk there are two strategies for describing a person, group, or idea in text media [10]. The first

strategy is by saying positive things (positive self-presentation) and the second is by saying negative things (negative other-presentation). Positive self-presentation is a way used by participants to describe themselves positively by giving or saying positive details while negative other-presentation is a way used by participants to describe or represent others with a negative outlook or by saying negative things. This can be the addition of negative details.

Van Dijk defines that news texts consist of 'macro' and 'micro' structure [9]. Van Dijk in Algamdhi states that the macrostructure refers to the 'thematic' structure (the overall content of a text) and the 'schematic' structure (the overall form of a text) [7]. On the other hand, Van Dijk also states that microstructures of news texts involve analyzing microelements such as lexical choice, clause grammar, and clause combination, semantics, coherence between sentences or propositions and so forth [9]. The implicit ideologies and opinions which are embedded within the discourse can be revealed by analyzing the microstructures of the news texts.

III. METHOD

The analysis of this research was done by using statistics descriptive method proposed by McEnery and Hardie [12]. McEnery and Hardie state that statistics descriptive method is a statistical method that does not seek to test for significance and this method simply describes the data in some way. McEnery and Hardie also explain that the most basic statistical measure in statistics descriptive method is a frequency count. This method is suitable for researchers who want to do linguistics research by using corpus linguistics approach. Statistics descriptive method allows researchers to quantify vocabulary variation between corpora, calculate collocations, et cetera.

The authors are also using corpus linguistics as a method to conduct the data. Corpus linguistics is a scholarly enterprise to the study of discourse which involves the process of analyzing large volume of authentic textual data using computer software, and it uses word processing programs to perform computations, answer questions and discover invaluable facts on language use [13]. In this research, the authors use the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) to collect the data. According to the official website of COCA, COCA is the largest freely-available corpus of English and the only large and balanced corpus of American English. COCA contains 560+ millions of words of text and those words are obtained from various texts published in the U.S, such as magazine, newspaper, academic text, fiction, or speech text. Through COCA, we can observe the profile of American society in using English language. Moreover, we can analyze the American perspective over specific matters by using COCA.

The objects of this research are the adjectives that collocate with the word 'Islam' taken from newspapers in the United States obtained from COCA. The data are collected by searching the word 'Islam' in the collocation column in COCA official website, and the research will find the adjective(s) that attached to the word 'Islam' itself. The authors will sort the result of the of the adjective(s) word(s) that attached to the word 'Islam' from the most used to the least used (from 2012 to 2017) according to the frequency, and the sources of the data

are only taken from the news category. After that, the authors will choose the top five of most used adjectives that collocate with the word 'Islam'. From each adjective, the authors will choose one data to be analyzed. The reason why the authors only choose the adjective as the parameter because adjective can occur within the noun phrase and can function in attributive [14].

The data that are being analyzed in this research are taken from several selected newspaper articles published in the United States and most of them are taken from Washington Times, New York Times, The Seattle Times, and Christian Science Monitor, and Washington Post. Newspapers are chosen by the writer because newspapers, according to the authors' perspective, are the most accessible media by the public. Newspapers have the power to lead the public opinion because newspaper can be easily accessed by the public.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After selecting the data by using corpus linguistics in COCA, the authors find out the frequency of the top five most used adjectives that collocate with the word 'Islam' in the U.S. newspapers. The authors find out that the newspapers in the U.S. have been collocating the word "Islam" in their news with these adjectives such as *radical*, *militant*, *fundamentalist*, *political* and *holy* for 624 times. Table 1 represents the number of each adjective that collocate before or after the word 'Islam' in the U.S. newspaper.

TABLE I. THE FREQUENCY OF EACH ADJECTIVE THAT COLLOCATE BEFORE OR AFTER THE WORD 'ISLAM' IN THE U.S. NEWSPAPERS

| No | Adjectives | Frequency |
|-------|----------------|-----------|
| 1 | Radical | 234 |
| 2 | Militant | 184 |
| 3 | Political | 82 |
| 4 | Fundamentalist | 63 |
| 5 | Holy | 61 |
| TOTAL | | 624 |

From the table above, we can see that in the U.S. newspaper, the word 'Islam' is often paired with these adjective words: *radical*, *militant*, *political*, *fundamentalist*, and *holy*. The adjective word *radical* used in the U.S newspaper for 234 times, and it makes this adjective word ranked as the most used adjective in the news about Islam in the U.S. newspaper, followed by *militant*, *political*, *fundamentalist*, and *holy*

To be more specific, the authors limited the time-scope of the data. Authors take the data that appear in the last five years, i.e. from 2012 until 2017. After the data is being specified, the authors find out that the U.S. newspapers use those five adjective words for about 141 times in that period. More detailed information can be seen in the figure below.

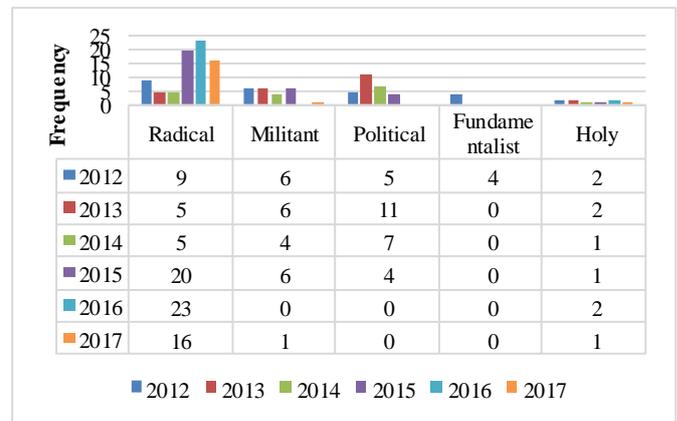


Fig. 1. The frequency of each adjective that collocate before or after the word 'Islam' in the U.S. newspapers (2012-2017).

Based on the chart above, we can see that the usage frequency of adjective word *radical* is the highest among any other adjective words, and radical mostly used in 2016. In general, it can be seen that Islam is mostly associated with radicalism in America, followed by *militant*, *political*, *fundamentalist*, and *holy*. It is surprising to see that negatively-connotated adjectives are used more frequently in the news of Islam in the U.S newspapers. The authors can assume that those adjectives are negatively-connotated by finding the definitions of those adjectives in Oxford English Dictionaries, particularly for the first, the second, and the fourth adjectives.

According to Oxford English Dictionaries, *radical* means '(Especially of change or action) relating to or affecting the fundamental nature of something; far-reaching or thorough; advocating or based on thorough or complete political or social change; representing or supporting an extreme or progressive section of a political party', *militant* means 'Favoring confrontational or violent methods in support of a political or social cause,' and *fundamentalist* means 'A person who believes in the strict, literal interpretation of scripture in a religion; a person who adheres strictly to the basic principles of any subject or discipline'.

The rest of the adjective words, *political* and *holy*, tend to be assumed as a neutral and a positively-connotated adjective. According to Oxford English Dictionaries, *political* means 'Relating to the government or public affairs of a country; relating to the ideas or strategies of a particular party or group in politics; interested in or active in politics', and *holy* means 'Dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose; sacred'. The meaning of these two adjective words is still biased, since these words are not known to be used in what kind of context.

The authors indicate that the image of Islam in the U.S, according to this finding, is relatively associated with negative representation. The newspapers in the U.S. seem to influence the thoughts and opinions of the American people about Islam. This phenomenon can certainly harm Muslims, especially for those Muslims who live and stay in the United States. The social phenomenon of 'Islamophobia' cannot be separated from the news about Islam in the U.S. newspapers. Numerous of

Muslims, particularly American Muslims, become the victim as the result of this malevolent publicity. The Muslim portrayals in western media have been rebuked for instigating numerous to carry out brutal violations, offenses, and assaults against Muslims who live in western nations. Based on this finding, the authors can assume that American citizens appear to be so suspicious for Islam; they thought about Islam as an awful religion. The journalists were also seen intentionally picking negative descriptive words in representing Islam in the media.

To uncover the information about the representation of Islam in the U.S newspapers more profoundly, the authors will show the piece of five news taken from corpus, and each news is containing one of those five adjectives.

A. Data 1: Radical

Date : 23 June 2017
 Title : Trump Administration Orders Tougher Screenings of Visa Applications
 Source : The Seattle Times Newspaper

Trump and his national-security team are not waiting to toughen the rules to decide who can enter the United States. Embassy officials must now scrutinize a broader pool of visa applicants to determine if they pose security risks to the United States, according to four cables sent between March 10 and March 17. That extra scrutiny will include asking applicants detailed questions about their background and making mandatory checks of social-media history if a person has ever been in territory controlled by the Islamic State group. Trump has spoken regularly of his concern about the threat of "radical Islamic terrorism" from immigrants. But it is unclear who, exactly, will be targeted for the extra scrutiny since Tillerson's cables leave that decision up to security officers at each embassy.

Analysis:

In the data above, it can be implied that the U.S. President, Donald Trump, wants to tighten the immigrant permits to enter the United States. In this news, Trump seems paranoid with Muslims who are portrayed as the biggest threat to the United States. In the news above, Trump stated that he was worried about the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. Trump's statement on this news can lead the public opinion that Trump really regards Islam as a threat, so the American citizens are supposed to suspect all Muslims entering the United States as a treat too. The presence of the word "radical" and "terrorism" embedded in the word "Islam" further reinforce the negative representation of Islam in the media in the United States. In this news, The Seattle Times has represented Islam in a negative way.

B. Data 2: Militant

Date : 14 October 2017
 Title : With Las Vegas Shooting Victims, Trump Assumes Role of Consoler...
 Source : New York Times Newspaper

"Earlier, the White House press secretary, Sarah Huckabee Sanders, declined to say whether the secretary of state had been instructed by the White House to deliver his statement. Mr. Trump has been uncharacteristically subdued about the Las Vegas shooting, one of the deadliest in American history. He has said little about it on Twitter and deflected questions about the killer's motives, in contrast to previous mass shootings, which have drawn quick, furious reactions from him, particularly when the attackers were Muslim. With no evidence yet linking Mr. Paddock to militant Islamic groups, the Las Vegas attack appears unlike those in Orlando, Fla., or San Bernardino, Calif., both of which Mr. Trump seized on, as a candidate, to justify his ban on people from predominantly Muslim countries. He also used those earlier shootings to highlight the scourge of what he labels "radical Islamic terror".

Analysis:

Just as in the previous data, in data 2 Islam is represented negatively by the New York Times. In that news above, it was described that Islam already has a militant and a radical group that has committed massive shooting terrorism in Las Vegas. From the news above, it can be implied that, again, Trump exposes his paranoid feelings towards Islam. The label "militant Islamic group" and "radical Islamic terror" pinned against the shooter and the shooting incident. In that news, Islam is represented as a religion to be feared by the people of the United States. This statement is further confirmed by the statement that Trump wants to ban Muslims to enter the United States.

C. Data 3: Political

Date : 14 January 2015
 Title : Was Charlie Hebdo Attack about Revenge - or Recruiting European Jihadis?
 Source : Christian Science Monitor Newspaper

Muslim population, some experts in terrorist ideology say. The broader objective, they add, was very likely to attract those drawn to expressions of power - and perhaps violence - to the jihadist cause by driving a wedge between Muslims and the majority secular society. The best path to preventing the attack being successful as a recruiting tool, these experts say, is the kind of tolerance shown after terrorist acts in Norway in 2011 and Australia in 2014. Most French Muslims are not keenly interested in religion or in politics of any stripe," let alone political Islam," Michigan's Professor Cole says. But that could change if events like the Charlie Hebdo attack succeed in polarizing the Muslim and majority populations, he adds "Al Qaeda wants to mentally colonize French Muslims, but faces a wall of indifference," says Cole, writing on his webpage." But if it can get non-Muslim French to be beastly to ethnic Muslims on the grounds that they are Muslims, it can start creating a common political identity around grievance against discrimination."

Analysis:

Although this adjective word, "political", is assumed to be an adjective with a neutral connotation, the word "political" is implied as "stubbornness" of Islam in politics in this news. In the news above, it was reported that Muslims in France seems "stubborn" because they are not interested in participating in politics. In the news above also explained that Al Qaeda wants to colonize the Muslims mentally in France. This news is published in the local American newspaper, Christian Science Monitor, and this news can add a negative impression to Islam in the United States.

D. Data 4: Fundamentalist

Date : 11 September 2012
 Title : Tribes, Militants Battling in Yemen
 Source : Washington Post Newspaper

The United States and its allies consider as important a front line as Pakistan and Afghanistan. Nearly every week, violence erupts in Jaar and other parts of southern Yemen, including the port city of Aden, targeting military and security complexes, high-profile generals and government ministers. Sayid's struggle reflects the jihadists' determination to remain a force in this region and the limitations of Yemen's new government and the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy. A rare visit by a Western journalist to Jaar, once the militants' main base and their laboratory to experiment with fundamentalist Islamist rule, revealed how deeply entrenched they remain in the city. Militant cells are actively working to undermine Yemen's weak government, even as U.S. and Yemeni officials declare progress in the fight against AQAP, as the al-Qaeda affiliate is known.

Analysis:

Again, Islam is represented as a negative religion. In the news contained in Washington Post newspaper, Islam is described as a religion that has fundamentalists who must be resisted. This is reinforced by the statement that the United States and Yemen will work together against AQAP, an Islamic radical group that is still affiliated with Al Qaeda. The existence of this news can lead public opinion against radical Muslims. Unfortunately, innocent Muslims are often the victims of intimidation from this kind of news.

E. Data 5: Holy

Date : 3 June 2017
 Title : London Police Respond to Two Terrorist Attacks; at Least One Dead
 Source : Washington Times Newspaper

Soon after, there were reported stabbings at a restaurant at nearby Borough Market, a popular area of pubs and cafes on the south side of the bridge. With explosions being heard after 1 a.m. Sunday, London time, media reports indicated that at least some of the suspects were possibly still at large. Police said another stabbing more than one mile away in the Vauxhall section of the city was not related to the other "terrorist incidents. The attacks, taking place during the

Islamic holy month of Ramadan, occurred less than two weeks after a suicide bomber killed 22 people at an Ariana Grande concert in Manchester, and just over two months after a deadly car-and-knife attack at outside the British Parliament. Mr. Trump, who was receiving updates from his national-security team at the White House, pledged help for London and the United Kingdom. "Whatever the United States can do to help out in London and the U. K., we will be there - WE ARE WITH YOU" Mr. Trump wrote on Twitter.

Analysis:

Despite having a positive meaning, in fact, the adjective "holy" in this news is only supposed to show the holy time of Muslim, which is the month of Ramadan. In this news, again, Islam is implied as the perpetrator of the murderous incident in London which was occurred two weeks after the tragedy of the bombing in Manchester. In this news Islam is not explicitly represented as a negative religion, but it can be implicitly seen that the Washington Times wanted to link Islam with terrorism. This is reinforced by a tweet from Trump containing support for London.

Based on the explanations above, it can be seen that most of the United States newspaper represents Islam as a radical, militant, political, fundamentalist, and holy religion. It can be seen from the frequency of those adjectives used in the U.S. newspaper when they are reporting the news about Islam This is in line with the results of previous studies conducted by Alghamdi, namely that Islam was represented as a religion full of threats and worthy of fear. Furthermore, it can be seen that Islam is often represented negatively by the U.S newspaper. This phenomenon can certainly harm Muslims, especially for Muslims living in the United States. The social phenomenon of 'Islamophobia' cannot be separated from the news about Islam in the U.S. newspapers. Numerous of Muslims, particularly American Muslims, become the victim as the result of this malevolent publicity.

From the analysis above, it can be seen that the determination of diction can determine how a group or individual is described. This proves that word selection can have a strong influence on people's perceptions toward a group or an individual. The dominance of the use of negative diction in the news about Islam such as 'radical' and 'militant' can certainly cause misrepresentations among the public. This phenomenon shows that language is the key of forming people's perspective towards something.

V. CONCLUSION

Based on this finding, the authors can assume that American citizens appear to be so suspicious for Islam; they thought about Islam as an awful religion. The journalists were also seen intentionally picking negative descriptive words in representing to Islam in the media. Of course this can endanger the existence of Muslims throughout the world. In addition, this study proves that newspapers can be a powerful "weapon" to destroy the credibility of a group or an individual. The power of newspapers in leading public opinion toward an issue cannot be doubted.

There are still many things that can be explored from this study. Not only focusing the study at how Islam is being represented in the U.S newspaper based on the choice of adjectives, it is hoped that in the future studies the researchers can examine how the U.S newspapers represent Islam based on the selection of nouns, verbs, and so on.

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