

CHAPTER I

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1.1 Background of the Study

People need information. One way to get information is by reading newspapers, conveyors of today's thought (Thomas and Robinson, 1982:121). Newspaper reading has become a part of human life and indispensable for many people because a newspaper contains the latest information about everything that happens around them. It has become a medium of conveying one's opinions to the readers no matter what their professions are. The information and opinions are presented in various columns such as news articles, editorials, reviews, feature stories, cartoons, and advertisements that can not be found in the other mass media.

Among all these columns, an editorial is considered the center of a newspaper. Waldrop (1948:53) says that the general functions of an editorial are to inform and to assist in the continuing process of adult education, to create a healthy climate of thinking about public affairs, and to condition the atmosphere in which readers arrive at decisions. More particularly Spencer as quoted by Waldrop (1948:52) points out that an editorial is a presentation of fact and opinion in a concise, logical, and pleasing order for the sake of entertaining, influencing opinion, or interpreting significant news in such a way that its importance to the average reader will be clear. From the above quotation, it is seen that one of the characteristics of an editorial is logical presentation of opinions.

The type of writing that presents opinions logically is called argumentative writing. Reid (1982:103) says, "In argumentative writing, rational thought is a strong

persuader. If the essay is based on emotions or feelings, or if the rational thought is flawed (and therefore not rational) the argument loses its strength.”

Ideally speaking, an editorial represents the writer’s good reasoning. To this point, Waldrop (1942:51) states that writing an editorial involves the ordeal of thinking, of setting the facts in relation, of testing facts by logical analysis, of checking to determine whether other facts are needed, of arriving at a conclusion that has sense, of deciding on the purpose of an editorial, and of keeping in mind the reader to whom the editorial is addressed. However, an editorial writer being conscious or not may make fallacious statements in his efforts to influence the readers’ beliefs. The following is an example of the logical fallacies that was found in the editorial of Surya Daily Newspaper issued on 30th December 2004, page 25. The English version between brackets is the writer’s translation.

Pemilihan Umum 2004 masih beberapa bulan lagi. Belum masanya berkampanye. Tetapi pada kenyataannya parpol mencuri start dengan melakukan kampanye.

(The 2004 General Election is held in a few months again. The time has not come for campaign. In fact, the political parties stole the start by doing campaign).

The above example is a hasty generalization because it hastily makes the conclusion (political parties stole the start of campaign) based on too few (insufficient) and unrepresentative cases (some political parties did steal the start of campaign). Therefore, some political parties cannot be generalized to all 24 political parties.

When the editorial writer commits logical fallacies, he violates the principles of good reasoning (at least there are three components of an argument that should be fulfilled, they are warrant, ground, and claim, (Warnick and Inch, 1994:6)). In addition, this fallacious argument (statements that contain fallacies) can also be identified by

recognizing the theory of Logical Fallacies. Warnick and Inch (1994:147) states that there are four types of logical fallacies namely, Faulty Reasoning, Fallacies of Grounding, Misdirection, and Language Use Fallacies having one or more subtypes each.

The writer takes Surya Daily Newspaper as the source of her study because Surya Daily Newspaper is known as the second biggest newspaper in Surabaya. Besides, there is no study about logical fallacies encountered in newspaper editorials yet. If fallacies appear in an editorial, it will influence the unwary readers to make false conclusions, as the main function of an editorial is to mold the public opinion (Waldrop, 1948:53).

Based on these background considerations, the writer has chosen the topic of the study under report to describe the logical fallacies encountered in the editorials of Surya Daily Newspaper.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

In line with the background of the study, the research questions to be answered by this study were formulated as follows:

1. What types of logical fallacies are found in the editorials of Surya Daily Newspaper?
2. Which type of logical fallacies is mostly encountered in the editorials of Surya Daily Newspaper?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Implied by the above problem statements, this study intended:

1. To describe the types of logical fallacies encountered in the editorials of Surya Daily Newspaper.

2. To single out which logical fallacy is the most frequent type of logical fallacies made by the editorial writers of Surya Daily Newspaper.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Reading this thesis, the students of Argumentative Writing are expected to recognize various types of logical fallacies and avoid constructing illogical arguments. Besides, the findings of this study are expected to help the readers of newspaper editorials to recognize and identify logical fallacies in order to decide carefully how to act and how to give responses to certain issues put forward by the editorial writers.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Due to the limited time, energy, and facilities, the writer analyzed only the editorials of Surya Daily News issued from 1st of December 2003 until 31st of January 2004. The reason for choosing December-January editorials is that in these two months many important things happened (i.e. General Election 2004, and Avian influenza that started to catch Indonesia). The focus is on the logical aspects of argument (premise and conclusion relationship) without considering another aspects such as: psychology, sociology, and cultural aspect.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

There are two theories used in this thesis they are, the theory of argument and the theory of logical fallacies. Argumentative writing is characterized by who to write to, what and why to write, for what purpose and how to organize arguments based on logical

thinking. Any argumentative writing should obey the rules of deductive and inductive reasoning, and should be stated in non-emotive language. Any violations from these rules will result in logical fallacies. According to Warnick and Inch (1994:147) there are four major kinds of logical fallacies: Faulty Reasoning, Fallacy of Grounding, Misdirection, and Fallacy of Language Use having one or more subtypes each. These theories are used to analyze the logicity of the editorials of Surya Daily Newspaper.

1.8 Definition of Key terms

To avoid misinterpretation, the writer would like to define the key terms used in this thesis before proceeding to the next chapters. These key terms are editorial, logical fallacy, reasoning, argument, and Surya Daily Newspaper.

- a) Editorial is an expository writing used in newspapers to discuss current news events and to express editorial writers' opinion, analysis and clarification to mold the public opinion (Waldrop, 1948:52).
- b) Logical fallacy is a statement that appears to be logical but actually reflects error in the reasoning process (Ford, 1992:345). It happens because the reasons are based on emotions or feelings, and the flaw of the logical mind.
- c) Reasoning is the act of marshalling evidence, weighing it and drawing conclusions from it (Manicas and Kruger as quoted by Tukan 1991:18). It is also called the act of constructing an argument.
- d) Argument is a rational piece of discourse, written or spoken, which attempts to persuade the readers or listeners to believe something (Cooper, 2001:56)
- e) Surya Daily Newspaper is the second biggest newspaper in Surabaya.

1.9 Organization of the thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. In Chapter one, the writer presents the introduction of the study. Chapter two deals with a review on the literature related to this study. Chapter three discusses the research methodology. The findings and the interpretation of the findings are presented in Chapter four. Finally, Chapter five deals with the conclusion and suggestions of the whole thesis.