Relational Values of Grammatical Features on Docudrama Social Dilemma: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Rina Mulya
Universitas Negeri Medan
Sumatera Utara
rinamulya.kr@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the relational values of grammatical features in the docudrama film The Social Dilemma. The Social Dilemma is a docudrama that was released on Netflix in 2020 and it is the combination of documentary-style interviews with experts in the fields of technology, social media, and psychology, as well as dramatized sequences that illustrate the potential negative impacts of social media and technology on society. Relational values in critical discourse analysis (CDA) refer to how language is used to construct and negotiate social relationships between different groups and individuals. To conduct this study, the researcher used the main theory from Fairclough (2013) that focused on three grammatical features of the text: modes of sentence, modality, and pronouns. This study aims to understand how language is used to construct and maintain social relationships, to reveal the power dynamics that underlie communication in society, particularly in the docudrama film The Social Dilemma, and to describe it in the discussion. This study only analyzed the grammatical features of text expressed by some interviewees. This study used descriptive qualitative which is very common for conducting research in social sciences. This study also used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to provide a critical perspective on language use and its role in shaping social realities, power relations, and ideologies.

Keywords: relational values, grammatical features, critical discourse analysis, docudrama.

INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the documentary film 'The Social Dilemma' was released on the online platform Netflix. This film tells the story of the development of social media and its effects on society today, where social media has made almost the entire population dependent on it. Furthermore, 'The Social Dilemma' also portrays how social media generates fake news, spreads hatred, and can manipulate human behavior. Each piece of information in the film is conveyed directly by former employees of social media companies such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and other social

media platforms. Not only that, but researchers and psychologists are also involved in the film to provide data and factual evidence on the impact of social media usage.

The film features interviews with former employees of social media companies who reveal how social media has significantly transformed human perspectives and attitudes. Each statement made contains warnings, opinions, questions, and solutions regarding the use of social media. Overall, the film encourages viewers to exercise wisdom in using social media and not become addicted to these applications. However, it is inevitable that the statements conveyed in the film possess underlying meanings. This is influenced by power dynamics, belief systems, and social relationships between those involved in the film and the audience, who are members of the society.

On the other hand, films have the remarkable ability to engage viewers both intellectually and emotionally, leaving a lasting impact and influencing their perceptions and behaviors. Platinga and Smith (2009) assert that films possess the power to shape our understanding of the world and our role within it. They can evoke emotional responses, foster empathy, and encourage identification with characters and situations. A docudrama is a genre of film or television that combines elements of documentary and drama, presenting real-life events or historical subjects in a dramatic narrative style. It employs a blend of factual information and fictionalized elements. One of the primary purposes of a docudrama is to provide insight into the subject matter and shed light on a particular event or historical period. Therefore, the film "Social Dilemma" can also influence society's perspective on the use of social media in the present day. This is particularly notable due to the interviews conducted with former employees of social media companies, lending a sense of credibility and accuracy to the film's portrayal.

The film "Social Dilemma" has been analyzed by Ashfiasari and Wiyata (2021) through the lens of semiotics, using Pierce's theory. Their study aimed to identify the signs portrayed in the film that depict the effects of using social media. The researchers argued that the sign portrayed in this film effectively conveyed the negative impact of excessive social media usage. While their analysis primarily centered on the signs portrayed in the film, it is crucial to acknowledge that the investigation extended beyond the director's presentation and visual elements. It also incorporated the textual aspects in the interview referred to within the discourse. Discourse, as described by Fairclough (2010), encompasses the complex relations that constitute social life, including the production of meaning and the process of meaning-making through communication between individuals. In the case of the film, the text of the interviews is produced by the filmmakers and consumed by the audience, creating a relationship between the textual elements with the viewers. The relationship showed the interplay between the conveyance and construction of meaning by the interviewees during

Relational Values of Grammatical Features
Rina Mulya

their interviews.

Given the issues raised above, the present study undertakes the critical discourse analysis of the use of relational values of grammatical features on docudrama The Social Dilemma. Fairclough developed this term as part of the three stages that he presented in the critical discourse analysis. Relational value is an element in the description text stage, which refers to the ideological and power relationships encoded in discourse (Fairclough, 2013). This feature is used to analyze how the ideology behind the text is connected to power. Each text can reflect the system of ideas that is affected by authority and power, and it also explains why there is always a meaning and purpose behind a text.

Relational values in CDA may also be referred to the ways in which power, social relations, and ideology are constructed and reproduced through language. Wodak and Meyer (2001) stated that power is about differences in relationships, and especially about the effects of differences in social structures. How power is manifested, enacted, and maintained through language use and discourse practices being what is discussed in power relations. Meanwhile, Van Dijk (2009) stated that social relations is linked to the power and dissent. It involves examining how language use reflects and shapes social structures, power dynamics, identities, and social norms. Machin and Mayr (2012) argued that ideology covers up the nature of our unequal societies and makes it difficult to see different possibilities. It limits what can be seen and what we believe we can do. Analyzing ideology in a text showed how ideologies are conveyed through language. Since these elements are related to each other, it means that analyzing the power, social relations, and ideology of the text will lead to the relational values.

Grammatical features are the specific characteristics or properties of words or phrases that are used in a language to convey grammatical information. These characteristics can be used to categorize or describe various sentence elements such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, and so on. However, the concept of grammatical features takes on a slightly different meaning compared to traditional grammatical analysis in critical discourse analysis. Grammatical features are examined in the context of power relations, ideology, and social practices in CDA. The focus of the investigation is on how language is used to reinforce or challenge power structures, social inequalities, and dominant ideologies. Fairclough (2013) described the grammatical features in critical discourse analysis are the use of modes, modality, and pronoun in the text.

Critical discourse analysis investigates language beyond sentence structure to explore meaning beyond individual sentences. According to Van Dijk (2015), it is a branch of discourse analytical research that primarily examines how text and speech in social and political contexts facilitate the enactment, reproduction, legitimation, and resistance of social power abuse and inequality. In contrast to traditional discourse analysis, which focuses

on analyzing language patterns and their social impact, critical discourse analysis highlights the influential role of language as a tool of power. Xie (2018) stated that critical discourse analysis aims to uncover relationships between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures that may not be readily apparent to the average person. This is precisely why critical discourse analysis holds significant value in research.

This study aims to understand how language is used to construct and maintain social relationships, to reveal the power dynamics that underlie communication in society, particularly in the docudrama film The Social Dilemma. Relational values in the film Social Dilemma were investigated by using the grammatical features namely modes, modality, and pronouns in the text that is communicated by the interviewees. The analyzing of this text presented what is the relational values behind the interview of this docudrama film. Hence, this study led by one research question: (1) What relational values do grammatical features have in the Social Dilemma docudrama film?

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative which is very common for conducting research in social sciences. According to Nassaji (2015), descriptive research is to describe a phenomenon and its characteristics. The data was collected by the researcher using a video analysis entitled The Social Dilemma. The source of data was streamed from Netflix. The instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher. To begin analyzing data, the researcher watches the video to focus on the relational values do grammatical features have that is proposed by Fairclough (2013). Then, the researcher found out data that related to the study by investigating the text with the modes, modality, and pronouns and it identified the relational values in the interview of this docudrama film. The data analyzed with the theory of data analysis by Miles, Hubberman, and Saldana (2014), which are data condensation, data display, and conclusion. In data condensation, the text in the interview transcribed. In data display, the data displayed in the table. The last step, the data concluded by the analysis and explanation from the text..

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, the relational values of grammatical features in docudrama film The Social Dilemma which expressed by the interviewees were found. The data findings are presented in the table below.

Relational Values of Grammatical Features
Rina Mulya

Table 1. Relational Values of Grammatical Features in Social Dilemma Docudrama

Grammatical Features	Types	Example
Modes	Declaratives	I would say, again, the methods used to play on people's ability to be addicted or to be influenced may be different this time, and they probably are different.
		They pay in exchange for showing their ads to us.
	Imperatives	Imagine a world no one believes anything true
	Grammatical Question	What is the world gonna look like when one has a six-times advantage to the other one?
Modality	Auxiliary Verbs	…I really struggled to try and figure out, how, from the inside, we could change it
	Adverbs	We probably destroy our civilization through wilful ignorance
Pronouns	You	You can make some tweaks…
	Them	And over time, by running these constant experiments, you… you develop the most optimal way to get users to do what you want them to do.
	They	They can get you to invite more people.
	We	When we were making the like button…
		We're just zombies…
	Us	… and they want us look at more ads so they can make more money.
	I	…but what I know is the current situation exists not for the protection of users…

Relational values pertain to the belief systems and power dynamics that are expressed and embedded within communication. This can be seen from the grammatical features consist with modes, modality, and pronoun

used in the text. Declarative are marked by having an S followed by V (Fairclough, 2013). As the data below:

1) They pay in exchange for showing their ads to us.
2) There's a study, an MIT study, that fake news on Twitter spreads six times faster than true news

Declarative modes used in data (1) to inform the viewer about how the companies got paid by showing ads to the users. Meanwhile in data (2), the speaker informed the viewer from the research done by MIT study about fake news in social media. The statement realized in the form subject 'there' followed by verb be 'is'. Most of the interviewee are the former employee who were responsible for creating the features used in the social media and they explained the information based on their experience at the company. The speakers stated it in the interview to let people know how the social media is working now which are different with the first purpose when they created the technology, and it will be not good in the future. However, the verb in declarative modes can also be followed by modal verb. The interviewee used the modality in their statement to express their attitude towards the information that they shared, as the data example below:

3) I would say, again, the methods used to play on people's ability to be addicted or to be influenced may be different this time, and they probably are different.
4) From that perspective, you can have a very different understanding of what technology is doing.

Data (3) showed that the declarative mode is used because the speaker wants to inform how the companies applied the methods that make people addicted to social media. Modal auxiliary verb 'would' is followed by the verb 'say' in the statement which 'would' indicated the request. Instead of simply stated 'I say', the speaker expressed it by using 'would' to request for saying again about the information. Meanwhile in data (4), the speaker gives the information to the viewers by adding the modal verb 'can' to express the ability of the viewer for having distinctive perspectives of technology. Declarative modes in this docudrama film which is formed in the pattern S followed by Auxiliaries modal and verb expressed the speaker's opinion and attitude about the information consisted with a possible fact or action that can done. Relational modality in this data showed that the speaker has power to state the information towards the viewer since they experienced in engineering the social media (Fairclough, 2013).

Imperative are marked by starting with V and not having S (Fairclough, 2013). As the data below:

5) Imagine a world no one believes anything true.

Data (5) clearly showed the imperative pattern where the text starting with the verb 'imagine'. Imperative mode aims to indicate the second person which in this case is the viewers. It realized in the data by the speaker in the position for asking the viewers to imagine if all people do not believe anything true because of the social media (Fairclough, 2013). The interviewee used the imperative mode after they explain and give some information of how the social media would be. Nevertheless, there is a data finding that simultaneously consist of imperative, question, and modality. As presented in data (6):

6) Let's figure out how to get as much of this person's attention as we possibly can.

From this data, it can be seen that the interviewee is not merely asking the viewers to do something, but rather the speaker is simultaneously asking the viewers to realize the way companies try to capture people's attention as much as possible. Moreover, the speaker reinforces this statement with the modal auxiliary verb 'can' to emphasize the companies' ability to grab people's attention. This is expressed in how companies attract society to consume more social media. The pattern of this text is characterized by starting with a verb followed by the WH questions. Grammatical question begins with the WH questions and verb (Fairclough, 2013). Here are the data below:

7) What is the world gonna look like when one has a six-times advantage to the other one?
8) Are we always gonna defer to the richest, most powerful people?

Based on the data provided above, it can be seen that the interviewee used grammatical question modes to inquire about viewers' opinions on the impact of social media. Data (7) and (8) indicate that the speakers only pose questions to the viewers without demanding any specific action. However, there is a recurring grammatical question mode in the interview text used by the same speaker. The repetition of the grammatical question mode in the text is achieved by using verbs and WH questions. Instead of asking a single question, the speaker reiterates it to emphasize the previous question, as shown in data (9) below:

9) Is this the least generation of people that are gonna know what it was like before this illusion took place? Like, how do you wake up from the matrix when you don't know you're in the matrix?

Relational Values of Grammatical Features
Rina Mulya

On the other hand, the grammatical question mode is not only directed towards the viewers, who represent society in general, but also towards the companies. The inclusion of the modal verb 'could' in the question mode suggests the possibility of companies utilizing individuals in the development of technology. This can be observed in data (10) presented below:

10) How could you use everything we know about the psychology of what persuades people and build that into technology?

Furthermore, the pronouns found that is used by the interviewees in the Social Dilemma docudrama are I, You, They, Them, We, Us, and Our. The pronoun 'I 'refer to the interviewee itself, 'you' refers to the viewers, 'they' and 'them' refers to the social media companies, and 'we', 'us', and 'our' represent the interviewees and viewers as the person who are not involved in creating the technology and social media. Here are the data example:

11) …but what I know is the current situation exists not for the protection of users…
12) You can make some tweaks…
13) … you develop the most optimal way to get users to do what you want them to do.
14) They can get you to invite more people.
15) We're just zombies…
16) … and they want us look at more ads so they can make more money.

However, there is a specific instance in the data where the interviewees employed the pronoun 'we' to refer to themselves and their companies. In this context of data (17), the use of 'we' signifies that the interviewees with their team of workers who were responsible for developing the features in the social media platform. It can be inferred that the interviewees occasionally used 'we' not only to represent themselves and the broader society in opposition to the companies but also to refer to their identities and the companies they represent. This can be seen in the following data:

17) When we were making the like button…

To summarize, the data findings reveal how relational values were identified during interviews with former employees of social media companies in the docudrama film "The Social Dilemma." The interviewees utilized declarative mode to inform viewers about the current state of social media. The declarative mode in the text is not only realized in the form of a subject (S) followed by a verb (V) (Fairclough, 2013), but also in the form of a subject (S) followed by a modal verb and a verb (V). The modal verb in

Relational Values of Grammatical Features
Rina Mulya

declarative mode is used to express the interviewees' opinions or attitudes towards the information. Imperative mode was employed by the interviewees to prompt viewers to consider their own opinions on social media, while also inviting them to find answers. Therefore, the imperative mode serves the purpose of requesting action and seeking responses, following the form; of a verb (V) followed by an object (O) and WH questions. In this docudrama film, the interviewees used grammatical questions to inquire about the viewers' perspectives and what they intend to do in response to the evolving landscape of social media in this era (Fairclough, 2013). It was observed that the interviewees repeatedly employed grammatical questions to emphasize their inquiries and encourage viewers to reflect upon these questions. Modality was also present in the grammatical question mode to show viewers' opinions and attitudes toward the situations they presented.

The interviewees utilized various pronouns in the interview, including I, You, They, Them, We, Our, and Us. These pronouns served to represent different entities, such as the interviewee themselves (I), the viewers (You), the companies (They, Them), and the collective representation of the interviewee and the viewers (We, Our, Us). Interestingly, the pronoun 'we' was also used by the interviewees to encompass both themselves and the companies when discussing their past contributions to the development of social media technology. This usage highlights the interviewees' tendency to use 'we' when seeking the viewers' opinions or providing information. Additionally, the interviewees frequently employed the pronouns 'they' and 'them' to critique the companies' exploitation of people for the benefit derived from social media.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of relational values in the docudrama film uncovered the impact of modes, modality, and pronouns on the interpretation and power dynamics within the text. The interviewees are former employees of those companies who possess the authority to provide statements and factual information against the companies. Their firsthand experience equips them with insights into the long-term effects of social media in the present context. These grammatical features provided insights into how the interviewees intended to convey information and identify their target audience. The modes employed in the text of the interviews indicated how the information about social media was presented. Given the interviewees' extensive experience as former employees, they assumed the role of providing information to the viewers. Modality in the text is to express the speakers' attitudes, opinions, and suggestions regarding the issues and solutions related to the adverse effects of social media. Then, the modality showed the potential actions that people could take in response to these challenges. The pronouns used in the text were utilized to refer to

Relational Values of Grammatical Features
Rina Mulya

individuals in general, as numerous people contribute and involve in social media. Thus, the relational values observed in the docudrama film "The Social Dilemma" predominantly consisted of declarative modes, modality expressed through "can" and "could," and the pronouns "you," "they," and "we."

REFERENCES

Ashfiasari, S. & Wiyata, M.T. (2021). Analisis Semiotika Film The Social Dilemma. *NOUMENA: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Keagamaan*. Vol.2 No.1. pp. 44-54

Fairclough N. (2010). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language (2nd ed)*. New York: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2013). *Language and Power. Abingdon*. Oxon: Routledge.

Machin D. & Mayr A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse Analysis: a multimodal introduction*. London: SAGE.

Miles, M.B., Huberman, A.M. and Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*. London: Sage

Nassaji, H. (2015). Qualitative and Descriptive Research: Data Types Versus Data Analysis. *Language Teaching Research*, 129-132.

Plantinga, C., & Smith, G. (2009). *The Cognitive Impact of Film*. England: Routledge.

Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Society and Discourse. How Social Contexts Influence Text and Talk.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Van Dijk, T.A. (2015). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. In D. Taneen, H. E. Hamilton, & D. Schiffrin, *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (pp. 466-485). United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Wodak R. & Meyer M. (2001). *Methods of critical discourse analysis*. SAGE.