

Framing Historical Memory: YouTube Commentaries on the Myth of 350 Years of Dutch Colonization in Indonesia

Maria Martha Nikijuluw

Linguistics Department, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

Following the Dutch government's apologies for colonial atrocities in Indonesia, discussions on the duration of Dutch colonization have emerged. This preliminary study investigates how people reacted to the claim that "Dutch colonized Indonesia for 350 years" through YouTube comments. Key questions explore whether this narrative is a truth, myth, or something in between, and how that memory is expressed, reframed, or challenged in YouTube comment sections. Data was gathered through a keyword search, resulting in 48 relevant YouTube videos. The researcher performed manual content analysis to identify the content's relevance to the videos' titles and commonly discussed reactions. A sample of 4 videos from the channel was selected to gather data for the analysis, representing 2022 to 2025 and having at least 500 reactions, totaling 8.516 reactions. The reactions were extracted into Excel tables using the export comments tool and visualized through the AntConc (3.5.9 version) tool. Data for analysis focuses only on selected phrases related to the number of periods. Reactions were analyzed using qualitative descriptive methods, particularly inductive frame and discourse analysis. Findings reveal diverse perspectives on the duration of Dutch colonization, sparking engaging public debates. Videos from 2022 to 2024 showed significant interactions, with some strongly supporting the 350-year claim, emphasizing its validity in regions like Java and Maluku. Others questioned this duration, suggesting it might be a hyperbolic number in a nationalist context. Opinions varied widely, from claims of just 3 years to as many as 343 years, factoring in different wars. Many responses took the form of a satirical dialogue between teachers and students, often critiquing what was taught in schools. This study underlines the profound impact of these debates on public perception and education. It emphasizes the need for further research on perceptions of colonization in Indonesia and its integration into educational curricula, highlighting the depth and significance of this complex and contentious issue.

Keywords: Framing Historical Memory, YouTube Reactions, The Myth of 350 Years