1. Introduction

Media can refer to the press, radio, and TV Broadcasting, and recently the Internet. They have become part of our popular culture. Those media have been used extensively in our daily life; thus affecting the society in

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general. The focus of the discussion will be about one type of media, that is TV Broadcasting, more specifically talk show. The purpose of this paper is to see how media affect our knowledge and representation of people, places, and events. The paper will be divided into several parts: the first part (this part) serves as the Introduction to give a clear background of the discussion, the next part, The Function of the Media, talks about the use of the media in our daily life, the third part discusses the relation between the media, the language used in the media, and the power held by the media, The Oprah Winfrey Show is the part dedicated to talk about the issues brought up by the talk show that inform as well as entertain the audience, that part is followed by the discussion of the issues taken by Indonesian famous talk show Kick Andy; the next part will discuss media's power in relation to society's development under the subtitle Media and It’s Power to Develop Society. This paper is closed with a Conclusion.

Through media we can access wide range of information as well as entertainment. This makes media has a power over the society. They can decide what event is important and what is not important in a particular time. The representation of the media cannot be separated from the extensive use of language. Thus, the language used in the media plays a significant role in describing certain people, places and events. Society tends to refer to the similar way (certain words) when discussing that specific people, place, and event.

The discussion of language in talk show will be limited to the discussion of the language used in discussing the issues in two famous talk shows. The two talk shows taken are Oprah Winfrey Show as the representation of the western talk show that is also broadcasted in Indonesia and Kick Andy, one of famous talk shows in Indonesia which brings up issues in Indonesia that are worth-knowing. The two talk shows are chosen because they have become popular media in the society. Sometimes, both talk shows bring the hidden topics up to the surface level, so that people or society are informed about the existence of those topics.

2. The Function of the Media

As stated earlier in the Introduction, media can serve as a place to get information, as well as entertainment, and also education which cannot
be separated from getting information. But sometimes, due to the society’s preferences, these boundaries are blurred between information and entertainment. Thus this creates a new term called “infotainment”.

Because through media we can get much information, it makes the media become a potential powerful force in our society. They can decide what is news, who gets on television or in this case talk show, and the most important is how the stories get told. Does the talk show reveal the real story based on the interview with the concerned people? Or is the interview framed within what should be said and what should not? We should not forget that the media do not stand alone; there are many people or institutions behind the production. This makes the media (i.e. talk show) become less objective, and sometime they take a side.

Media have become an integral part of most people’s lives. Most people watch TV, either for news or entertainment. The language used in TV Broadcasting (i.e. talk show) reflects our daily life. And the way we talk about the topics presented in the talk show is affected by the language used in the talk show itself. Scannell in Thomas and Wareing (2000) says that TV has become a part of our life. The sentence: “There’s nothing on TV.” means that there is no program on TV that is considered interesting to watch, although there are many programs offered. This shows that TV programs have become part of daily activities of the society, thus have become the culture of the society.

As a tool that carries information as well as entertainment, media can be a powerful site to develop society. We can see it from our everyday life how persuasive a media is. Knowing this fact, those who have power over media should use it wisely. They should think about the society where they live. It can be a way for them to contribute in developing nation through informal education.

3. Media, Language, and Power

Knowing the important function of media, we should be aware of their power. The power of the media can be the power to influence knowledge, beliefs, values, social relations, social identities, and the power to represent things in particular ways (‘a signifying power’) which is largely a matter of how language is used (Fairclough, 1995). But, we should also see that it is not always the media which hold the power. The society,
too, has power over the media. The people are not merely puppets of media control; they also decide what to read, to watch, and to hear.

We will see the power of the media over the society, first. As stated earlier in the Introduction that media play a significant role in describing certain people, places, and events. The most important and interesting aspects of the potential power of the media from the linguistic point of view is the way that people, places, and events get reported. Thomas and Wareing (2000) state that since early 1970's, linguists have been interested in the relationship between how a story get told and what that might indicate about the point of view that it gets told from.

According to the theory of Saussure about the sign system, each sign has two parts, a signifier (which we call "label") and a signified (which we call "concept"). If we apply this theory on analyzing how media affect the representation of people, places, and events, we will find that the agreement between signifier and signified can be shifted or changed as the media shift or change it. For example, in several shows (such as Bob Greene's Best Life Diet broadcasted on January 15th, 2007 and Dr. Oz Diet broadcasted on November 2nd, 2006), Oprah Winfrey Show brought up the topic of going on a diet. The term 'diet' has become a popular word in society all over the world. People go on a diet because they want to have a perfect body shape by reducing eating food. In Oprah Winfrey Show, this understanding is being shifted, going on a diet is not merely to get a perfect body shape but it is more on how we balance our food consumption to have a healthy life style. Thus, it will create a healthy person who is far from illness that can cause death. Because the goal is different, the way to achieve the goal is also different. Through this show, people are opened to a new concept of diet, which is considered a better concept that should be informed to the society worldwide.

The similar shift or change was also done by Kick Andy. One episode entitled “Big is Beautiful” broadcasted on January 8th, 2010 tried to shift or change the perception of ‘big’ in term of body shape. This show gave some evidences that being big in body size do not mean that one cannot be beautiful. The term ‘big is beautiful’ has been used widely, but the society still cannot accept the concept. Therefore this show tried to reinforce this term to the society, especially Indonesian people.

The example taken from Oprah Winfrey Show stated in the paragraph before the previous paragraph is also in line with Sapir – Whorf
hypothesis. Sapir – Whorf hypothesis focuses on analyzing the linguistic and philosophical differences between cultures, and the impact language has on our perception of reality. One of the parts of the hypothesis is about theory of linguistic relativity. It states that there is no absolute or ‘natural’ way to label the world; that different cultures might interpret the world in different ways. The way the Oprah Winfrey Show shifted or changed the perception of diet will create the society’s perception. Because the show is broadcasted not only in America but also in other countries (such as Indonesia), the shift or change will also influences the other culture, thus creating what we call “popular culture”.

We will move to discuss the power of the society over the media. People have the control over the media in this way: the remote control is on the people’s hand, if they do not like a certain talk show or maybe the issue is not what people want to watch, they will be easily switch the channel to other TV broadcaster which probably has another talk show running at the same time. This will create tough competition among the TV broadcasters to fit the society’s needs and preferences in order to survive the business. Talk shows usually make a kind of survey of the issues that the society wants to discuss. These two talk shows chosen, “Oprah Winfrey Show” and “Kick Andy”, are good in maintaining the ‘wanted issues’ to talk. They discuss the topics which are not ‘too heavy’ it means the topics are there within the society’s daily life. Here we can see how the society has the power over the media.

There are several opinions concerning the relationship between media, language, and power on this kind of TV broadcasting, which involves audience participation (i.e. talk show). According to Livingstone and Lunt (1994), this kind of program opens up access to an important public domain for people whose voices are not usually heard, for example Kick Andy tried to give room for the victims of Lapindo mud to speak their mind in the episode of “Bernapas dalam Lumpur” broadcasted on September 18th, 2008 and it also once discussed the real condition and the feeling of transgender and homosexual on “Terjebak dalam Raga yang Salah” broadcasted on June 9th, 2008.

Another opinion, which is in contradiction to the previous opinion, is stated by Fairclough (1995). He argues that the program (i.e. talk show) has been structured in such a way making the interview runs within the framework set by the producer (the people behind the scene). This makes
the program become less objective and does not represent the reality; thus the unheard voice remains silent. For example, when the interview done with a list of questions in the interviewer’s hand, and the questions are structured to make the interviewee answers not in detail, thus the story is created by the interviewer’s interpretation.

4. The Oprah Winfrey Show

Oprah Winfrey Show is a famous talk show in America. Hosted by Oprah Winfrey, this talk show is also broadcasted outside America, Indonesia is one of them. According to www.oprah.com, this talk show has been broadcasted since 1986 in America and now has also been broadcasted in more than 100 countries worldwide. The issues discussed are various, from the ‘light’ topic on the interview with several celebrities to ‘heavy’ topic on law and economics.

Oprah, the host, is an African-American woman who is talented, intelligent, and humble. She is now the richest Black woman throughout the world. But her past life was not as wonderful as her present life. She did not live in a prosperous family. Her parents separated since her childhood. She had a traumatic childhood and teenage. She once experienced child abused by one of her relatives. She even had a baby, a baby boy who died a week after in hospital, when she was 14 years old. This bitter past has become a reason why in most of her shows, she brings up topics of child abuse, rape, and any other social concerns.

As stated earlier that the issues raised by the Oprah Winfrey Show are mostly social concerns, Oprah also discusses her personal health which can be an inspiration to those who want to lose weight and start to live a healthy life. She also brings up other topics like economics, how to manage income; beauty, mostly on fashion and style; and also entertainment, where she invites celebrities to tell reveal their true life. The topics on revealing the other side of a story are quite many in the show. She wants people not to judge a story from one side, thus more people are open minded and not subjective.

The episodes that are broadcasted in Metro TV, one of Indonesian private TV broadcasters, do not follow the original show broadcasted in America; it is approximately one year late. But the topics are not out of date, there are still relevant maybe because of their universality.
episode that will be discussed was broadcasted on Metro TV on May 15th, 2010 from 11.05 to 12.05. The title of the episode was “Released from Prison: A Mother of Three Goes Home”, the real broadcast was April 20th, 2009. Inside this episode, there was an interview about ‘child predator’; this was about child pornography through Internet. The attorney of Florida asked Oprah Show to broadcast their attempt to arrest person(s) who was suspected to be the ‘predator’. This interview is going to be analyzed to see how the language used can influence the society.

First, we will see the choice of words used in the interview. The word ‘predator’ was being used over and over again as if to emphasize on the meaning. The dictionary meaning of ‘predator’ is taken from and adjective ‘predatory’ which means (of animals) killing other animals for food (Oxford dictionary) and ‘predator’ is the noun. Knowing the meaning if the word is combined with the word ‘child’ it means that ‘killing’ or using child for ‘food’ (consumption). Killing here does not always mean to take someone’s life, but also to take someone’s bright future. Thus, the word ‘child predator’ here means person who makes use of children and takes their bright future for that person’s consumption; in this case pornography. Oprah also used the words ‘disgusting’ and ‘violence’ with emphasize. This shows her opinion toward ‘child pornography’.

The tenses used were present tense. The purpose to show that the event happened in present time. That the event was going on in the neighborhood at present time, thus increasing the society’s awareness on the issue. The show also presented a map of Florida which had been marked to show how many internet users who download the images or movies on child pornography. The purpose of doing so is that to make the society start to take care of the surrounding, that their children might be in danger.

The second thing to analyze is the aim of the show. Oprah said that the purpose bringing up the topic was to make people informed of what was happening in the society, and especially to redefine people’s understanding on pornography. She said that the idea of pornography in most people’s mind were incomplete. Through the show, the meaning of ‘pornography’ refers back to the term ‘pornography’ taken from Antipornography Civil right Ordinance (also known as Dworkin-MacKinnon Antipornography Civil Rights Ordinance or Dworkin-MacKinnon Ordinance). The extract of the ordinance is quoted below:
Dworkin and MacKinnon gave the following legal definition:

1. "Pornography" means the graphic sexually explicit subordination of women through pictures and/or words that also includes one or more of the following:
   a. women are presented dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities; or
   b. women are presented as sexual objects who enjoy humiliation or pain; or
   c. women are presented as sexual objects experiencing sexual pleasure in rape, incest, or other sexual assault; or
   d. women are presented as sexual objects tied up or cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt; or
   e. women are presented in postures or positions of sexual submission, servility, or display; or
   f. women's body parts—including but not limited to vaginas, breasts, or buttocks—are exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts; or
   g. women are presented being penetrated by objects or animals; or
   h. women are presented in scenarios of degradation, humiliation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised or hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual.

2. The use of men, children, or transsexuals in the place of women in (a)–(h) of this definition is also pornography for purposes of this law.

3. "Person" shall include child or transsexual.

Oprah Winfrey Show is used to inform the society about the issue of pornography especially child pornography and to educate them about the consequences. The show did not only use recording and motion without language, but the use of simple everyday language helps the audience understand the context.

Oprah’s style is casual and relax and she always tries to use the standard English. During the interview, she never uses any chart of questions to guide her. The interview flows naturally because she tries to
equip herself with knowledge on the issue prior the interview. Certain words were stated and repeated with stressing, and with the help of facial expression, the words show Oprah’s feeling and concern on the issue; this might influence the way the society feels and reacts on the same issue.

5. Kick Andy

Kick Andy has become the most popular talk show in Indonesia. Although as old as Oprah Winfrey Show, Kick Andy has won a place in Indonesian audience. Kick Andy is a product of 21st century TV broadcasting; it is broadcasted on MetroTV the same TV broadcaster which broadcast the Oprah Winfrey Show in Indonesia. The issues raised by the show are from politics of the nation to politics of a family, from Hercules to ordinary people whom Andy revealed as extraordinary. This show is very influential to the Indonesian people, it has been proved by one of the show broadcasted on August 8th, 2008 “Kick Andy New Spirit”. This show presented people who had been touched by the show, people who wanted to end their life but cancel it after getting new spirit because of watching Kick Andy.

Andy F. Noya, the host of the show, is a journalist who has excellent track record and high achievement. He has lots of experience as a journalist. He loves to write short stories and articles for newspaper since he was studying. He is also able to draw cartoon and caricature (that is why he sometimes gave his guests the caricature of the guest being interviewed). Although he is a journalist, he is also a student of mechanic; he took vocational school majoring on mechanic since he was on high school. And maybe that is the reason why his way of speaking is rather ‘stiff’.

The purpose of Kick Andy is not only to inform the audience about a certain issue but also to inspire the society after knowing stories of ordinary people with extraordinary actions. The example of the issues are: “Semua Demi Anakku” (broadcasted on June 4th, 2010) revealing stories about single mothers whose husband have passed away leaving several small children for the mothers to take care, how they survive raising their children with re-married; “Cinta Tanpa Batas” (broadcasted on April 23rd, 2010) and “Kesempurnaan Cinta” (broadcasted on April 30th, 2010) both are the stories of how women and men who chose to marry “imperfect”
person (person with disability) ignoring the resistance from the family around them and they remain happy with their lives.

On other occasion, Kick Andy also educates the society about issues that have been around in everyday life, but we do not realize or do not have any idea about them. The episode of “Kami Terlahir Berbeda” broadcasted on May 28th, 2010 took the love story between Alter and Jane to introduce the term *Klinefelter* syndrome which is suffered by Alter. *Klinefelter* is a chromosome disorder which makes a baby boy is considered a baby girl by mistake because of the imperfect genital growth. This episode opened up people’s mind about the variant of this syndrome, and that the people who suffer from this syndrome are many in Indonesia and they want to be considered normal and to be accepted the way they are, because it was not their choice or mistake.

Although the way Andy presenting the show is a little bit ‘stiff’, the use of simple words and ability to dig out more information from the guests makes this show won its place in the people’s heart. The show does not only inform, but also educate, as well as inspire the society through the people who watch the show. The show has educated the people that money is not the ultimate goal of someone’s life, because the show has proven that several rich people who can live a comfortable life are willing to share their belonging to help those who need just because they hear ‘the call’ and they feel that money cannot fell their empty heart.

6. Media and its Power to Develop Society

The discussion on the two talk shows help us to understand that there are some qualified talk shows which educate society through giving information on several important issues such as gender and other social issues. This can be a good capital for government in developing our nation, since this kind of media gives a hand extension to reach a multicultural society in a widely spread area at the same time with the same message.

This would also benefit the society, since they can enjoy the information as well as being educated about a certain issue with no cost. Learning is a lifetime activity, therefore media can serve as a teacher for society to facilitate them with true and usefull information. Social issues are not there in formal education curriculum, but the awareness on them
is badly needed. As a member of a certain society, one should open her eyes and ears to issues in her neighborhood. It is needed to help her in participating in activity of social development.

A media can open the new perspective on the idea of gender equity, for example. Not all members of a society really understand what the real meaning of gender equity is. For most people the idea of gender equity is said to be the belief of highly educated women, to change this false assumption the talk show can bring up this topic and present several women who are the heroes of their family by becoming the bread winner. They might not understand that what they do is an example of reaching gender equity. Their strong characters can inspire other members of the society to understand that having gender equity is not wrong at all. And it is there in daily life, it is not an abstract idea that cannot be achieved.

This is where media can use its power to develop social’s awareness. To help the audience open their perspective about an issue is one of the goals of having talk shows. The broadcaster should also understand that it is not only a matter of getting more money from the talk shows, but also to give contribution to the development of our nation, to lift the society from poverty as well as ignorance.

7. Conclusion

The relationship between language and media is unquestionable closed. With the use of language, media holds power to change the society, to create a new culture, the culture that is ‘universal’ or popular. The language used in the media, especially TV broadcasting, helps the media to convey the message successfully. TV broadcasting like talk show has become an integral part of the society’s daily life. Talk show can be used as media to inform the society about a certain issue, at the same time to educate them about the consequence that might be carried by the issue, and finally to move the society to react over the issue.

Knowing the power to change, the media should remain objective. They should give the society the two sides of every story, and let the society exercise their mind to think about the issue. The society should also be aware of the power because if the power that the media have is misused, the society can be easily driven by the media, and it might be to
a bad thing. Therefore, the society should be clever enough to consider and to choose which media give good benefit.

By giving them a chance to broaden their perspective, broadcaster through its talk shows helps educating and developing nation. Then now, it is also the responsibility of our government to set rules for broadcasters in showing their talk shows. There should be guidelines to broadcast qualified talk shows that would benefit society. Broadcasters and the government should be a watcher one another: broadcaster can inform to the society about the real condition, while the government can also guide the broadcasters to present good and qualified news, and all is done for the sake of the development of social awareness.

References


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