

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TJITJIK SRI TJAHJANDARI'S STATEMENT: "PENDIDIKAN TINGGI ADALAH TERTIARY EDUCATION"

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**ABSTRACT** In May 2024, significant tuition fee hikes at Indonesian state universities led to widespread protests and public outcry. Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's response, emphasizing that higher education is a choice rather than a necessity, drew significant attention and criticism. The research aims to critically analyze the ideological meanings in Tjahjandari's statement and explore its impact on public perception and educational policy in Indonesia. The study uses Fairclough's CDA framework to analyze the linguistic features in textual analysis level, production and distribution processes in discursive strategy, and broader social contexts of the statement. Data collection includes the statement's transcript, media reports, and public responses. Textual analysis reveals the use of technical and institutional language that aligns with neoliberal ideologies, lead to describe higher education as an optional, market-driven pursuit. Discursive practice analysis shows the statement's wide media dissemination and critical public interpretation that suggest a perceived shift away from viewing higher education as a public good. Social practice analysis indicates that the statement supports hegemonic processes that commodify education and reduce the state's role in ensuring access. The study concludes that Tjahjandari's statement reflects and constructs ideological meanings that devalue higher education's societal importance and impact its accessibility. Public reactions highlight a demand for more equitable and inclusive educational policies. This research contributes to understanding the role of governmental discourse in shaping educational policy and societal attitudes, advocating for policies that support broader access to higher education.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, higher education tuition fees, Indonesia, public policy, government communication

### INTRODUCTION

Discourse analysis is a powerful tool for examining how language reflects and shapes power dynamics (Ramadilla et al., 2024), ideologies, and social structures (Saeed, 2024). Through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), researchers can uncover the underlying assumptions, biases, and power relations embedded within textual and spoken communication. CDA goes beyond the surface level of language to explore how discourse constructs social realities and influences public perception and policy (Ulinuha, 2013). This approach is particularly relevant in analyzing statements made by public officials, whose words carry significant weight and impact on societal attitudes and actions.

In May 2024, the media and news outlets were inundated with discussions about the sudden and drastic increase in single tuition fees (Uang Kuliah Tunggal, UKT) at several state universities (PTNBH) in Indonesia. This policy shift provoked widespread protests from students who felt burdened by the policy and demanded mediation with university authorities Aprilianingrum et al. (2024). The dissatisfaction extended beyond students, drawing wide attention from the public and academia. According to Commission X deputy chair Dede Yusuf, the reasons behind this significant increase are multifaceted (Hutajulu, 2024). Reports indicate that two primary factors contributed to the hike: the sub-optimal allocation of the state campus education budget and the determination of the status of state universities as legal entities (PTN-BH). He added that these factors have led some university rectors to raise tuition fees to meet operational needs.

Amidst this controversy, the Secretary of the Director General of Higher Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture, Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari, Ph.D., responded during a press conference in Jakarta. She stated that higher education is tertiary education, which is not a mandatory pursuit for the public (CNN Indonesia, 2024). This statement elicited significant reactions from the public, who expressed concern that such a remark came from the

Ministry of Education and Culture, an institution that ideally should support efforts to increase higher education enrollment rates in Indonesia, as advocated by the President of Indonesia (Damarjati, 2024; Setiawan & Kurniati, 2024). The public interpreted the term "tertiary education" used by the Ministry as implying that higher education is a tertiary need, accessible only to the elite.

This research aims to critically analyze the statement made by Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, specifically Fairclough's model. CDA is a method that examines the way discourse shapes, and is shaped by, social and political structures (Ahmadvand, 2011; Ramadilla et al., 2024; Saeed, 2024). It focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology.

Fairclough's approach to CDA involves three interrelated processes of analysis tied to three interrelated dimensions of discourse; (1) textual analysis (involves analyzing the text's vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure), (2) discursive practice (examines how the text is produced, distributed, and consumed within specific social contexts), (3) social practice (explores the broader social context and the ideological effects and hegemonic processes) (Burhanudin et al., 2021).

Previous studies have explored ideology in various government officials' discourse. However, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the critical analysis of government officials' discourse and its impact on public perception and policy. Studies by Merrita (2021) and primarily focus on revealing the ideology of Joko Widodo in his victory speech as the chosen president during 2019—2024 but did not delve into the discursive strategies and ideological implications of official statements. Moreover, a study by (Silalahi et al., 2017) examined Joko Widodo's ideologies of national education, they lacked a detailed analysis of how specific language use by officials shapes these reactions and perceptions.

This study aims to fill this gap by applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjani's statement. CDA is a framework that examines how language reflects, reinforces, and potentially challenges power dynamics and ideologies within society (Mullet, 2018). By critically examining her statement, this study seeks to uncover the underlying ideologies and power relations that shape the discourse on higher education in Indonesia. Furthermore, it aims to explore how the statement's framing and terminology influence public perception and policy regarding accessibility to higher education. As aforementioned, this study will answer the following research question, "how does Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement "higher education is tertiary education" reflect and construct ideological meanings regarding the accessibility and value of higher education in Indonesia?"

In doing so, this research intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of governmental discourse in shaping educational policy and societal attitudes. By analyzing the critical discourse, the study hopes to provide insights that can inform more equitable and inclusive policy communication strategies, ultimately supporting broader access to higher education.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a research approach that examines how discourse shapes and is shaped by power dynamics and ideologies within society (Wodak, 2015). Norman Fairclough, a prominent figure in CDA, proposed a three-dimensional model which integrates textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice (Fairclough, 1992). This model serves as the theoretical foundation for analyzing how language contributes to the construction and maintenance of social inequalities.

### **Fairclough's Model of CDA**

Fairclough's approach to CDA is particularly relevant for analyzing statements made by public officials because it provides tools for examining the interplay between language, power, and ideology. The three dimensions of Fairclough's model are:

1. **Textual Analysis:** This dimension focuses on the linguistic features of a text, such as vocabulary, grammar, and text structure. It allows researchers to identify how specific language choices contribute to meaning-making and power relations (Fairclough, 2004).
2. **Discursive Practice:** This involves the production, distribution, and consumption of texts. It examines how texts are interpreted within specific social contexts and the role of intertextuality in shaping meaning (Fairclough, 2004).
3. **Social Practice:** This dimension explores the broader social and ideological contexts in which discourses operate. It considers how discourse practices contribute to the reproduction or transformation of social structures and power relations (Fairclough, 2004).

### **Prior Research of Ideology in Discourse**

Several studies have utilized CDA to investigate discourses surrounding ideology of government officials. For instance, Click or tap here to enter text. analyzed a number of propositions in Joko Widodo's victory speech as the chosen president during 2019—2024 taken from online news media. It aims to gain a number of macro propositions and nationalism ideology. Using proposition theory proposed by (Van Dijk, 2019) and critical discourse analysis from (Fairclough, 1992), the result revealed that neoliberal ideologies often underpin discussions about higher education, emphasizing market-driven approaches and individual responsibility.

Moreover, Silalahi et al. (2017) conducted a research with aims of reconstructing Joko Widodo's ideologies of national education. To achieve this objective, the authors conducted a descriptive qualitative research on Joko Widodo's policies (which were reflected through the presidential speeches on education, legislation, and presidential and government regulation). Fairclough's three dimensional frameworks include 1) the linguistic description of linguistic elements, 2) the interpretation of discursive practice, and 3) socio-cultural explanation applied to answer the research question. To support the analysis, the writers analysed the linguistic elements by using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), incorporating three linguistic metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, and textual).

### **Gaps in Existing Research**

While previous research has provided valuable insights into the governmental discourses surrounding ideology, there are still several gaps that need to be addressed. First, the previous study lack in presenting the public reaction and interpretation. There is limited research on how the public interprets and reacts to official statements about higher education. Thus, understanding public perception is crucial for assessing the impact of these statements on societal attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, this study brings new horizons in Indonesian context. While there is some research on higher education discourse in Indonesia, it often lacks a critical perspective that examines the ideological underpinnings and power dynamics involved.

### **Contributions of the Current Research**

This research aims to fill these gaps by using Fairclough's CDA approach to analyze Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement that "higher education is tertiary education." By doing so, this study will contribute to the existing literature in several ways. First, as it focuses on the official statements, it provides a detailed analysis of this statement made by a high-ranking education official. This highlights the linguistic and discursive strategies used to frame higher education. Afterward, it explores how the public interprets and reacts to this statement. This analysis offers insights into the broader social and ideological implications. In addition, its use

of a critical perspective to the Indonesian context help to uncover the power relations and ideologies embedded in the discourse about higher education.

## RESERACH METHODS

This study is qualitative research employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the statement made by Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari regarding higher education. Qualitative research, a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems instead of collecting numerical data (Tenny et al., 2024), is chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of the meanings and implications embedded in the discourse.

Then, the research follows a descriptive design to systematically describe the linguistic and discursive elements of the statement. Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA guides the analysis, which includes textual analysis, analysis of discursive practice, and analysis of social practice.

The population for this study includes a statement made by high-ranking officials in the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia. The sample is purposive, focusing on the statement by Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari made during a press conference in Jakarta in May 2024.

Moreover, data collection involves several steps. First, the researchers collect the data in the form of text as the primary data, namely the transcript of the statement made by Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari. This transcript is obtained from reliable sources, namely from Kompas, a reputable news outlet. Secondly, additional data is collected to understand the context in which the statement was made. This includes media reports, policy documents, and public responses to the statement.

As it applies CDA, the variables are the linguistic and discursive features identified within the text. These variables are operationalized as follows: First, the textual analysis level that consist of vocabulary, grammar, and text structure used in the statement. Secondly, the discursive practice that analyze the production, distribution, and consumption of the statement, including how it is reported in the media and interpreted by the public. After finishing in the previous stages, the researchers bring the analysis into the social practice to reveal the relation of the language use and discursive practice with the broader social, political, and ideological contexts that influence and are influenced by the statement.

Afterward, the data analysis is conducted in three stages, corresponding to Fairclough's three-dimensional model. It began with textual analysis, done by identifying key vocabulary and phrases used in the statement, analyzing the grammatical structures and their implications for meaning, and examining the overall text structure and cohesion. Then, it is followed by the discursive practice analysis that consist of investigating how the statement was produced, distributed, and consumed, analyzing the intertextuality by examining references to other texts and discourses within the statement, and considering the roles of different social actors involved in the discourse. Lastly, it analyzed the social practice that include contextualizing the statement within the broader socio-political environment, exploring the ideological effects and hegemonic processes reflected in the statement, and analyzing the implications of the statement for public perceptions and higher education policies.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

The complete transcript of the statement by the Secretary of the Directorate General of Higher Education at the Ministry of Education and Culture, Prof. Tjitjik Sri Tjahjandari, Ph.D., who delivered at a press conference in Jakarta, provided several important points for analysis. The following is the transcript that is the focus of this research:

“SSBOPT kita itu sekarang berubah komponen atau parameter untuk pembiayaannya. Dari situlah kita mengeluarkan satuan SSBOPT yang dijadikan dasar untuk menghitung BKT (Biaya Kuliah Tunggal). Artinya, SSBOPT itu sebagai dasar untuk biaya kuliah tunggal satu semester pada Prodi dengan karakteristik yang berbeda-beda itu adalah sekian. Jadi, tidak bisa sama BKT setiap program studi walaupun program studinya sama kalau akreditasinya berbeda ya pasti berbeda, karena ini menyangkut kualitas. Kalau wilayahnya berbeda, kita juga harus memperhitungkan indeks kemahalan wilayah. Gitu, kan, kita ketemu BKT. BKT ini, teman-teman sekalian, kita dasarkan untuk kemudian sebagai tanggungan biaya yang harus dipenuhi agar penyelenggaraan pendidikan itu memenuhi standar mutu. Tetapi, dari sisi yang lain kita bisa melihat bahwa pendidikan tinggi ini adalah tertiary education. Jadi bukan wajib belajar, artinya tidak seluruhnya lulusan SLTA SMK itu wajib masuk perguruan tinggi ini sifatnya adalah pilihan. Siapa yang ingin mengembangkan diri masuk perguruan tinggi ya itu sifatnya adalah pilihan bukan wajib, berbeda dengan wajib belajar yang SD SMP begitu ya. Nah apa konsekuensinya? Karena ini adalah tertiary education, pendanaan pemerintah untuk pendidikan itu difokuskan diprioritaskan untuk pembiayaan wajib belajar karena itu amanat undang-undang. Sehingga bagaimana untuk pendidikan tinggi tentunya pemerintah memberikan tetap bertanggung jawab tapi dalam bentuk Bantuan Operasional Perguruan Tinggi Negeri yang kita sebut dengan BOPTN. Nah harusnya idealnya BOPTN itu jumlah yang diberikan itu sama dengan BKT-nya. Betul tidak? Kalau pemerintah bisa memberikan pendanaan BOPTN sama dengan BKT maka pendidikan tinggi itu gratis. tetapi permasalahannya, dana pendidikan kita kan tidak mencukupi karena prioritas utama adalah untuk pendidikan wajib.”

(Our SSBOPT is now changing the components or parameters for its financing. From there we issue a unit of SSBOPT which is used as the basis for calculating BKT (Single Tuition Fee). This means that SSBOPT is the basis for a single semester tuition fee in Prodi with different characteristics. So, it cannot be the same BKT for each study programme even though the study programme is the same if the accreditation is different, it must be different, because this concerns quality. If the region is different, we also have to take into account the regional cost index. That's right, we meet the BKT. We base this BKT, my friends, on the costs that must be met so that the provision of education meets quality standards. However, from the other side, we can see that higher education is tertiary education. So, it is not compulsory, meaning that not all high school graduates are obliged to enter higher education, it is an option. Who wants to develop themselves to enter higher education is a choice, not compulsory, different from compulsory elementary and junior high school education. So, what are the consequences? Because this is tertiary education, government funding for education is prioritised to finance compulsory education because it is mandated by law. So how for higher education, of course, the government is still responsible but in the form of Operational Assistance for State Universities, which we call BOPTN. Well, ideally BOPTN should be the same amount as the BKT. Isn't that right? If the government can provide BOPTN funding equal to BKT then higher education is free. but the problem is, our education funds are insufficient because the main priority is for compulsory education.)

### **Textual Analysis**

The textual analysis of Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement reveals several key linguistic and grammatical features that contribute to the overall meaning and ideological stance of the discourse.

1. **Vocabulary and Phrasing:** The statement uses specific terminology to frame the discussion on higher education. Terms such as "SSBOPT," "BKT (Biaya Kuliah Tunggal)," and "BOPTN" are technical and institutional language that position the discourse within a bureaucratic and policy-driven context. The use of the term "tertiary education" instead of simply "higher education" aligns with an international and possibly neoliberal framework that emphasizes the optional nature of higher education.
2. **Grammar and Modality:** The statement utilizes modal verbs such as "should" and "can" which imply a prescriptive and normative stance. For example, "*BKT ini, teman-teman sekalian, kita dasarkan untuk kemudian sebagai tanggungan biaya yang harus dipenuhi agar penyelenggaraan pendidikan itu memenuhi standar mutu*" suggests an obligatory approach to meeting educational standards.
3. **Cohesion and Text Structure:** The structure of the statement is logical and sequential, beginning with an explanation of the funding mechanisms and concluding with a

justification of the policy stance. This structure helps to build a coherent argument that higher education, being tertiary, is not a mandatory public good but rather a choice.

*Table 1: Key vocabulary and phrases*

<b>Key Term</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<i>SSBOPT (Standar Satuan Biaya Operasional Pendidikan Tinggi)</i>	A unit of calculating BKT
<i>BKT (Biaya Kuliah Tunggal)</i>	Cost of single tuition
<i>BOPTN (Bantuan Operasional Perguruan Tinggi Negeri)</i>	Operational Assistance for State Universities
<i>Tertiary Education</i>	Higher education as an optional, non-mandatory level of education

### ***Discursive Practice Analysis***

1. **Production:** The statement was produced by a high-ranking official within the Ministry of Education and Culture. This institutional context lends authority and legitimacy to the discourse. The press conference setting also indicates a formal and controlled dissemination of information.
2. **Distribution:** The statement was distributed through various media outlets, including reputable sources like CNN Indonesia and Kompas. This wide distribution ensures that the message reaches a broad audience, including policymakers, educators, and the general public.
3. **Consumption:** Public reactions indicate a critical interpretation of the statement, with many expressing concern over the implications for accessibility to higher education. The framing of higher education as "tertiary" suggests a shift away from the perception of education as a public good, which has led to public dissatisfaction.

### ***Social Practice Analysis***

1. **Ideological Context:** The statement reflects neoliberal ideologies that prioritize market-driven approaches and individual responsibility over collective social support. This is evident in the emphasis on the optional nature of higher education and the prioritization of funding for mandatory education levels (SD and SMP).
2. **Hegemonic Processes:** The discourse supports the hegemonic process by reinforcing the idea that higher education is not a fundamental right but a privilege for those who choose and can afford it. This aligns with broader global trends that commodify education.
3. **Social Implications:** The statement has significant implications for public perceptions and policy. By framing higher education as non-mandatory, it potentially reduces public pressure on the government to increase funding and support for higher education institutions, thereby affecting accessibility and equity in education.

### **Discussion**

The findings from this CDA reveal how Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement "higher education is tertiary education" reflects and constructs ideological meanings regarding the accessibility and value of higher education in Indonesia. This section addresses the research question directly and interprets the findings about the accessibility and value of higher education, as well as discuss the public reaction and interpretation of the statement.

#### ***Reflecting Ideological Meanings***

Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement reflects several ideological positions that align with neoliberal principles. By stating that "higher education is tertiary education," she implicitly categorizes higher education as a non-essential, optional pursuit. This categorization suggests that higher education is not a universal right but rather a privilege for those who choose to pursue it and have the means to do so. This reflects a shift in the ideological

framework from education as a public good to education as a private good, accessible primarily to those who can afford it.

The terminology used, particularly the term "tertiary education," positions higher education within a global and market-oriented discourse. This language aligns with international trends that prioritize efficiency, individual responsibility, and market-driven solutions over collective social investment. By using such terminology, the statement aligns Indonesian higher education policy with broader neoliberal ideologies that emphasize self-reliance and reduce the role of the state in ensuring access to education.

### ***Constructing Ideological Meanings***

The construction of ideological meanings in Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement is achieved through specific linguistic and discursive strategies. These strategies include:

1. **Framing Higher Education as Optional:** The statement clearly positions higher education as a choice rather than a necessity. This framing is significant as it constructs higher education as an optional endeavor, thereby reducing the perceived obligation of the state to fund and support it comprehensively. This has the effect of normalizing the idea that not everyone needs to pursue higher education, which can lead to reduced societal pressure on the government to make higher education universally accessible.
2. **Justification of Funding Priorities:** By emphasizing that government funding priorities are legally mandated to focus on basic education (SD and SMP) as opposed to higher education, the statement constructs a justification for the current funding distribution. This not only deflects criticism regarding the underfunding of higher education but also frames the limited financial support as a logical and legal necessity, rather than a policy choice. This justification serves to reinforce the notion that higher education is a lower priority compared to basic education.
3. **Economic Rationalization:** The statement incorporates economic reasoning by discussing the SSBOP, BKT, and BOPTN in detail. This technical language and the focus on cost calculations suggest that the value of higher education is primarily economic. It implies that higher education should be self-sustaining and that government funding should be carefully allocated based on cost-efficiency. This economic rationalization aligns with neoliberal ideologies that prioritize cost-cutting and efficiency over broader social investments.

### ***Public Reaction and Interpretation***

The public reaction to Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement was significant and multifaceted, reflecting a deep concern over the accessibility and value of higher education:

1. **Perceived Elitism:** Many members of the public interpreted the statement as elitist, suggesting that higher education is reserved for those who can afford it (Putri et al., 2024). This interpretation aligns with concerns that the government is not committed to making higher education accessible to all, thus exacerbating social inequalities.
2. **Criticism of Government Priorities:** The statement sparked criticism regarding the government's priorities, with many arguing that higher education should receive more substantial public funding. Critics contended that viewing higher education as merely an option undermines efforts to improve national education standards and workforce competitiveness.
3. **Demand for Accountability:** There was a strong demand for greater accountability and transparency in how educational funds are allocated and spent. The public reaction included calls for the government to ensure that higher education is affordable and accessible, highlighting the perceived disconnect between official statements and public expectations.

### **Impact on Accessibility and Value**

The ideological meanings constructed in the statement, coupled with public reactions, have direct implications for the accessibility and value of higher education in Indonesia:

1. **Reduced Accessibility:** By framing higher education as optional and emphasizing the need for efficient use of limited funds, the statement may contribute to policies that further reduce public investment in higher education. This can lead to increased tuition fees and a greater financial burden on students, making higher education less accessible to lower-income populations.
2. **Perceived Value of Higher Education:** The framing of higher education as tertiary and optional can devalue it in the eyes of the public. If higher education is seen as a non-essential choice, its perceived importance and value may diminish. This can impact societal attitudes towards higher education, leading to lower enrollment rates and reduced support for higher education initiatives.
3. **Policy Implications:** The statement's ideological stance can influence policy direction. Policies may increasingly reflect a market-oriented approach, focusing on individual responsibility for funding higher education. This can result in a greater reliance on private funding sources and less public accountability for ensuring equitable access to higher education.

### **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Prof. Tjitjik Srie Tjahjandari's statement "higher education is tertiary education" reflects and constructs ideological meanings that align with neoliberal principles, framing higher education as an optional, market-driven choice rather than a universal right. This has significant implications for the accessibility and value of higher education in Indonesia, potentially leading to reduced public investment, increased financial burdens on students, and a devaluation of higher education's societal importance. The public reaction to the statement underscores a demand for more equitable and accessible higher education policies. Future research and policy-making should consider these ideological implications to promote more equitable and inclusive access to higher education.

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