

Representation of Gender Ideology Issue in Matt Walsh's Speech: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Suprayogi Suprayogi¹, Shavina Lestiani², Rizma Amalia Sa'adah³

¹²³ Universitas Teknokrat Indonesia

Email: shavinaestiani2402@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As the researches on gender ideology seen from critical discourse analysis perspective has been limitedly conducted, this research is aimed at filling this gap. This research reveals the representation of gender ideology issue in Matt Walsh' Speech. Employing qualitative methods using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis framework, this research focused on the speech from Walsh's Youtube Channel delivered in Centennial Institute's 2022 Western Conservative Summit on gender ideology issues. The micro aspects of language or microstructure, namely the lexical, syntactic, semantics and rhetorical aspects becomes the focus of the research. The finding suggest that gender ideology is represented negatively through exclusive pronoun, adjective, noun, verb, anaphora, metaphor, paradox, and many others stating that gender ideology is a weak concept but influencing massively.

Keywords: *critical discourse analysis, gender ideology, speech, van dijk*

Introduction

Gender identity, sometimes referred to as an individual's psychological sex, has been defined as "one's basic existential sense of manhood or womanhood" (Spence 1984; 83 in Kacen, 2000). This is then distinct from sexual orientation, and may differ from an individual's birth-assigned sex (Burn, Aboud, Moyles, 2000). In other words, gender identity is not determined biologically, rather it is social construction. It is a person's self-conception as he/she wants to be recognised in society as a man, woman or as someone who fluctuates between men and women or even as someone outside these categories. Gender identity can be collective identity or personal identity formed through religion dan culture in long period.

The issue of revealing gender identity has sparked world attention. It is not only because there is a notion that gender should not be seen as binary option (Lindqvist, Sendén, and Renström, 2021) but also how the cultural and religious foundation may affect the freedom of expression of society to perceive the gender identity. This statement leads us to current condition in The United States of America today which has diverse

views on gender identity. The society is divided into 2 adherents of different ideologies namely the right group, consisting of supporters of the right wing (republican/conservative), and the left, the ranks of the people who support the left wing (democratic/liberal). Democrats are much more likely than Republicans to say that society has not gone far enough in accepting transgender people (59% vs. 10%) meanwhile 66% of the Party Republicans say that society has gone too far in accepting transgender people (Parker, Horowitz, and Brown, 2022).

The battle of thought on gender between right-wing supporters and left-wing supporters shows the condition of society that this country is experiencing a gender identity crisis and its response. The gender identity crisis experienced by a person will likely reject their anatomy and focus on how to dress, behaviours and activities that are stereotypical of other genders. Gender identity crisis can be said to be a gender ideological phenomenon that has shaken American society.

Seeing the number of data on people who have problems with gender identity has increased in recent years, like the increase of gender identity reveal (Gorayashi, 2022; Gentleman, 2022,

Kaltiala-Heino et al, 2018) as well as the pros and cons of accepting the new ideology about gender have made many big figures interested in discussing it at once. One of them is Matt Walsh who are articulating his views a lot in digital media. Matt Walsh is a representative of the right wing supporters where he is part of the republican party, and gave a speech at the Western Conservative Summit 2022 delivering his thoughts on the gender identity crisis.

The topic of gender is an issue that is commonly used as an object of research, based on previous research that has similar content on gender issues, observing the number of people who experience gender identity disorder, observing the factors that cause rejection of self-gender, and how public or community leaders respond in dealing with gender issues. Recently, the studies on gender ideology issues have been widely conducted. The studies have seen gender ideology with other perspective such as culture (Noordaddini, 2021), psychology (McDermott, 2022), climate change (Hung and Bayrak 2022). Furthermore, many have conducted critical discourse analysis on gender identity in literary works (Kendenan and Sumarlam, 2018; Mir and Jahangir, 2021) and text book (Ahmad and Syah, 2019; Apsari et al, 2022). However, there have been limited research on gender identity issues seen from critical discourse analysis, especially with the corpus taken from speech of influential figures. This study investigates how gender ideology/ identity issues is portrayed by Matt Walsh in his speech. Then the research was conducted aiming to find out Matt Walsh's points of views regarding the issue of the gender identity crisis from the perspective of Van Dijk's Critical Discourse analysis.

Since the issue of gender ideology is polarized into a group which is in favor and another group which is against the issue, Van Dijk's framework on critical discourse analysis is able to uncover this idea. In line with this study, the researcher would like to describe the notion of gender ideology represented by the micro aspects of language, namely the lexical, syntactic and rhetorical aspects in Matt Walsh's speech.

Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis framework or called as socio-cognitive approach is one of the popular framework in the study of discourse across discipline. It consists three layers of analysis called as superstructure, macrostructure and microstructure. Superstructure highlight the main topic of the discourse meanwhile macrostructure focuses on the sequence of ideas. Microstructure, on the other hand, intricately focuses on semantic, syntax,

lexical and rhetoric aspect (Van Dijk, 1985 in Al-Araji, 2016). The semantic aspect highlight the reasoning of an argument to answer the question of "what does the opinion stated by the speaker mean?" meanwhile the syntax level focuses on "How are the opinion produced?" which can be seen through the nominalization, sentence structure and pronoun. In smaller level, the lexical aspect focuses on the choice of word to deliver the idea meanwhile the rethoric aspect can be seen from the style and figurative language used in the text.

Van Dijk's (in Wodak and Meyer, 2015) postulated the ideological discourse structure of polarization that can be seen through pronoun of inclusion (we, us, our) and exclusion (they, them, their), membership identification, positive self description and negative other description, activities, values and interest of both group. This means that selection of certain words or phrases can reflect this membership of categorization. Furthermore, ideology in discourse is seen at how words are selected, and structured in to active and passive sentences, and modalities (Van Dijk, 2000).

Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach and ideological square has been widely conducted to analyze various field. Yen-yuan (2013) and Afdholy, Sudikan and Indarti (2022) employed this approach on media studies to reveal hidden ideology Moustafa and Basant (2021) used this approach in the context of political speech to deliver the stance of a country. This concludes that Van Dijk's approach is applicable for many studies, and is considered as the most appropriate framework to investigate the textual representation of gender ideologies in Matt Walsh speech.

This study plays crucial roles in depicting linguistic representation of gender ideology issues trending right now in the US, that more or less will affect outsiders of right wings or even global audiences perceiving this issue. By conducting this study, the logic of argumentation of Matt Walsh as outspoken figure to respond this issue through linguistic devices is revealed. As the studies on gender ideology issues seen from critical discourse analysis are limited, to further extent, this study can be the foundation of other research on gender ideology that intersects with discourse study and other social studies.

Method

This study employs qualitative research. This focuses on diverse points of view of analysis, and also concerns on inductive and deductive processes (Creswell, 2014 in Suprayogi and Pranoto, 2020) and the perception or understanding of human thought (Stake, 2010 in

Afrianto and Gulo, 2019) Since this research analyzes the discourse of speech, which relates directly to social problems/social circumstances, using a qualitative method is the most suited way to study these problems. The research design of this paper is qualitative because it relies on critical discourse analysis to describe, interpret, analyse, and critique social life as it is reflected in text.

The instruments of this research are literature review of previous gender ideology researches, internet searches to select Matt Walsh's speech, and document analysis to analyse the speech text. This research focuses on the analysis of Matt Walsh' speech about the American gender identity crisis. There are more than 20 speeches delivered in Matt Walsh's Youtube account in different occasion uploaded, however this study focuses on his speech at Centennial Institute's 2022 Western Conservative Summit at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center at Colorado. The reason of selecting this video is because Matt Walsh speak the idea to people who have same ideology with him so it is expected that he said as it is frankly, not diplomatically. The video is available in Matt Walsh Youtube Channel with the length of 22 minutes and 35 second and this consist of 3662 word of corpus. The data of this research was collected through transcribing using down-sub website, then the data were put in Ms. Word document.

In data analysis, this study employs the framework of Van Dijk's Sociocognitive Approach on textual level. Then, the study identifies and marks the word, phrase and sentence in syntactical aspect, semantic aspect, rhetorical aspect, and lexical aspect such as the use of exclusive and inclusive pronouns, part of speech that label the people or issue, rhetorical or stylistic devices, and lexical choices. The next step is analysing the context of speech on where, what occasion, to whom, and why along with possible impact of the speech.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The issue of gender identity crisis conveyed in Matt Walsh' speech is reflected through many kinds of linguistic devices and strategies. Most of them ended up with polarisation of idea, which are a positive representation of the in-group and a negative representation of the out-group. The in-group or inclusion refer to Matt Walsh's himself and the right wing group or republican meanwhile the out-group or exclusion refers to the left wing group or democrat. First, the portrayal of gender identity is reflected through the syntactical aspect

i.e. pronoun used by the speaker to refer to both groups.

Table 1.
Frequency of Inclusion and Exclusion Pronoun

Inclusion Pronoun	Frequency	Exclusion Pronoun	Frequency
<i>we</i>	35	<i>they</i>	45
<i>our</i>	13	<i>their</i>	13
<i>us</i>	6	<i>them</i>	15
Total	54	Total	73

The use of inclusion pronoun reaches 54 meanwhile the exclusion pronoun is lower than the exclusion pronoun, which is 73. Personal pronouns in a speech could reflect the social distance, politeness, or solidarity between the speaker and the audience (Bano & Shakir, 2015; Hasan, 2013) or the person or group discussed in the speech. In this speech, the issue of gender ideology is discussed more within the logic of the right wing group on how gender ideology doesn't fit the right group ideology. The use of of exclusive pronoun is mostly used to describe negative representation of parties who support gender ideology. In his speech, the speaker also mentioned the right 6 times as opposed to the right only once entailing that the right group becomes the main discussion why gender ideology is glorified by the left.

Other than the use of pronoun, gender ideology is represented syntactically through the adjectives, nouns, and verbs located surround the phrase gender ideology as seen in Excerpt 1-6.

Excerpt 1: "*gender ideology is **insane, destructive, pervasive, ubiquitous and beatable***"

Excerpt 2: "*So number one what I learned is that gender ideology is totally absolutely **pervasive***"

Excerpt 3: "*the gender ideologues are **weak and scared and vulnerable** they've perched themselves on a limb that isn't even connected to a tree.*"

Excerpt 4: "*these beliefs however **half-baked and incoherent** they may be can be found everywhere in the country stop*"

Excerpt 5: "*the film is called "What is a Woman" and it documents my year-long journey to **confront** and expose gender ideology*"

Excerpt 6: "*the ultimate goal of gender ideology **goes far beyond "gender"** a word which has been expanded you know into oblivion*"

The use of adjective and verb in discourse is used to label or attribute positive or negative qualifications of persons or phenomena (Suprayogi, Puspita, Nuansa, Sari, 2021). In di. the phenomena Gender ideology is described through the use of adjectives attributing negative or bad meaning of the idea of gender ideology. On Matt's perspective, gender ideology is seen as weak concept as well as destructive one for society. The verbs to construct gender ideology used in this speech also label the concept with negative

meaning on how gender ideology is the concept opposed by the right wing and on how the concept is not in line with the given definition of gender. Furthermore, gender ideology is associated with the noun as seen in excerpt 7-9. For Matt Walsh, gender ideology is seen as mental disease, something that associated with psychological matter even the spread of the ideology is considered as threats and came from story of despair.

Excerpt 7: “gender ideology paves the way for itself through fear with **intimidation, threats, coercion**”

Excerpt 8: “a **mental disease** called gender ideology has gripped hold of a large swath of the american public”

Excerpt 9: “...that's the birth of gender ideology as we know it today it was **born in abuse and despair and death** and that is what it has reaped...”

In addition to syntactical aspect through pronoun and part of speech, Rhetorical aspect plays crucial roles in constructing gender ideology discourse in this speech. Matt Walsh employed anaphora, artistic repetition of word or phrase (Karimovna, 2021), to counter the notion of gender preference.

Excerpt 9: “**men** can have babies, **women** can have penises, **a woman** can impregnate, **a man** who can then give birth to and breastfeed a child.”

Excerpt 10: “**we spoke to** alleged experts, doctors, therapists, professors, surgeons. **we spoke to** trans people themselves, **we spoke to** activists **we spoke to** politicians **we spoke to** average people on the street **we spoke to** nomadic tribesmen living in huts made out of cow dung”

The purpose of employing anaphora in this text is to show that the issue of gender ideology can be seen from different perspective. Specifically, to this context, the speaker intended to bring the audience to bigger perspective of what men and women could possibly do and from whom the speaker get the input about what woman is.

Moving on to the specific figurative language. Matt Walsh’ employs irony and paradox to counter the idea of gender ideology as supported by the left. Irony in speech and in other text is aimed at showing several things in contrast on what usually happen and what is happening nowadays. Although, it is not always implying opposite but the truth (Qaiwer, 2020), it is used to highlight strong emotion of the speaker in response to certain issue.

Excerpt 11: “now **their deaths** go down in history as suicides but they were both effectively **murdered** by john money who's **the father of**

modern gender theory and that's the birth of gender ideology”

Excerpt 12: “...all over the the country from **san Francisco** to seattle to new York even across the world deep into the bush in Kenya took us to other **third world countries..**”

Excerpt 13: “I followed it up by interviewing **a man who actually identifies as an animal** he identifies as a woman and also as a wolf.”

Excerpt 14: “many children of our country today are indoctrinated into the gender cult often times **suicide before they're even out of diapers.**”

Besides irony and paradox, metaphor becomes rhetorical strategy to construct the discourse on gender ideology. The gender ideology itself is seen as disease that can infect people, as seen in Excerpt 15. The followers of gender ideology are seen as parrots which means imitate but not considering the whole concept what they are imitating. Further, gender ideology is seen as hill, something that is really huge and challenging to solve.

Excerpt 15: “it's a **madness** which has **infected** our society”

Excerpt 16: “they may not realize who they're parroting but **they** are **parrots** nonetheless and they don't even know it they've adopted these beliefs....”

Excerpt 17: “this a **hill** that i'm really gonna that i want to die on”

Excerpt 18: “these ideas are **fed** to the public they're dumped out onto the **masses like a you know giant sewage pipeline**”

Excerpt 18 reflect the analogy of how gender ideology is spread in society today and instilled to the people. These metaphors are functioned as explanation and persuasion (Thibodeau, Matlock, and Flushberg, 2019) to convince the audience in creative wording so that it can be effectively remembered.

Seeing from the lexical choices, Matt Walsh’s employ strong diction as well. He mentioned *Flipperdoodle* which means someone who is mentally retarded, disciple of this cult to reflect how gender ideology is seen as excessive admiration, and toxic lunacy which means the insanity that can potentially spread. The choices do not only reflect how gender ideology is opposed by Matt but also to show hatred that this idea should not even be acknowledged.

Excerpt 19: “many refuse to say anything at all it would mean the loss of their job their friends their family their reputation.”

Excerpt 20: “we can win because the other side can be crushed under the weight of simple questions”

Excerpt 21: “it occurred to me also that this is a major problem for the left for the people promote this agenda because if the word “woman” no longer means “adult human female”

then what does it mean and the left if they cannot tell us what it means."

In semantic level, the ideas are structurally arranged through use of extreme exemplification. These examples mentioned in the speech is to show logical fallacy and the quality of argument of groups who are in favor of gender ideology. It is inline with the description of negative other-presentation that is mentioned by Van-Dijk (1985).

Discussion

From the analysis of linguistic choices or textual evidence of representation, it is clearly understood that the words, phrases and sentences are frontally spoken by the speaker. This can be seen further justification behind these linguistic choices from the perspective of context where the speech is spoken. This speech was held at the Western Conservative Summit 2022 as annual event in Colorado Christian University by the Centennial Institute. This is to enhance public understanding of the most important issues relating to faith, family, and freedom. In distributing the texts, the original discourse was in the summit itself. Then, the speech was documented and posted on one of Matt Walsh's Youtube accounts. The video can be accessed on Walsh's personal channel but can also be found on the Centennial Institute's channel. This creates a greater access to a wider audience, that not just on a national scale, but also an international scale proven that up to March 2023, the video from Matt Walsh's account has reached 123,000s views and 700s comments.

The target audience or listener who consumes the text, are US citizens, mainly those of the right-wing (conservatives). The speech was held at an event where US conservatives would gather to exchange new ideas and think about the phenomena that is happening in the US, most likely, the physical listeners who were able to witness this speech directly were of the middle to upper class due to the limited access to the event itself. The age of the audience can vary from young adult to senior adults who still hold the conservative ideology that was and is used from the early ages. This shows the influence Walsh has in society, especially towards the right-wing. By viewing the speech, the audience is able to gain insight on Walsh's perspective towards the gender identity crisis.

The concept of gender identity beyond the binary of male and female has been present in the US for several decades, with individuals identifying as transgender, non-binary, and other gender identities. However, in recent years, there has been a rapid increase in the number of

individuals who identify as such, leading to a significant growth in the LGBTQ+ community. This increase in visibility has allowed many left-wing supporters, including Democrats and liberals, to share their beliefs more freely with the public and media. As a result, this phenomenon has sparked a heated debate between two ideological factions: left-wing supporters, who advocate for the recognition and acceptance of gender identity beyond the binary, and right-wing supporters, including Republicans and conservatives, who oppose these views. The media has labeled this phenomenon as the "gender identity crisis" in the US, as it is seen as a contentious issue with significant implications for society's norms and values. The debate has revolved around several key issues, including the recognition of gender identity in public spaces, such as schools and bathrooms, the use of pronouns, and medical interventions such as hormone therapy and gender reassignment surgery. The controversy surrounding gender identity has also led to a broader discussion about the nature of gender, including the social and cultural constructions of masculinity and femininity, as well as the impact of gender on one's personal identity and experiences. In conclusion, the increase in individuals identifying as transgender and non-binary in the US has sparked a significant debate between left-wing and right-wing supporters, with the media labeling it as a gender identity crisis. This debate has raised critical issues about gender identity, norms, and values, with implications for broader societal discussions about identity, diversity, and acceptance.

According to Walsh (2022), the phenomena is pervasive and is primarily caused by the left-wing supporters who use language to validate the existence of a new gender identity. This language, in turn, creates a socially constructed term that can be changed over time. However, Walsh argues that this approach to gender identity goes against simple logic of human biology. In his documentary, he asks left-wing supporters about their beliefs and opposes them as the other social actors in this discourse. Through his speech and documentary, language is used to facilitate the representation of opposing opinions in public and media forms.

Walsh's perspective on gender identity is not unique, and there are many conservative individuals who share his views. They argue that the acceptance of transgender and non-binary individuals goes against traditional values and that it is a threat to the traditional understanding of gender roles. Furthermore, they argue that the acceptance of these identities goes against the

natural order of things. However, these views are not without opposition, and there are individuals who believe that gender identity is not limited to binary categories of male and female. According to them, gender identity is a personal and subjective experience that cannot be defined by biological sex alone. Moreover, they argue that the acceptance of different gender identities is necessary for creating an inclusive and equitable society

The debate over gender identity is not limited to the United States, and it is a global phenomenon that has gained significant attention in recent years. Scholars have analyzed the language used in this debate and its representation in various forms of media. For instance, Luo, Shen & Zheng (2022) analyzed the media coverage of a transgender group self-identity in the East Asia society. The study found that the media coverage had a negative influence on the self-identity of transgender individuals due to the harmful stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes present on these platforms. This was due to the closed mindset that eastern Asian possessed towards the LGBT+ community.

Similarly, Kinoshita (2020) analyzed how the major online media reports Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning or Queer (LGBTQ) issues in contemporary Indonesia. It was expected that Islamic media would adhere to the fatwa and pronouncements of the religious authority, but the study findings revealed that despite the close affiliation, Islamic media did not always endorse their views. Conversely, Detik and Kompas, the online media platforms with the highest readership in Indonesia, displayed a more unfavorable reporting attitude towards LGBTQ topics. This suggests that neither Islamic nor national media is responsible for the negative reporting stance on LGBTQ issues. Zottola (2018) analyzed the language used in Egyptian online forums to discuss gender identity. The study analyzes 11 national newspapers and identifies common themes and patterns in their use of language. Zottola argues that the language used by the press often perpetuates negative stereotypes and reinforces the binary gender system.

The way gender identity is represented in the media and public discourse has a profound impact on the lived experiences of transgender individuals. Negative representation and stigmatization can contribute to the marginalization and discrimination of transgender people, while positive representation can promote understanding and acceptance. Gender identity is a complex and diverse concept that goes beyond the binary of male and female, and it is crucial to

recognize and respect this diversity. Therefore, it is essential to analyze how gender identity is represented in other parts of the world and use language that acknowledges and respects the diversity of gender identities. This includes using inclusive language and recognizing gender identity in official documents to reduce discrimination and promote acceptance of the transgender community.

This particular speech by Matt Walsh states his opposing opinion towards the phenomena, saying it is totally, absolutely pervasive. Walsh also discusses his personal research documentary about gender identity entitled, "What is a Woman", where he asks many left wing supporters about their beliefs, while simultaneously appose as the other social actors in this discourse. These individual actors represent the left wing supporters as a whole. These social actors play a role in contradicting towards Walsh's opinion and the reason for this phenomena to happen.

Language in this context is used to describe and create new gender identity, as gender identity is a socially constructed term that can be changed over time. Language is also used by the left wing supported in order to validate the existence of a new gender and 'is able to accurately represent' who we are as a person. Through Walsh's speech and documentary, language is used in order to facilitate a representation of the opposing opinion in a public and media form. Simple questions asked by Walsh, such as "What is the definition of a woman?" and "What makes a woman a woman?" were as a way to question the existence of people who claim to be a woman when in fact they were born biologically a male and backtrack simple logic of human biology. All and all, this research also proves that Van Dijk's microstructure is able to locate the representation of certain issue, thus this supports the previous research in additional to studies from Yen-yuan (2013), Afdholy, Sudikan and Indarti (2022), and Moustafa and Basant (2021).

Conclusion

Walsh's response towards the gender identity crisis is overall negative as seen in linguistic devices in syntax, lexical, rhetoric, and semantic level. As a supporter of the right wing, the ideology behind gender identity is not valid, according to Walsh. Walsh describes this ideology as *absolutely pervasive* and firmly expresses how the individuals who support these phenomena *think that they get their own reality*. Through this study, it can be seen that the language Walsh used to convey his standing is forcefully opposing the ideology. The findings of this research suggest the

framework of Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis framework can be used to reveal the attributions toward gender ideology, which can be the basis for the future research to explore further about, for example, rhetorical devices in this issues with larger data set.

By having those kinds of linguistic devices, the ideas in opposing gender ideology could more or less convince people, viewers both from right wing group or non-right wing group. This shows that linguistic devices become powerful weapon to address certain social issues in our society today to label certain issues into negative attributes. The selection of linguistics devices by the Walsh can not be separated from his position as political commentator, the researcher and the forum itself.

Future researchers will be able to perform a more comprehensive investigation of the gender identity issue using more findings and data such as newspaper articles. Further, the representation on gender ideology from the supporters, left wings, and the people who proclaim certain gender ideology could balance the dimension on critical discourse studies on the issue.

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