



Discourse Analysis in the Perspective of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe

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ABSTRACT

This paper elaborates on the discourse analysis approach developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Laclau and Mouffe's ideas are still relatively new in the realm of communication studies in Indonesia. These two thinkers are more familiar with various contemporary political studies literature. Much of their theoretical arguments refer to the Neo-Marxist framework as well as the Post-structuralist perspective. This article provides the fundamental concepts developed by Laclau and Mouffe in assisting the broader socio-political discourse analysis. Laclau and Mouffe reject various basic assumptions from essentialism, foundationalism, discursive representationalism, and deconstructive approach. Using a critical literature review method, we examine the thoughts of Laclau and Mouffe in developing the discourse studies. Laclau and Mouffe's approach is practical for multiple communication studies such as political discourses, business communication, branding discourses, news analysis, and other social communication themes. It can be used to explore and study how, for example, a hegemonic discourse articulated in the practice of certain political discursive formation by various dominant political forces. Also, it is able to capture how a certain discursive topic negotiated and contested by various existing socio-political power. The implication can also extend to broader issues related to discursive practices because for Laclau and Mouffe, every social practice can be read from the lens of a discourse.

Keywords

discourse analysis, discourse, articulation, negotiation, hegemony

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of discourse analysis developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe can be said to be not as popular as other discourse analysis thoughts developed by Michel Foucault, Norman Fairclough, Theun A. Van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Gunther Kress, or Theo van Leeuwen. Laclau and Mouffe are more widely known as political thinkers who have contributed a lot to ideas about contemporary political discourse, especially the idea of 'radical plural democracy'. Many of the productive works of Laclau and Mouffe have made valuable contributions to contemporary analysis of politics, philosophy, ideology, social movements, and other social analysis (Laclau, 1994; 2005; 2007; Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). The perspective and terms of their political ideas are often

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categorized as 'Post-Marxian'. His thoughts are also heavily influenced by 'Post-Structuralist' thinking and psychoanalysis such as the thoughts of Jacques Derrida, Lacan, Hjelmslev, and Michel Foucault. Some of these post-structuralist and psychoanalytic views have influenced fundamental ideas, especially the principles of 'anti-foundationalism' and 'anti-essentialism' which have been adhered to by Laclau and Mouffe.

Among many papers produced by these two thinkers, 'Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics' (1985) is one of the important books that focus on the idea of discourse analysis. However, their ideas about the principles of discourse are also scattered in many writings and can be found in other books. For this paper's purposes, the author will elaborately describe some of the basic principles of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of discourse, both from the principles of the Post-Structuralist perspective and several elements of the dimensions of their theoretical thought. Laclau and Mouffe never gave their thought schemes systematically along with the development of their standard methodology. Many of their concepts of thought are very interesting to be described because, in fact, the basic concepts they develop become the pillars of their theory of discourse.

The Post-Structuralist great theory focuses on the dimensions of 'text', 'language', and 'discourse'. However, through Laclau and Mouffe, the perspective of discourse is expanding not only to become a 'linguistic' issue. From the perspective of these two thinkers, political issues are approached with broader discourse analysis. The main ideas of 'Post-Structuralism' are major criticisms and corrections at the heart of the views of 'essentialism', 'foundationalism' and 'objectivism' of structuralism ideas. Post-Structuralist criticism sharply leads to the basic assumption of the ontological presupposition that the reality of "Being" cannot speak for itself. The existence of the reality of something itself is always a "*formation*" and the construction of the various relations surrounds it (relational).

No essence is supposed to speak without the role of language/discourse. Likewise, the meaning of language is not an essential essence that is supposed to exist permanently and has been established out there. Post-Structuralism works in the space of Structuralism but wants to be an apart and beyond it. No language system can be considered standard. Language systems are considered liquid, flexible, and contingent. Possible meanings are then embedded and made into definite meanings through the social and institutional positions from which the discourse originates (and not through the structures of the positive requirements) (MacDonell, 2005, p. 6). A discourse will always be social.

The structuralism perspective still assumes that language is a 'fixed' and 'stable' structural reality. A model of meaning can be found generally in a closed relation of signification. But for the Post-Structuralist view, the language text itself is something which will never be 'fixed' and 'final', existence always depends on its relation to other meanings. The presupposition of an established or stable meaning of language is, of course, an illusion and impossible. For the Post-Structuralist view, the position of 'language' has no reference to a fixed (objective) 'representation' or 'signified'. Some of the 'Post-Structuralist' views reject this basic representational assumption. If in Structuralism there is an objective entity which is the object of reference for representation, in Post-Structuralism, there is no objective and definite reference. The relationship is no longer between signifier and signified, but can be broader, as a relationship between signifier and another signifier and with signifier and so on. The relation of the universe of this signifier is very broad and infinite.

METHOD

This research uses the Critical Literature Review approach to deepen and critically examine the thoughts of Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Analysis.

Several studies on the position of Laclau and Mouffe's Critical Discourse Analysis have begun to be developed, especially to offer new perspectives in discourse studies on different topics. In the focus of political studies and international relations, Laclau & Mouffe's discourse studies also make new contributions. Laclau & Mouffe not only provides analytical tools but also the offer of change through a discursive framework (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 249). Laclau and Mouffe's further critical discourse analysis can also be used to capture the process of hegemony consolophism, especially

in global political policies. Political relations were then arrested as an attempt to fight for hegemonic positions through discourse practices (Wullweber, 2017, pp. 148-162). Laclau's Discourse Analysis can also be used to examine the content of media coverage in articulating the direction of hegemonic political development. One interesting article was developed by Ernesto Abalo who examined the involvement of the mainstream media in Venezuela which supported the coup against Hugo Chavez's regime in 2002 (Abalo, 2012, pp. 105-128). From several journal notes, it is clear that Laclau and Mouffe's critical discourse analysis can be more widely used in many research themes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Discourse and Meaning: Post Structuralist Perspective

The meaning of the text in the Post-Structuralist principle is not based on a "hierarchy of meaning" in a standardized language system as was previously believed in the view of early Structuralism. Meaning is constructed from a network of references via a moment of suspension. Meaning and identity are things that are "constituted" by others and are universally valid. Even further, reality itself is nothing but a product of an 'intra-discursive' deferment-differentiation mechanism (Suryajaya, 2012, p. 7). The principle of this view opposes the notion that meaning is constructed because there is a definite reference (objective essence) binding it. So that in order to read and deepen the meaning of a text, it is necessary to parse the various networks and relations of existing meaning. Following Jacques Derrida's principle, the meaning of a text is always in the 'deferred' or 'postponed' position. This postponement opens up the nature of contingent necessity that the meaning of the text will always possibly be continuously deconstructed or in other words, the meaning of the text will always be 'deferred' and 'postponed' continuously (Hardiman, 2007, p. 166).

What is meant by 'the postponement of meaning'? I can give an example here with a discourse text of "Indonesian-ness". As a language text, the meaning of Indonesian-ness cannot be defined in a standard, complete, fixed, and final manner. If we are to define (interpret) Indonesian-ness, then it will always fall into a loose and fluid meaning. Why is that? The looseness and fluidity of the meaning of Indonesian-ness are not due to the existence of different interpreter subjects who interpreting it, but because of the intra-linguistic element which is always open to the postponement of meaning. This is contained in the principle of interpreting a text which is naturally relational and constitutively formed by the presence of other elements of the text. The meaning of Indonesian-ness is not derived from the positivity of the meaning of Indonesian-ness itself, but from the negation aspect, namely 'which is not Indonesian-ness'. So what is Indonesian-ness will always be determined by the presence of 'not Indonesian-ness'. What is not Indonesian-ness can mean colonialism, violence, Singapore, America, etc. The presence of other texts and meanings will always defer the Indonesian-ness meaning. This deferment of meaning applies universally to every language composition. The meaning of a text can never be stabilized and the hierarchy of a meaning regime is shaken from within the text itself (Hardiman, 2007, pp. 290-291).

As the theoretical belief of many Post-Structuralist thinkers, the meaning of the text does not exist and is not given by itself. The meaning of the text cannot be found as it is. Text can only be understood critically by reading its relation to the spectrum of contexts and other intertexts of discourse. The meaning and identity of the text are matters which are not constituted by themselves, but by others. Discourse is always presented with its relational principles. Even the proposal developed by Laclau and Mouffe was more radical, that is by rejecting the distinction between the 'discourse' and 'non-discourse' dimensions. Discourse is not merely understood as a matter of structural linguistic text but is understood broadly as a whole social practice which previously was often only understood as 'context' or non-discourse. In the discourse analysis studies developed by Michel Foucault (Dhona, 2019) or Norman Fairclough, for example, they still make a distinction between the 'discourse' dimension and the 'non-discourse' dimension. For example, Fairclough stated that social structure influences the practices of discourse (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 117).

This theoretical position also explains Laclau and Mouffe's views on broader dimensions, such as a society (the social). All social action is then understood as an inseparable part of the mechanism for the operation of the meaning process which is always constituted by the articulating practice of

different signifiers, either antagonistic or non-antagonistic. Society will always be defined by others. Because of this relationship, there is no fulfillment in the identity of the society. All identities of individuals, actors, institutions and all identities existing in society are always constituted by the meaning of another identity. There is always a "deficiency" in any meaning of identity or society. This constitutive deficiency makes society or the position of the subject always present non-identical others in itself. Any attempt to make the total fulfillment of the conception of people's identity is an impossible and futile one.

Post-Structural Perspectives of Laclau & Mouffe explain this position firstly by explaining the issue of the hegemonic articulation development associated with connecting various discourses in a web of equivalence links. The temporary fixation point of meaning determination which can bind various articulations of the discourse is then understood as a 'nodal point'. The fixed point of meaning will always be prone to change and is determined by various changes in the relation of the signifier which is constantly moving. Hegemony or the fixation of meaning will always be temporary. Every effort of meaning fixation will always contest with other meaning fixation efforts.

In every articulation and even in every hegemony, everything is correlated to other discourse articulations. So "hegemony" is a form of collective identification to a symbolic reference that brings together a wider common will. Because of this correlation view, the hegemonic position will always be temporary and can never be fixed. It is always vulnerable to encountering various threats in the form of continuous instability of meaning hegemony. So in simple terms, it can be said that hegemonic struggle is always a continuous negotiation and contest shaped by moments of 'differentiation' and 'equivalence'. The meaning will be hegemonic when it can unite the social world which is linked to the fixation of meaning and the articulation of floating signifiers. In achieving meaning fixation (temporary hegemony), many signifiers were excluded to eliminate their potential articulation of meaning. This process of meaning exclusion takes place on a continuous battlefield (negotiation and contest). The process of meaning exclusion itself is a constitutive feature of every discourse formation which cannot be avoided. Every effort to construct a meaning will always exclude other different meanings. Without this process, the formation of meaning will never occur.

In Laclau and Mouffe's understanding, the practice of articulation can also be interpreted as a social act because it is always open to constituting all existing discourse of identities and social structures. In the end, the practice of articulation is interpreted as the construction of nodal points, whose fixed meaning is partial. Every social practice is 'contingent' and always prone to be deconstructed and reconstructed by the next 'intersection'. Here, 'articulation' itself has to be understood differently from the meaning of 'discourse. According to Laclau, articulation is formed by practices, establishing the relationship between differences and similarities among the elements. Meanwhile, the notion of discourse does not practice itself, but it is the result of practice, which for a discourse observer is characterized as a regular pattern of difference (Irawanto, 2018, p. 86).

Negotiation and the Contest of Meaning

If some essentialist views assume that the meaning of language can be fixed and stable, and the constructivist view considers the meaning of language only as a product of subject construction, Laclau and Mouffe more radically argue that language discourse itself is always in a situation of continuous negotiation and contest. The contest and negotiation occur not because of aspects outside of discourse but constitutively exist in a discursive process (intra-discursive). This view is in line with the principle of "*the doctrine of negation of internal relations*" which is really at the heart of the main "*post-structuralist*" view. This view was originally developed by thinkers such as Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan in building a basic theory of the principle of "*distinction*" which produces what is understood as the meaning of the text. The view of the "*Doctrine of Negative Internal Relations*" (internal negativity) itself states that "*the existence of the meaning of something is always constitutively determined by the existence of other meanings outside of itself*". The existence of meaning has been always relational. Because it is relational, the meaning of text or discourse will always be prone to change, because the basic elements of meaning formation will not be able to form a final and permanent moment of meaning. In other words, the meaning of language is always in a state of constant negotiation. The fixation of meaning (hegemony) will only happen temporally.

The principle of "*Internal Negativity*" was later elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe as a constitutive "*lack*" principle. It is this aspect of deficiency that causes efforts to achieve a total and fixed

representation of meaning will never be possible. This impossibility of totality of meaning then results in what Laclau calls the 'empty signifier'. An empty signifier is a concept for describing a signifier without a signified. The term subject, society, or (social) society can ultimately be understood as an 'empty signifier' that has no reference to a coherent and full totality in itself. Every effort to establish meaning will always be delayed and postponed continuously. It will never settle down precisely because of its internal constitutive lack. So all formulations of identity, conceptions, social realities, and all discourse structures will ultimately always change because of their relational aspects to other signifiers. With these characteristics, the 'empty signifier' can also be called a signifier indicating a lack (Laclau, 2007, p. 42).

What is understood as "negotiation" is not the same as the notion of an exchange of communication as is generally understood by people, for example, in the case of "trade negotiations" or "political negotiations". In general, people understand negotiation as a practice of exchanging ideas among several parties in an attempt to find common ground and certain pragmatic goals. 'Negotiation' and 'constellation' occur not because of the autonomous rational will of the subject which is supposed to produce discourse, but as the constitutive inevitability of the 'contingent' character of each articulation. Contingencies will open gaps and blank spaces that all parties will scramble to fill. So every articulation is also a part of the effort to fill in the emptiness of meaning to achieve what is known as "meaning stabilization". Because the stabilization of meaning is only temporary, negotiations and the contest which seizes the hegemony of meaning will also continue. The process of complimenting each other, knitting each other, and at the same time excluding each other is what is interpreted as negotiation.

Discourse and Practice of Articulation

In Laclau and Mouffe's thought, discourse is described in detail as "structured totality resulting from the practice of articulation" (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 105). Initially, they defined articulation as the process of building relationships between various groups so that their identities change. This understanding, in its context, is related to the social identification process related to the construction of the meaning of political hegemony and the effort to read alternative social movements against it. In the context of discourse, articulation is related to the relational practice of signifying various elements in various existing moments. What is produced from this practice of articulation is what is called 'discourse'; or 'discursive formation. Laclau and Mouffe argue that there will never be a permanent unity or totality of meaning. Each of the elements articulated in the moments of the discourse will not produce a total coherence of meaning. If we associate this meaning with identity or subjectivity, then both of them will not be in the fixation of meaning. Subject or social identities will always be prone to change continuously. Subjectivity in the modern Cartesian view of autonomy has been challenged by this relational principle of meaning.

For Laclau and Mouffe, domination or hegemony of meaning can occur when the articulation process succeeds in realizing the fixation (partial determination of meaning) which Laclau calls a "Nodal Point" or often interpreted as a "fixed point of meaning". This process of meaning fixation occurs through what Laclau and Mouffe call the "Point of Equivalence" and "Point of Difference". Every effort to constitute meaning will always go through this process of differentiation and equivalence relations. These two processes will produce meaning in their constitutive relationship with other existences. Even an antagonistic relationship will produce meaning on both sides. This means that the existence of another in an antagonistic position will strengthen the position of the meaning of their identity. In Laclau's view, it is called a "constitutive outside". We can take examples such as the discourse of "anti-terrorism". The existence of the discourse of 'anti-terrorism' will be meaningful insofar as it is always constituted by the existence of the meaning of terrorism. The meaning of terrorism strengthens the meaning of "anti-terrorism".

Laclau's notion of a 'point of equivalence' is one of the important concepts which deserves to be understood as part of building a meeting point among different social elements and discourses (Smith, 2003, p. 89). Equivalence is not a total identity among related elements, but rather a division of identity, on the one hand maintaining its identity and on the other hand establishing participation in a wider identity. Finding the same point of demand among various particularities of various demands, such as what happened in the 'anti-New-Order' demands at that time, is a political phenomenon that can illustrate this notion of 'equivalence'. The 'anti-New Order' discourse was

originally a 'particular' discourse, but it continues to be articulated into a 'universal' discourse binding the particularities of other discourses. This process is not mechanical but rather dialectical with various forms of contest and negotiation among the elements, identities, or particularities of various demands. Laclau & Mouffe give important emphasis to this interesting concept.

A relation of equivalence is not a relation of identity among objects. Equivalence is never tautological, as the substitutability it establishes among certain objects is only valid for a determinate position within a given structural context. In this sense, equivalence displaces the identity which makes it possible, from the object themselves to the context of their appearance or presence. This, however, means that in the relation of equivalence the identity of the object is split: on the one hand, it maintains its own 'literal' sense; on the other, it symbolizes the contextual position for which it is a substitutable element (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 63).

In Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis, what becomes the object (the source of the data in the study) is not solely in the form of speech or language text, but in the form of a whole interrelated social practice which is even material (non-linguistic). External conditions and the overall social practice outside linguistics which are often categorized as 'context', in Laclau's thought, are categorized as an integral part of 'discourse'. This position is what distinguishes it from a discourse perspective, such as developed by Michel Foucault or Norman Fairclough, who still think that there is material outside of language. For Laclau and Mouffe, all reality can be understood as a text, whether it is an element, a moment, or a discourse as far as these elements are articulated. This view does not mean that there is no material outside the text, but it means that there is no reality that can be understood or interpreted as long as it is not through the mechanism of articulation.

Laclau and Mouffe's perspectives are very helpful for understanding more broadly that 'discourse' never articulates in immune, neutral, and autonomous situations. The presence of diverse discourses constitutively becomes an internal part in forming a meaning. In other words, changes in articulation among existing discourses will determine the process of changing existing meanings. The formation of meaning is not obtained as a result of the formulations of ideas made by subjects, individuals, or social agents who are considered rational actors who can create meaning. The process of meaning occurs because of the 'difference' aspect which is always present in every practice of discourse articulation. The meaning of a text will be constructed from the elements of differentiation which in a constitutive manner is necessary to the existence of the text itself.

Discourse is always presented in specific formulations and formations (Barker, 2004, pp. 54-55) and always intersects with the plurality of other discourse contexts which construct it. Social reality is a product of discourse that is never understood as a material object of ideas or as a single, total and valid entity (Boucher, 2007, pp. 11-12). Every existence of discourse reality, identity, or subjectivity must be positioned as part of the formation produced by the product of discourse and not positioned as an essential supra-historical entity, objective truth, or as a metaphysical matter (Saukko, 2003, p. 121). So, in Laclau's view, what is called an autonomous subject does not exist. It is the result of the formation of discourse. Thus, what can be understood as not a subject that can exist outside the practice of the relations of signification (meaning), but a subject which results from the product of signification which Laclau calls as a 'subject position'.

Discourse has always been a 'negotiated' and 'articulated' realm. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) define 'articulation' as any practice seeking to establish the relationship among the 'elements' in such a way that the identity of the elements is modified and that is as a result of the practice of articulation (p. 105). Negotiation is not only understood as a method but is inherent in the basic principles of discourse itself. This view is in line with the principle of 'post-structuralist' thinking about the discourse. Discourse constructs meaning in the social world and because language is fundamentally unstable, meaning basically will never be stable or permanent (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 106). This instability of meaning is an understanding that had been contributed a lot by Jacques Derrida's thought through his deconstruction reasoning, namely through the concept of 'différance' which means 'differing' as well as 'deferring' the meaning which is embedded in every discourse.

Borrowing the views of Laclau & Mouffe, there is no fixed discourse unity in any discursive formation. There will never be total coherence in any discursive formation. The different elements which become a constitutive requirement for the formation of meaning will thus make the meaning

of each identity relative. Every identity is always tied to another identity. The formation of the meaning of the text occurs because of the mechanism of differentiation from other signs/texts. The existence of a "differance" always postpones the presence of "the objective". According to Derrida's (1976) view, "there is nothing outside the text" (p. 158). There is nothing outside the 'differing-deferring' mechanism. Due to dependence on other meanings, the meaning of the text will always be possible to change and there is no "stability" or "fixation" of meaning. Chris Barker and Dariusz Galasinski provided helpful notes

Cultural studies have taken from Derrida the key notions of intertextuality, undecidability, deconstruction, difference, trace, and supplement all of which stress instability of meaning, its deferral through the interplay of texts, writing, and traces. Here, words have no universal meanings and do not refer to objects that possess essential qualities (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 9).

Meaning also cannot be held and claimed to be the object of ownership like as material object entities. If meaning is often represented as part of one's identity, it does not mean that the meaning can essentially be inherent in a person. The meaning of a text or discourse comes from the presence of its 'internal negation' relation and does not refer to preferences that are considered fixed and objective. The principle of 'internal negation' was developed based on Hegel's philosophical thinking which is later more often referred to as the 'Doctrine of Internal Relations' which states that the essence/identity of one thing is constituted by its relation to other things and this is universally valid (Suryajaya, 2003, p. 3). The Post-Structuralist view rejects the assumption of 'representation' and the belief that there are objective references to meaning. Because the mechanisms of "differing" and "deferring" are constantly in motion, the meaning of words is always fluid and cannot be understood as "fixed" and "stable". Because it is very fluid, meaning is always in a vulnerable and fragile position to keep shifting and changing.

No discourse is a closed entity: it is, rather, constantly being transformed through contact with other discourse. So, a keyword of the theory is discourse struggle. Different discourses –each of them representing particular ways of talking about and understanding the social world - are engaged in a constant struggle with one other to achieve hegemony, that is, to fix the meaning of language in their ways (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 6).

In Laclau & Mouffe's (2001) view, discourse is understood as "the structural totality of differences" (p. 106). The formation of the meaning of discourse through the practice of articulation is always presented in the system of 'differentiation' relations to its smallest unit, namely signifier' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 112). In Laclau & Mouffe's view, there are two types of signifiers. *First*, is an 'element', namely a signifier which is polysemic in nature, and potentially has plural meaning. *Second*, it is 'moment', which is a signifier whose meaning is partially or temporally fixed due to its different relation to other signifiers.

Discourse in Laclau's view is then understood as the determination of meaning in a particular domain (Jørgensen & Phillips. 2002, p. 26). This particular domain is partial and never fixed. The impossibility of carrying out a final fixation of meaning implies that what exists must be a partial fixation (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 112). A discourse is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around a 'nodal point'. The concept of "Nodal Point" is understood as a fixed point of meaning. The concept of 'nodal point' refers to an understanding influenced by Lacan's conception of 'le Point de Capiton' which are signifiers used to determine the meaning of a chain of signifying (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001, p. 112). Nodal Point itself is a major signifier that has "special privileges" around which the surrounding area can be used to arrange other signs. Nodal Point is a place to unite various discourses as well as social fields with a series of equivalents.

Every discourse is a totality in which each sign is defined as a "moment" through its relation to other signs (as in the fishing net illustration). This particular domain is partial and never fixed. The impossibility of carrying out a final fixation of meaning implies that what exists must be a partial fixation (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). This means that the formation of meaning is always 'relational', that is, it relates to the meanings of other signs. This is done by 'negating' all other possible meanings which the signs could have; that is, all possible ways of linking one sign to another (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 26). Discourse analysis in Laclau's perspective requires serious

observation of the existence of other meanings around the sign to be observed. The most basic function of Laclau's discourse analysis is to find 'nodal points' which give meaning to other signs and observe the process in which meaning allocation occurs (Irawanto, 2018, p. 87).

The Framework of Discourse Analysis Stages

To explain how Laclau and Mouffe's discourse analysis can be operationalized, it is necessary to describe the important stages in their discourse analysis. The author tries to elaborate and develop this stage, according to the author's understanding. As in the previous explanations, Laclau and Mouffe did not specifically describe the stages of discourse analysis in their theory. The description of the stages of discourse analysis I developed independently from several key concepts such as 'elements', 'moments', 'discourse', 'articulation', and several other important elements. This stage is not linear and standard but is open to being re-created according to the dimensional locus of the object to be studied. To explain it more concretely, the author provides one example, namely the discourse analysis of "*Negotiation and Contest of the 1965 Reconciliation Discourse in the Post-New Order Era*" (Narwaya, 2019).

The first stage, the analysis can be started by tracing and collecting various forms of articulation about the 1965 reconciliation discourse, which emerged in various dynamics of public conversations. It was contained in various texts such as government documents, formulation minutes in parliament, mass media coverage, views of social institutions, and other documents. The scope of the period needs to be defined so that the scope is not too broad. The beginning of the formation of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (KKR) and its subsequent developments was chosen to be the limit of momentum. There are two alternative ways to place the 1965 reconciliation discourse in the discourse formation scheme. First, placing the discourse of 1965 reconciliation as part of 'moments' which are related to other discourses outside of it, such as discourse on democracy, human rights, Indonesian-ness discourse, or other developing discourses. Second, placing the 1965 reconciliation discourse as an "*empty signifier*", so that many signifiers or discourses negotiate with each other to fill the empty signifier. Reconciliation can also be positioned as a 'nodal point' whereas a signifier binds and knits various moments which try to scramble into hegemonic discourse. Reconciliation becomes the main signifier of controversy.

The method of placing in the first option presupposes that the discourse of reconciliation can be understood as a 'marginal discourse' or exists as part of the 'moments' of discourse generated by various scattered 'elements'. For the second option, the 1965 reconciliation becomes an 'empty signifier' whose space of articulation is determined by the extent to which the elements of other contested discourses complement each other and take over their hegemonic position (Bowman, 2007). In the research context, the two methods can be elaborated simultaneously at the beginning of the analysis stage. Through this preliminary analysis, it is possible to read the entire stretch of the web and the articulation of discourse negotiating and contesting each other. The points of similarity and difference of these knits of articulation can then be grouped and analyzed. This is to make it easier to find the emerging trends and hegemonic discourses.

This initial stage helps researchers in reading how articulation practices are constructed and shaped. Of course, this elaboration will also be able to discover how each element, moment, or discourse is generated, intertwine, negotiate, and compete. Accuracy in laying out the dynamics of the discourse of 1965 reconciliation can help the effort to explain how the main signifiers or nodal points are binding and give distinctive characteristics to the discourse of reconciliation which has been built. This stage of analysis is also to see which other signifiers are excluded and lose the potential to reach the fullness of its meaning.

The second stage is finding and tracing the 'subject position'. The subject position will be determined by the discursive role. The identity and the subject position are in the discourse. After finding the range of various 'elements', 'moments' as well as the existing 'discursive' articulations, the subject position will be found. By reading various contests of discourse articulation, we can conceptualize the actors (subjects) who participate in the struggle to find definitions and the formation of reconciliation narratives. The concept of the relationship between discourse and the formation of 'subject positions' is similar to Louis Althusser's view of the concept of 'interpellation'. To add to the note on Althusser's thought which is still deterministic in understanding the formation of the subject, Laclau views the 'subject' as the 'position of the subject' in the structure of discourse.

The subject cannot be assumed as a sovereign autonomous entity but is always determined by the discourse. As something that is determined by the discourse, the subject can then be assumed as a structure that is never complete and is always in the process of achieving its integrity. The standardization of the identity of the subject basically will always be delayed and will continue to be suspended. Since the subject is always formed through its relationship with the 'plural' and 'divided' signifiers, every subject or subject's identity is always 'social' and divided at once. Hence, any idea that calls itself a complete and autonomous 'subject' is something that is 'illusory', 'fictional', or 'mythical'.

The third stage is to explore and find the antagonisms that exist in every discourse articulation. Every formation of the meaning of identity, subject, or other meanings has been always in contest and competition. In the contest, not everything is antagonistic. Antagonistic nature is also not a permanent and stable condition, but it is a temporal articulation, which also changes according to the existing conditions and contexts of discourse formation. This task of analysis is important to read where discourses coexist peacefully and where they are in a state of antagonism. This analysis process can be assisted by finding the "*logic of equivalence*" and "*logic of difference*" in each major discourse articulation. The logic of equality and the logic of difference can help to parse the extent to which discourse moments are absorbed in other discourses and seem to "*affirm*" agreement, and the extent to which discourse moments clash and mutually negate the integrity of meaning.

This process of equivalence and difference is of course never permanent and always changing according to the dynamics of existing discourse formation. In this movement of discourse formation, various important analyzes of the 'floating signifier' and also the 'hegemony' practice of discourse will be found. Reading of hegemony cannot be separated from the need to see the moments of the logic of difference and the logic of equivalence in every discourse articulation process. On another principle, finding an equivalence point or a shared discourse will only be meaningful if it is faced with something else. What takes place in this system of face-to-face differentiation is often referred to as 'antagonism'. So, finding another thing (discourse) that constitutes a point of intersection becomes very important. Chantal Mouffe often calls it a 'constitutive outside' (Mouffe, 2000, pp. 12-13).

The fourth stage is a critical step of deepening focusing more on the dynamics of interaction and the distinctive discursive relations between the '1965 reconciliation discourse' and 'other signifiers' such as 'the discourse on democracy, human rights, and Indonesian-ness'. Then it is continued by looking for various preferences, which become references for the meaning of reconciliation. This analysis will elaborate the various dynamics of the web of interaction and interpretation preferences so that they can get important findings regarding the various faces and forms of negotiations, the contests, antagonisms, and hegemony of existing discourses and which result in creating 'spaces of opportunity' or even creating 'threats' for the ideals of reconciliation itself. It is by examining the web of meaning through various contests of preferences that we can find an overview of what is being imagined in the discourse on reconciliation. This stage model is very likely to be developed in the study of various topics including studies in the broader field of communication disciplines.

CONCLUSION

From the description of discourse analysis developed by Laclau and Mouffe, at least important points can be referred to:

First, Laclau and Mouffe offer a critical perspective in understanding discourse and at the same time seeing its relationship with a wider social dimension. The meaning of discourse can only be understood by placing it on a diverse and mutually contrasting stretch of other discourse. A discourse, of course, cannot be immune from its various relationships to other elements of a discourse.

Second, Laclau and Mouffe offer a more radical discourse that all social realities can be placed as discourse phenomena. By not distinguishing between the "*dimension of discourse*" and the "*dimension of non-discourse*", these two thinkers have offered a further analysis that discourse itself is very broad in scope and can cover any aspect and including not only things that are manifested in verbal language texts.

Third, Laclau and Mouffe's perspectives also offer an idea that understanding discourse more radically will help not only to map the forms of discourse but can become a strategy in broader and varied discourse struggles.

Fourth, although Laclau and Mouffe do not provide standard analytical guidelines and frameworks for discourse analysis, which are more operational, at least the basic principles and key concepts are very rich to develop a flexible analysis in the various locus of discourse studies covering various disciplines and on broader thematic issues.

The strengths of the Laclau & Mouffe Discourse Analysis approach are at least three things. First, the positions of anti-essentialism and anti-foundationalism which make the study of discourse can reach a wider variety of relations. Second, the characteristics of his views do not separate the difference between the 'discourse' dimension and the 'non-discourse' dimension. With this viewpoint, this approach will be able to be used to study various practices that are not limited to the issue of discourse text alone but also dimensions that have been considered as 'non-discourse'. Third, there is a more radical view of the concept of 'hegemony'. Every practice of discourse or social practice as a whole is a practice of continuous negotiation and contestation in fighting over its hegemonic positions. This view is much sharper compared to the view of critical discourse analysis that existed before.

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