Persuasive Diction in Presidential Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Prabowo Subianto's National Speech

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Informasi artikel	:	ABSTRAK
		This study analyzes the use of persuasive diction in President Prabowo Subianto's state address during the post–2024 Presidential Election transition period in Indonesia. The study aims to fill a gap in research on lexical strategies in formal political discourse in Indonesia. Employing a qualitative approach through *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA), thematic analysis was conducted on the speech transcript to uncover linguistic mechanisms that construct political legitimacy, leadership identity, and national narratives. The analysis focuses on patterns of lexical choice, including evaluative terms, collective references, and the construction of future-oriented visions. The findings identify four main categories of persuasive diction: nationalistic, moral-evaluative, futuristic-visionary, and egalitarian diction. These categories operate complementarily to enhance the persuasive power of the speech and reinforce leadership legitimacy during the political transition period. This study demonstrates that lexical choices in state addresses are not neutral but function as systematic ideological strategies. The findings contribute to political discourse studies in Indonesia and Southeast Asia and are relevant to the development of critical media literacy, political rhetoric analysis, and the understanding of leadership construction in contemporary democratic contexts.

ABSTRACT

| Keywords:
Diksi Persuasif;
Wacana Kepresidenan;
Analisis Wacana Kritis;
Komunikasi Politik;
Politik Indonesia. | ***Diksi Persuasif dalam Wacana Kepresidenan: Analisis Wacana Kritis terhadap Pidato Kenegaraan Prabowo Subianto.*** *Penelitian ini menganalisis penggunaan diksi persuasif dalam pidato kenegaraan Presiden Prabowo Subianto pada masa transisi pasca-Pemilihan Presiden 2024 di Indonesia. Kajian ini bertujuan mengisi kekosongan penelitian mengenai strategi leksikal dalam wacana politik formal Indonesia. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) dengan analisis tematik terhadap transkrip pidato untuk mengungkap mekanisme linguistik dalam membangun legitimasi politik, identitas kepemimpinan, dan narasi kebangsaan. Fokus analisis diarahkan pada pola pemilihan leksikal yang meliputi istilah evaluatif, rujukan kolektif, serta konstruksi visi masa depan. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi empat kategori utama diksi persuasif, yaitu diksi nasionalistik, moral-evaluatif, futuristik-visoner, dan egalitarian. Keempat kategori tersebut beroperasi secara saling melengkapi dalam membentuk daya persuasi pidato dan memperkuat legitimasi kepemimpinan pada periode transisi politik. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa pilihan leksikal dalam pidato kenegaraan bersifat strategis dan ideologis, serta berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian wacana politik, analisis retorika, dan literasi media kritis dalam konteks demokrasi kontemporer.* |

Introduction

Political rhetoric plays a central role in shaping public opinion, legitimizing power, and directing a nation's policy agenda (van Dijk, 2021). In the global context, scholars have increasingly examined presidential discourse as a strategic instrument for constructing social realities, influencing public perception, and consolidating political authority (Coe & Neumann, 2021; Kampf & Lazar, 2023). Recent cross-national research demonstrates that lexical and rhetorical choices in presidential speeches do more than convey information; they frame national challenges, signal ideological positioning, and mobilize public sentiment, particularly during periods of political transition and uncertainty (Bligh et al., 2021; Charteris-Black, 2021). Despite this expanding body of research, systematic attention to persuasive diction at the lexical level, rather than broad rhetorical description, remains relatively underdeveloped in political communication studies, especially in non-Western contexts where linguistic strategies operate within distinct cultural, historical, and institutional settings.

In Indonesia, state addresses occupy a strategic position as formal political texts through which presidents articulate national vision, policy priorities, and collective identity to a heterogeneous public (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2020). These speeches are frequently cited by policymakers, mass media, and civil society actors as authoritative discourses that shape democratic deliberation and public interpretation of state priorities (Prasojo & Sidiq, 2022). Beyond their informational function, presidential speeches perform ideological work by constructing notions of leadership, authority, and national belonging (Heryanto, 2020). However, scholarly engagement with how lexical choice and evaluative language in Indonesian presidential discourse reproduce power relations and social alignment remains limited, indicating the need for more fine-grained, linguistically grounded analysis.

The election of Prabowo Subianto as President of Indonesia in 2024 marks a new phase in national political discourse, characterized by a distinctive leadership persona and communicative style. Preliminary observations of his state addresses suggest a recurrent use of assertive, culturally resonant, and evaluatively loaded diction (Warburton & Mietzner, 2023). Comparative perspectives on political leadership discourse further indicate a shift toward language that foregrounds national resilience, strategic autonomy, and moral authority in contemporary governance narratives (Liu & Lei, 2022). Such linguistic tendencies warrant critical investigation, particularly given the role of presidential rhetoric in responding to public concerns surrounding corruption, inequality, and Indonesia's position within an increasingly interdependent global order.

Existing scholarship on persuasive diction highlights its function in activating ethos, pathos, and evaluative reasoning within political communication (Ott & Dickinson, 2020). Linguistic studies have shown that specific lexical selections shape interpretive frames, influence emotional responses, and guide evaluative judgment among audiences (Semino, 2021; Charteris-Black, 2018). Within presidential discourse, persuasive language contributes to aligning policy intentions with public acceptance and legitimizing governance practices (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012; Chilton & Schäffner, 2022). Nevertheless, research on Southeast Asian presidential rhetoric remains sparse, with limited attempts to systematically categorize persuasive diction in state addresses using robust analytical frameworks such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Critical Discourse Analysis provides a well-established theoretical and methodological foundation for examining ideological positioning, power reproduction, and identity negotiation in political texts (Fairclough, 2015; Wodak & Meyer, 2022). Fairclough's three-dimensional model—encompassing textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice—enables researchers to relate lexical patterns to broader socio-political contexts (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach further emphasizes how discourse structures public cognition and shared social representations (van Dijk, 2015). In addition, appraisal theory offers analytical tools for examining evaluative meaning, stance, and attitude embedded in political lexicons (Martin & White, 2005), making it particularly relevant for the study of persuasive diction.

Despite the growing literature on Indonesian political communication, most studies concentrate on leadership image construction, campaign rhetoric, or overarching discursive themes (Santoso, 2023; Dewi, 2021). Few have undertaken lexical-level, CDA-based analyses of persuasive diction in presidential state addresses, and even fewer situate such analyses within the context of a newly elected administration's agenda-setting discourse. In particular, there is a lack of research that systematically links persuasive diction to key socio-political concerns such as national self-reliance, ethical governance, future-oriented development, and social justice within an integrated discourse–ideology framework. This gap underscores the need for studies that move beyond description to theorize the ideological and cognitive significance of lexical choice in political leadership discourse.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze persuasive diction in Prabowo Subianto's state addresses through a Critical Discourse Analysis approach. By focusing on lexical patterns and their evaluative and ideological functions, the study bridges global debates on political communication with a context-sensitive analysis of Indonesian presidential discourse. The integration of Fairclough's CDA, Van Dijk's sociocognitive framework, and appraisal theory provides a comprehensive methodological rationale for examining how language constructs legitimacy, mobilizes public alignment, and articulates national priorities. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to political discourse studies and sociolinguistics, while offering practical insights into the dynamics of political messaging and meaning-making in contemporary Indonesian democracy.

Method

This study employed a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach to examine persuasive diction in a national state address delivered by President Prabowo Subianto during Indonesia's post–2024 presidential election transition period. The data consisted of a single official state speech delivered in 2024 and obtained from authorized public government sources, selected for its highly institutionalized nature and its role in articulating presidential authority, ideological orientation, and national priorities at a critical political juncture. The unit of analysis comprised sentences and clauses containing evaluative, persuasive, and ideologically salient lexical items, including value-laden expressions, collective references, and future-oriented projections. Data analysis involved iterative stages of close reading, inductive coding, and thematic categorization to identify recurring patterns of persuasive diction. These patterns were subsequently interpreted within Indonesia's socio-political context using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, Van Dijk's sociocognitive framework, and appraisal theory to examine how lexical choices function to construct political legitimacy, leadership identity, and national narratives. While limited to a single text and interpretive in nature, this approach prioritizes analytical depth and contextual sensitivity, providing a focused examination of persuasive lexical strategies employed during a pivotal moment of political transition.

Result and Discussion

The categories of persuasive diction in this study are classified into four main types: nationalistic, moral–evaluative, futuristic–visionary, and egalitarian, with several subcategories emerging functionally from the data. These subcategories do not operate independently; rather, they reinforce the primary rhetorical strategies in the construction of leadership discourse. This relationship can be observed in the data table presented below.

The use of persuasive diction in state addresses is not neutral; rather, it functions as an ideological instrument for shaping public perceptions of the state, leadership, and power relations. Nationalistic diction, such as *kemandirian*, *ketahanan nasional*, and *kekuatan bangsa*, ideologically constructs Indonesia as a sovereign and resilient entity capable of standing independently without reliance on foreign powers. The pragmatic effect of such diction is the cultivation of collective pride and symbolic

legitimacy for leadership, as the leader is positioned as the primary guardian of national sovereignty amid global dynamics and geopolitical challenges.

Table 1. Analysis of Persuasive Diction in Prabowo Subianto's Speeches

Category of Persuasive Diction	Representative Diction / Phrases (Data)	Rhetorical Function
Nationalistic Diction	kemandirian, berdiri sendiri, ketahanan nasional, kekuatan bangsa, tidak bergantung pada asing	Evokes collective identity and fosters a sense of national pride
Nationalistic–Protective Diction (subcategory)	ancaman, stabilitas, perusakan, pencurian SDA, penyelundupan	Cultivates vigilance and a sense of urgency in safeguarding national sovereignty
Moral–Evaluative Diction	korupsi, kebocoran, penyelewengan, amanah, kewajiban	Constructs moral judgment regarding the condition of the state and governance practices
Futuristic–Visionary Diction	bangkit, maju, potensi besar, negara besar, masa depan	Shapes a collective imagination of the nation's future direction and goals
Egalitarian–Solidarity Diction	rakyat, kesejahteraan bersama, pemerataan, keadilan sosial, hanya segelintir yang menikmati	Creates proximity, solidarity, and a sense of social togetherness
Egalitarian–Empathic Diction (subcategory)	penderitaan rakyat, kebutuhan masyarakat, ketidakadilan, mereka yang tertinggal	Strengthens emotional alignment between the leader and the public
Collective Mobilization Diction (cross-category)	kita harus, mari bersama, kewajiban kita, tugas bersama	Mobilizes participation and collective action through persuasive appeal

Moral-evaluative diction, encompassing terms such as *korupsi*, *penyelewengan*, *amanah*, and *kewajiban*, functions to frame political reality through a moral lens. Ideologically, this diction emphasizes that state affairs are not merely technical or administrative matters, but also issues of ethics and responsibility. The resulting pragmatic effect is the formation of normative public judgments toward state actors and institutions, alongside the reinforcement of the leader's image as a moral authority empowered to assess, admonish, and reform state governance.

Meanwhile, futuristic-visionary diction such as *bangkit*, *maju*, *potensi besar*, and *masa depan* operates the ideology of progressivism and national optimism. This diction shifts the discursive focus from present problems toward a horizon of collective hope. The pragmatic effect of this strategy is the mitigation of post-contestation social tensions and the strengthening of public acceptance of long-term policy agendas. The leader thus appears not only as a crisis manager, but also as an architect of the nation's future.

Egalitarian and solidarity-oriented diction, marked by lexical choices such as *rakyat*, *kesejahteraan bersama*, *keadilan sosial*, and *mereka yang tertinggal*, represents an ideology of inclusive populism. This diction blurs the symbolic distance between elites and the broader public while affirming that power is exercised in the name of collective interests. The pragmatic effect is the creation of emotional closeness and political empathy, enabling the speech to function not only informatively but also affectively in fostering public trust.

Furthermore, protective and national security-related diction such as *ancaman*, *stabilitas*, and *penyelundupan* articulates an ideology of the state as an entity that must be safeguarded from both internal and external disruptions. The pragmatic effect of this diction is the legitimization of firm state actions and the normalization of the role of security apparatuses as protectors of national interests. This discourse implicitly guides the public to perceive security policies as collective necessities rather than as restrictions on freedom.

Finally, collective mobilization diction, exemplified by expressions such as *kita harus* and *tugas bersama*, constructs a participatory ideology that positions society as an active subject in national development. The pragmatic effect of this strategy is the symbolic distribution of political responsibility to all citizens, leading policies and governmental agendas to be perceived as products of collective agreement rather than unilateral exercises of power.

Overall, the ideological meanings and pragmatic effects of persuasive diction in this speech demonstrate that language functions as a strategic instrument for constructing leadership legitimacy, unifying public political orientations, and stabilizing national discourse during periods of democratic transition. This explanation reinforces the argument that lexical choices in state addresses constitute systematic discursive practices imbued with ideological interests.

This study advances the understanding of political persuasion by demonstrating that persuasive diction in Indonesian presidential discourse functions as a systematic ideological configuration rather than a collection of isolated rhetorical devices. Unlike descriptive analyses that merely catalogue lexical patterns, the present findings reveal that persuasive diction operates at the intersection of legitimacy construction, ideological alignment, and socio-political stabilization, particularly within a transitional political context. This perspective reinforces Fairclough's (2015) view of political discourse as a form of social practice through which power relations are enacted, negotiated, and ultimately normalized.

A central contribution of this study lies in its identification of a hybrid persuasive model embedded in Indonesian presidential rhetoric. While much prior research on political persuasion especially within Western democratic contexts highlights polarized populist strategies that emphasize antagonism, exclusion, and binary oppositions between "us" and "them" (Charteris-Black, 2011; Wodak, 2015), the findings of this study suggest a markedly different orientation. Indonesian presidential discourse appears to integrate multiple ideological strands simultaneously, including nationalism, moral governance, futurity, and egalitarianism, which operate in a complementary rather than confrontational manner. This supports Chilton's (2004) argument that political discourse is deeply shaped by local socio-cultural expectations regarding authority, cohesion, and legitimacy.

From a sociocognitive perspective, the ideological significance of this hybrid model becomes more apparent when examined through Van Dijk's (2015) framework. Persuasive diction contributes to the construction of shared mental models concerning leadership, national identity, and collective responsibility. Rather than overtly imposing ideological positions, the discourse guides public cognition indirectly by framing national challenges and aspirations in morally charged and emotionally resonant terms. Such indirect persuasion aligns with Van Dijk's claim that elite political discourse often exerts influence through implicit evaluative meanings that shape interpretation without explicit coercion. Recent studies on contemporary political communication further corroborate this view, demonstrating that subtle lexical framing plays a crucial role in shaping public perception during periods of political uncertainty (Bligh et al., 2021).

The findings also resonate strongly with appraisal theory, which foregrounds the role of evaluative language in positioning speakers and audiences within shared value systems (Martin & White, 2005). Through the strategic deployment of judgment, appreciation, and affect, persuasive diction in the presidential address constructs an ideological stance that appears consensual rather than directive. This naturalization of evaluative meaning reinforces Semino's (2021) observation that political persuasion is most effective when ideological positions are embedded as common sense rather than presented through explicit argumentation. In this sense, persuasion operates not through debate or confrontation but through moral alignment and affective resonance.

Within the Indonesian context, this study extends earlier research that has predominantly focused on leadership image-building, electoral appeal, or campaign communication (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2020). While such studies have offered valuable insights into how political actors cultivate authority and popularity, they often do not examine how ideological meanings are encoded and stabilized at the

lexical level. By foregrounding persuasive diction as an analytical category, the present study addresses this gap and demonstrates that presidential state addresses function as ideological texts par excellence, where power, morality, and national identity are discursively negotiated rather than merely asserted.

In comparative terms, the findings align with international research emphasizing the strategic role of presidential rhetoric in times of political transition, crisis, or institutional uncertainty (Coe & Neumann, 2021). However, the study also challenges universalist assumptions in political discourse analysis by illustrating that persuasive strategies are culturally contingent. Unlike adversarial democratic traditions where persuasion often relies on ideological polarization, Indonesian presidential discourse appears to prioritize symbolic unity, moral stewardship, and collective optimism. This orientation reflects broader cultural expectations of leadership in Indonesia, where political authority is closely associated with ethical guidance and social harmony (Heryanto, 2020).

Methodologically, this study demonstrates the analytical value of integrating Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with thematic lexical categorization. Although CDA has sometimes been criticized for interpretive opacity and methodological subjectivity (Wodak & Meyer, 2022), the present approach shows that systematic thematic mapping of persuasive diction can enhance analytical transparency without sacrificing critical depth. By combining close lexical analysis with socio-political interpretation, this study contributes to ongoing methodological debates on how qualitative discourse analysis can balance interpretive sensitivity with analytical rigor (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Taken together, these findings underscore that persuasive diction in Indonesian presidential discourse is not an ornamental feature but a central mechanism of ideological governance. Language is mobilized to align public perception with political agendas, stabilize authority during periods of transition, and construct a morally grounded and nationally coherent vision of leadership. Consequently, this study contributes not only to Indonesian political discourse scholarship but also to broader discussions on the intersections of persuasion, ideology, and power in contemporary democratic communication.

Simpulan

This study concludes that Prabowo Subianto's state address strategically employs persuasive diction across four interrelated categories nationalistic, moral-evaluative, futuristic-visionary, and egalitarian to construct political legitimacy, consolidate public support, and reinforce national identity during a critical political transition. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, the findings demonstrate that lexical choices function not merely as stylistic elements but as ideological instruments that frame national challenges, project future aspirations, and align presidential authority with collective values and public expectations. The study contributes to political discourse scholarship by elucidating how Indonesian presidential leadership is discursively constructed through a hybrid persuasive configuration that integrates sovereignty, ethical governance, developmental vision, and social inclusivity, distinguishing it from more antagonistic or exclusionary populist rhetoric in other contexts. Although limited by its focus on a single speech, this research provides a context-sensitive analytical framework and conceptual foundation for future studies employing comparative, multimodal, or audience-centered approaches to deepen understanding of language, power, and political communication in contemporary Indonesia.

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