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Topicalization and Political Representation Strategies in the 2024 Election Campaign Banners: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach

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Abstract

This article discusses the use of topicalization as a linguistic strategy in the 2024 Indonesian election campaign banners. Employing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis approach, the research analyzes how political actors structure their slogans by foregrounding certain elements to construct ideological narratives and project political identity. Based on 20 banners documented across Surakarta, the findings are classified into nine topicalization strategies: (1) ideal values and visionary leadership, (2) populist and people-oriented imagery, (3) discourse of change and improvement, (4) nationalism and collective action, (5) social identity and local representation, (6) gender mainstreaming and women's representation, (7) ethical and moral political discourse, (8) emotional and popular language, and (9) affiliation with political figures or parties as legitimacy claims. These strategies indicate that topicalization serves not only as a syntactic technique but also as a powerful rhetorical tool in shaping political communication. The study concludes that topicalization in visual campaign media is central to building persuasive political imagery. Future studies are encouraged to explore multimodal elements and audience reception to gain a deeper understanding of political discourse.

Keywords: topicalization, political campaign, discourse strategy, representation, CDA

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Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji penggunaan topikalisasi sebagai strategi linguistik dalam spanduk kampanye Pemilu 2024 di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan Analisis Wacana Kritis model Fairclough, penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana aktor politik menyusun slogan kampanye dengan memajukan elemen tertentu guna membentuk narasi ideologis dan menampilkan identitas politik. Berdasarkan dokumentasi terhadap 20 spanduk di wilayah Surakarta, temuan diklasifikasikan ke dalam sembilan strategi topikalisasi, yaitu: (1) penonjolan nilai ideal dan citra kepemimpinan visioner, (2) citra kerakyatan dan kepemimpinan yang merakyat, (3) citra perubahan dan perbaikan, (4) citra nasionalisme dan kolektivitas, (5) pemberdayaan identitas sosial dan lokalitas, (6) pengarusutamaan gender dan representasi perempuan, (7) citra etis dan moral politik, (8) bahasa populer dan emosional untuk mendekati diri ke pemilih, dan (9) topik afiliasi politik sebagai legitimasi. Strategi-strategi ini menunjukkan bahwa topikalisasi bukan sekadar teknik sintaksis, tetapi juga merupakan alat retorik yang kuat dalam membentuk komunikasi politik. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa topikalisasi dalam media kampanye visual berperan sentral dalam membangun citra politik yang persuasif. Studi lanjutan disarankan untuk mengeksplorasi unsur multimodal serta respons khalayak guna memperdalam pemahaman terhadap wacana politik.

Kata kunci: *topikalisasi, kampanye politik, strategi wacana, representasi, AWK*

Introduction

Political communication is not only conveyed through speeches or digital media but also through visual and linguistic media such as campaign banners. These banners function as semiotic artifacts that do more than merely deliver political information they actively shape and disseminate specific images, ideological positions, and political identities (Alifudin et al., 2020; Wahdaniah et al., 2021). In the context of Indonesian elections, banners remain a strategic medium for political actors to frame their public image, convey agendas, and establish symbolic closeness with voters, particularly in public spaces characterized by high levels of social interaction.

The strategy of political representation in campaign banners involves the integrated use of verbal and visual elements, including persuasive word choices, compelling imagery, and the strategic placement of information. As noted by Khajavi and Rasti (2020) such strategies do not merely serve as a means of message delivery; campaign banners also play a crucial role in shaping public perception by simplifying complex political messages and influencing voter behavior. Despite the advancement of information technology and the dominance of social media, campaign banners remain relevant in Indonesia due to their ability to reach voters in areas with limited digital access and to deliver political communication in a direct and visible format.

Language use in political discourse is never neutral. One key linguistic strategy, according to Fairclough Hikmawati and Wahyudi (2016) is topicalization the technique of moving a particular element to the initial position of a sentence to emphasize a specific focus. This strategy allows political actors to highlight issues they deem strategic, shape public perception of their political agenda, and implicitly downplay or exclude less favorable issues (Cook, 1989; Van Dijk, 2015; Wodak, 2014). In campaign texts, topicalization serves as a crucial tool for constructing political narratives, shaping candidate images, and guiding readers' interpretations of the messages conveyed.

Various studies have explored the role of political discourse in conveying ideology and constructing power relations. For example Saputra, et al., (2021) examined readability, meaning, and the function of foreign languages in commercial billboards in Surakarta. Their findings revealed that foreign languages are used not only to enhance marketing appeal but also as a

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symbolic strategy to reflect modernity and globalization. Similarly Panjaitan, et al., (2023) analyzed political discourse structures in campaign banners using Teun A. van Dijk's critical discourse analysis model, identifying how textual features, social cognition, and social context co-construct political messaging.

Topicalization has also been the focus of several discourse studies. Seperti penelitian oleh Sari (2019) for instance, found that while not every paragraph contains an explicit topic, each discourse typically maintains an overarching theme. Selanjutnya, penelitian oleh Cenderamata dan Nani (2019) investigated the use of topicalization strategies in celebrity news in online media through the lens of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model. Meilawati (2013) examined how topicalization contributes to the interpretation of classical Javanese texts, such as *Serat Sana Sunu*.

Research on populist rhetoric (Moffitt, 2016) visual persuasion in political campaigns (Eberl et al., 2021) and the use of social media in political communication (Jungherr et al., 2019) continues to reveal the complexity of contemporary discourse strategies. However there is still limited research that specifically investigates the use of topicalization in campaign banner texts as a means of political representation, particularly within the Indonesian political context. This indicates a conceptual and empirical gap that warrants further investigation.

Previous studies on discourse analysis and topicalization (Cap, 2020; Chadwick, 2000; Chilton & Schäffner, 2008; Dunmire, 2012; Guo et al., 2023; Mustafa, 2019; Samsulhadi et al., 2023; Trisnaningrum et al., 2019) have addressed political discourse in general. However the novelty of this study lies in its focus on the intersection between linguistic strategies particularly topicalization and the construction of political identity through visual media that may seem conventional but are in fact ideologically and politically charged.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how political candidates employed topicalization strategies in the 2024 election campaign banners to construct self-representation and articulate their political agendas. This research also aims to uncover how political messages in banners reproduce ideological structures and power relations through linguistically simple yet discursively loaded forms. Accordingly, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of political discourse and visual communication studies, while also offering practical insights for political communication practitioners in Indonesia.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how topicalization functions as a linguistic strategy in political discourse embedded in campaign banners. This method is chosen for its capacity to reveal the interrelationship between linguistic structures, political communication strategies, and the socio-ideological context underlying discourse production (Cook, 1989; Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2011, 2015; Wodak, 2014). The analytical framework adopted follows Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which includes text analysis (description), discourse practice analysis (interpretation), and social practice analysis (explanation). This study adapts Fairclough's CDA model but focuses specifically on the textual analysis stage, particularly in identifying topicalization structures as a political representation strategy within campaign slogans.

The scope of this study is limited to the analysis of topicalization in the verbal texts of political campaign banners during the 2024 election campaign period in Indonesia. The analysis focuses on how legislative candidates utilize syntactic structures especially by placing specific elements in clause-initial positions to highlight strategic issues, construct political identities, and articulate ideological affiliations and values intended to be communicated to the public.

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The primary data in this research consist of verbal texts extracted from 40 political campaign banners displayed in various strategic locations across Surakarta City during the campaign period (January–February 2024). The selection of banners is based on considerations such as text readability, representation of political parties participating in the 2024 general election as registered by the General Elections Commission (KPU), and the diversity of political communication styles and representational strategies. Data collection sites include five strategic areas: university surroundings, main intersections, shopping centers, densely populated residential areas, and major urban roads.

Data collection was conducted through field observation and visual documentation using a digital camera to capture the banners in their entirety. Each documented banner was accompanied by notes regarding the time, location, and situational context of its installation. Field notes also recorded linguistic aspects such as lexical choices, syntactic structures, topic element positioning, and visual elements that reinforce the verbal message. If public reactions or interactions were observed around the banners, these were noted as part of the social context to support discourse practice analysis.

Secondary data sources include scholarly journal articles previous research findings, and media reports relevant to the context of political communication in the 2024 election. These sources were used to enrich the interpretation of the social and ideological practices underlying campaign discourse.

Data analysis was conducted using a textual-descriptive approach with a specific focus on the structure of topicalization within campaign slogans. The analysis aimed to identify the forms of topicalization particularly the fronting of constituents to the initial clause position and to classify their rhetorical functions in constructing political representation. Each slogan was coded and analyzed based on the syntactic structures employed to foreground specific values, identities, or political agendas. The forms of topicalization were then classified into nine strategic categories according to emerging thematic tendencies in the data, such as the emphasis on ideal values, populist imagery, nationalism, and political affiliation. This approach allows for a systematic reading of political discourse in campaign banners from a linguistic structural perspective, without delving deeply into the dimensions of production or social context.

By integrating the CDA approach with a focus on syntactic aspects, particularly topicalization, this study seeks to reveal how linguistic structures shape political narratives and influence public perception. The findings are expected to contribute both conceptually and empirically to the field of political linguistics, especially in understanding the construction of political images through visually concise yet ideologically rich campaign media.

Result and Discussion

In the results and discussion section, a detailed analysis will be presented on how campaign messages are constructed through the use of topicalization strategies in banners, and how this technique is applied by political parties to shape their image and political objectives. The discussion will also highlight the specific linguistic characteristics employed by each party in utilizing topicalization as a tool for message delivery. The findings are expected to provide deeper insights into contemporary political communication strategies during the 2024 general election and their implications for voter perception and preference.

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Table 1. 2024 Indonesian Election Campaign Banners

No	Candidate / Party	Slogan	Date & Location	Area
(1)	Anies B. & Muhaimin I.	<i>Indonesia Adil & Makmur untuk Semua (A Just & Prosperous Indonesia for All)</i>	24 January 2024, Manahan	Surakarta
(2)	Anies B. & Muhaimin I.	<i>Kami Pilih Nomor Satu; Perubahan Indonesia; Untuk Indonesia Lebih Baik (We Choose Number One; Change for Indonesia; For a Better Indonesia)</i>	24 January 2024, Gonilan	Surakarta
(3)	Prabowo S. & Gibran R. B. Raka	<i>Jangan Lupa; Pilih yang Tulus Bekerja; Bersama Indonesia Maju; Indonesia Maju Sejahtera (Don't Forget; Choose the Sincere Worker; Together for a Progressive Indonesia; Prosperous Indonesia Forward)</i>	24 January 2024, Karangasem	Surakarta
(4)	Prabowo S. & Gibran R. B. Raka	<i>Maju Bersama Lintas Generasi (Progressing Across Generations)</i>	26 January 2024, Banyuwangi	Surakarta
(5)	Ganjar P. & Mahfud MD	<i>Gerak Cepat; Indonesia Raya; Indonesia Unggul; Indonesia Lebih Baik! (Quick Action; Great Indonesia; Excellent Indonesia; A Better Indonesia!)</i>	24 January 2024, Laweyan	Surakarta
(6)	Ganjar P. & Mahfud MD	<i>Tuanaku Rakyat, Jabatan Hanya Mandat (The People Are My Masters, Position Is Merely a Mandate)</i>	26 January 2024, Jebres	Surakarta
(7)	Dwi Purwanto / Demokrat	<i>Solo Damai, Solo Berseri (Peaceful Solo, Radiant Solo)</i>	24 January 2024, Karangasem	Surakarta
(8)	One Krisnata / Demokrat	<i>Yang Sudah Baik, Lanjutkan; Yang Belum Baik, Perbaiki (Continue What's Good; Fix What's Not)</i>	24 January 2024, Laweyan	Surakarta
(9)	Toto Susmono Hadi / Gerindra	<i>Putra Daerah; Lebih Memahami Kebutuhan Daerah (A Local Son; Better Understanding Local Needs)</i>	24 January 2024, Nusukan	Surakarta
(10)	Adik Sasongko / Gerindra	<i>Wonge Mase; Sat-Set; Das-Des; Wayahe Wong Tulus Tampil (Our People; Fast and Ready; It's Time for the Sincere to Lead)</i>	24 January 2024, Manahan	Surakarta
(11)	Puan Maharani /	<i>Sesarengan Mbangun Solo (Together Building Solo)</i>	25 January 2024, Karangasem	Surakarta

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No	Candidate / Party	Slogan	Date & Location	Area
	PDI			
(12)	Siti Nur Zulaikah / Ummat Party	<i>Saatnya Perempuan Menjadi Pelopor Perubahan (Time for Women to Lead Change)</i>	25 January 2024, Karangasem	Surakarta
(13)	Abdul Kharis Almasyhari / PKS	<i>Setia Melayani Rakyat (Loyal in Serving the People)</i>	25 January 2024, Banjarsari	Surakarta
(14)	Legislative Candidate / PDI, Laweyan District	<i>Hadir di Tengah Masyarakat untuk Membangun Kemenangan (Present Among the People to Build Victory)</i>	24 January 2024, Laweyan	Surakarta
(15)	Monique Dian Ayu / PDI	<i>Bangkit Bergerak; Berjuang Bersama (Rise and Move; Fight Together)</i>	24 January 2024, Laweyan	Surakarta
(16)	Kevin Fabiano / PDI	<i>Berintegritas & Bermanfaat; Ini Bukan Tentang Ganjar... Ini tentang Indonesia (With Integrity & Purpose; This Isn't About Ganjar... It's About Indonesia)</i>	24 January 2024, Banjarsari	Surakarta
(17)	Sekar Tandjung / Gerindra	<i>Karyakan Suaramu; Sekarang, Maju! (Empower Your Voice; Now, Move Forward!)</i>	25 January 2024, Laweyan	Surakarta
(18)	Pradipta Indro Kusumo / PAN	<i>Bantu Rakyat; Saatnya Pemuda Menuju DPRD Solo (Help the People; It's Time for Youth in DPRD Solo)</i>	24 January 2024, Gonilan	Surakarta
(19)	Hami Mujadid Irsyad / PAN	<i>Hidup Mapan Bersama PAN (Prosperous Life with PAN)</i>	24 January 2024, Banjarsari	Surakarta
(20)	Sonny / PSI	<i>Ikut Jokowi Pilih PSI; Anti-Intoleransi; Berjuang Bersama Rakyat; BPJS Gratis; Miskinkan Koruptor (With Jokowi, Choose PSI; Anti-Intolerance; Fight with the People; Free Health Insurance; Impoverish Corruptors)</i>	24 January 2024, Laweyan	Surakarta

Topicalization in the 2024 election campaign banners functions as a deliberate linguistic strategy to construct political image and influence public opinion. As shown in Table 1, in examples (1) through (20), topicalization is employed to foreground specific values, programs, or identities that candidates, political parties, or affiliated movements seek to associate directly with their public persona or political message. This strategic placement of linguistic elements at the beginning of slogans highlights key themes and serves to frame voter perception in favor of the represented political figure or agenda.

1. Topicalization Strategies in Campaign Banners

In the context of political campaigns, topicalization involves the selection of key issues to attract voters' attention and guide public discourse in line with the campaign agenda (Tyas, 2013). The following are topicalization strategies used in the 2024 election campaign banners to shape political image and influence public opinion:

a. Emphasizing Ideal Values and Visionary Leadership

In political campaigns, ideal values such as justice, prosperity, and progress are frequently topicalized to create the impression that the candidates possess a grand vision for the nation. This form of topicalization constructs a narrative portraying the candidates as visionary leaders capable of leading Indonesia toward a better future (Jayanti, 2014).

This strategy is evident in example (1) *Indonesia Adil & Makmur untuk Semua (A Just and Prosperous Indonesia for All)* where the phrase centers public attention on the ideas of justice and shared prosperity. By making these values the topical focus, the Anies-Muhaimin (AMIN) pair is portrayed as leaders who prioritize equity and the welfare of all citizens. Their campaign offers a solution to the public's perception of social and economic inequality, aligning with Anjayani and Hudiyono (2023) observation on the public's growing dissatisfaction with the unequal distribution of welfare and justice ahead of the 2024 election. Thus, the emphasis on "justice and prosperity for all" frames the candidates as agents of desired change.

Similarly, example (5) *Gerak Cepat; Indonesia Raya; Indonesia Unggul; Indonesia Lebih Baik! (Quick Action; Great Indonesia; Excellent Indonesia; A Better Indonesia!)* portrays Ganjar-Mahfud as responsive, proactive leaders oriented toward comprehensive national progress. Their slogans foster a progressive image, encouraging the public to associate them with visionary, pro-people leadership.

Example (19) *Hidup Mapan Bersama PAN (Prosperous Life with PAN)* projects an ideal future centered on well-being and stability. By topicalizing prosperity, Hami Mujadid Irsyad positions PAN as the party capable of realizing this vision. The message conveys an aspirational and visionary identity.

b. Populist Image and Grassroots-Oriented Leadership

A populist approach is used to build emotional closeness between candidates and the people. This strategy seeks to portray the candidate as relatable and a direct representative of the public will.

Example (6) *Tuanku Rakyat, Jabatan Hanya Mandat (The People Are My Masters, Position Is Merely a Mandate)* clearly topicalizes the people (*rakyat*) to assert their sovereignty, portraying Ganjar-Mahfud as humble leaders committed to public service. The phrase also implicitly criticizes elitist or authoritarian power practices. This resonates with the 2024 electoral context, which is marked by increased political awareness and public demands for transparency and leadership integrity (Syah, dkk., 2024).

In example (13) *Setia Melayani Rakyat (Loyal in Serving the People)* Abdul Kharis emphasizes his identity as a servant, not a ruler. This rhetorical strategy aligns with public expectations for leaders who are approachable, open, and service-oriented, influencing public opinion by reinforcing a humble yet effective populist image.

Example (14) *Hadir di Tengah Masyarakat untuk Membangun Kemenangan (Present Among the People to Build Victory)* topicalizes *presence among the people*, positioning the candidate as grounded and directly involved with constituents. This strategy shapes the image

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of an active, people-centered politician and promotes solidarity between representative and electorate as a path to meaningful political outcomes.

Similarly, in example (18) *Bantu Rakyat; Saatnya Pemuda Menuju DPRD Solo (Help the People; It's Time for Youth to Enter the Solo Regional Parliament)* the topical phrase *help the people* builds a narrative of public service. Despite containing a message of generational renewal, the elements of empathy and populism are prominent. PAN's Pradipta Indro Kusumo highlights a dual commitment to public service and youth representation.

c. Image of Change and Improvement

The theme of change is often central to campaign strategies, particularly when voters feel the need for renewal in leadership. Topicalizing change distinguishes candidates from the status quo.

In example (2) *Kami Pilih Nomor Satu; Perubahan Indonesia; Untuk Indonesia Lebih Baik (We Choose Number One; Change for Indonesia; For a Better Indonesia)* the AMIN pair is framed as symbols of change. The topical phrase *Perubahan Indonesia (Change for Indonesia)* reinforces the idea that their leadership offers a brighter future, positioning them as agents of expected reform.

Example (8) *Yang Sudah Baik, Lanjutkan; Yang Belum Baik, Perbaiki (Continue What's Good; Fix What's Not)* by One Krisnata, takes a moderate approach by acknowledging past achievements while offering improvements. This constructs a pragmatic narrative, presenting the candidate as rational, realistic, and adaptive a leader focused on continuity and practical solutions rather than extreme criticism. As Priyadharmad and Sultan (2019) observed, this rhetorical strategy reflects political stability and concrete problem-solving.

Example (15) *Bangkit Bergerak; Berjuang Bersama (Rise and Move; Fight Together)* by Monique Dian Ayu, emphasizes collective action and transformation. The slogan invites the public to participate in change, framing the candidate as progressive and collaborative.

In example (18) *Bantu Rakyat; Saatnya Pemuda Menuju DPRD Solo* the emphasis on youth and regeneration represents a new political direction. This topicalization strategy constructs a narrative of generational renewal, presenting the candidate as a representative of idealistic and proactive youth committed to public service. The combination of empathy and generational involvement aims to influence especially young voters, suggesting that change can be achieved by empowering young leaders.

d. Nationalism and Collectivism

Themes of nationalism and unity are used to appeal to voters' collective emotions and reinforce the image that the candidate represents national, not merely personal or group interests.

In example (3) *Bersama Indonesia Maju; Indonesia Maju Sejahtera (Together for a Progressive Indonesia; Prosperous Indonesia Forward)* Prabowo-Gibran use the theme of national progress as a shared mission. Words like *together* and *Indonesia* underscore collective participation in nation-building. The overall slogan design portrays them as experienced, hardworking, sincere leaders committed to stability and progress. The public is emotionally and ideologically influenced to view their leadership style positively.

Example (4) *Maju Bersama Lintas Generasi (Progress Together Across Generations)* constructs an inclusive narrative that connects multiple age groups in a shared national vision. The topical phrases *progress together* and *across generations* emphasize unity across demographics. This aligns with national collectivism and synergy across citizens. It positions

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the candidates as a balanced mix of experience and new energy, forming a moderate and integrative political image that appeals to both older and younger voters.

Likewise, in example (17) *Karyakan Suaramu; Sekarang, Maju! (Empower Your Voice; Now, Move Forward!)* Sekar Tandjung directly calls for active public participation, framing it as essential for collective progress. This establishes her image as a politician who promotes political awareness and progressive change.

e. Empowerment of Social Identity and Locality

Topicalization that highlights local and social identities is often employed to strengthen the connection between candidates and their constituents. This strategy constructs the image that the candidate is part of the community and understands the character and needs of the region.

This is evident in Example (9) *Putra Daerah; Lebih Memahami Kebutuhan Daerah (Local Son; Better Understanding of Regional Needs)* where local identity is foregrounded to frame Toto Susmono Hadi as a figure closely connected to the everyday realities of local citizens. This strategy aims to present the candidate as authentic, relatable, and sensitive to the real challenges faced by the community.

Example (7) *Solo Damai Solo Berseri (Peaceful Solo, Radiant Solo)* uses the name of the city (Solo) as the topicalized element, associating it with values such as peace and harmony. This strengthens the perception that Dwi Purwanto represents local interests and is committed to safeguarding the city's social cohesion and quality of life (Siagian & Ritonga, 2024).

Furthermore, Example (11) *Sesarengan Mbangun Solo (Together Building Solo)* by Puan Maharani also employs a local theme, using the Javanese language to evoke cultural and emotional resonance with the people of Solo. The phrase is simple yet rich with the spirit of togetherness and collective work, constructing Puan's image as a leader who embraces mutual cooperation and shows genuine concern for her hometown's progress.

f. Representation of Women

The presence of gender issues in political campaigns is essential to demonstrate a commitment to equality. Topicalizing women as agents of change is a deliberate strategy to present candidates as progressive figures.

This is reflected in Example (12) *Saatnya Perempuan Menjadi Pelopor Perubahan (It's Time for Women to Lead Change)* which explicitly places "women" as the main subject. This topicalization reinforces the image of Siti Nur Zulaikah as a female figure ready to lead and transform. The slogan also fosters solidarity among female voters and encourages their political participation. Siti Nur Zulaikah builds an image as an active and visionary woman, while offering a space for identification among women who are often marginalized in mainstream political discourse.

g. Ethical and Moral Political Image

In a political climate often marked by public skepticism, candidates strive to present themselves as figures of integrity with missions that go beyond mere power. Topics such as integrity and public benefit are foregrounded to build a moral and ethical political persona.

This is seen in Example (16) *Berintegritas & Bermanfaat; Ini Bukan Tentang Ganjar... Ini tentang Indonesia (Integrity & Usefulness; It's Not About Ganjar... It's About Indonesia)* where Kevin Fabiano uses moral-nationalist rhetoric to avoid narrow personal associations and instead portray himself as a figure committed to national interest. This strategy constructs his

image as ideologically independent while remaining within the political party ecosystem.

h. Use of Popular and Emotional Language to Connect with Voters

Candidates also employ informal or local expressions as a topicalization strategy to establish emotional closeness with voters. Such language makes campaign messages feel more familiar and personal.

In Example (10) *Wongse Mase; Sat-Set; Das-Des; Wayahe Wong Tulus Tampil* (Javanese phrases meaning “Ordinary People; Swift Action; Honest People’s Turn”) Adik Sasongko uses popular local expressions. The phrase emphasizes simplicity, honesty, and the right moment for sincere leadership to emerge. This strengthens the candidate’s image as someone who “speaks the same language” as the people. Local language not only deepens emotional connection with voters but also enhances the credibility of political messages within the local context.

i. Political Affiliation as a Strategy of Legitimacy

In modern political campaigns, affiliating with popular figures such as presidents or national leaders is a common strategy to build electoral legitimacy. Topicalized slogans referencing such figures are used to leverage the so-called “coattail effect.”

Example (19) *Hidup Mapan Bersama PAN* (Prosperous Life with PAN) is not only a reflection of visionary leadership but also emphasizes party affiliation (PAN) as a vehicle for achieving well-being.

Similarly, in Example (20) *Ikut Jokowi Pilih PSI; Anti Intoleransi; BPJS Gratis; Miskinkan Koruptor* (With Jokowi, Choose PSI; Anti-Intolerance; Free Healthcare; Impoverish the Corrupt) the phrase *Ikut Jokowi* (With Jokowi) as the topical element reinforces PSI’s alignment with Jokowi’s leadership. The slogan functions to project PSI as a pro-people, tolerant, and anti-corruption party. The direct and action-oriented style of communication is designed to influence public opinion by presenting PSI and its candidates as not just ideologically driven, but as actors with clear positions on national issues.

Tabel 2. Recapitulation of Topicalization Strategies in the 2024 Election Campaign Banners

No.	Topicalization Strategy	Data Examples	Total Entries	Description
1.	Emphasis on Ideal Values and Visionary Leadership Image	1, 5, 19	3	Highlights visions of an ideal future, welfare, and responsive leadership.
2.	Populist Image and Grassroots Leadership	6, 13, 14, 18	4	Emphasizes closeness to the people and public service.
3.	Image of Change and Improvement	2, 8, 15, 18	4	Promotes structural reform, progressive politics, and participatory change.
4.	Nationalism and Collectivism Image	3, 4, 17	3	Highlights unity, national ideals, and collective movement.
5.	Empowerment of Social Identity and Locality	7, 9, 11	3	Emphasizes local values, regional beauty, and community collaboration.
6.	Gender Mainstreaming and Women’s Representation	12	1	Highlights women’s roles as agents of political change.

No.	Topicalization Strategy	Data Examples	Total Entries	Description
7.	Ethical and Moral Political Image	16	1	Builds the image of a morally-driven politician who prioritizes the nation over power.
8.	Use of Popular and Emotional Language to Engage Voters	10	1	Uses local expressions to build cultural and emotional proximity with the audience.
9.	Political Affiliation as Electoral Legitimacy Strategy	19, 20	2	Highlights alignment with major parties or leaders (e.g., Jokowi) to reinforce legitimacy.

Overall, topicalization strategies in campaign banners are used selectively to direct public attention toward key values and the desired perception of the candidates. This strategy proves effective in constructing a distinct political image and influencing public opinion by simplifying political messages into memorable slogans or phrases associated with the candidate’s identity.

Topicalization in campaign banners refers to the deliberate emphasis on certain issues deemed important and relevant by political actors (Wahyudi & Hikmawati, 2016). The findings indicate that topics raised in the banners include ideas of change, social justice, public empowerment, and anti-corruption efforts. This strategy demonstrates an effort to align campaign messages with the needs and aspirations of society.

For instance, the slogan “*Miskinkan Koruptor!*” (*Impoverish the Corrupt!*) explicitly highlights the issue of anti-corruption and projects a bold political stance. This discourse aligns with Fairclough’s (1995) view that political discourse is a form of ideological struggle that functions to construct identity, relationships, and systems of representation. Emphasizing corruption as a central topic acts as a symbolic strategy to gain public support by constructing a common enemy.

Another example, the slogan “*Tuanku Rakyat, Jabatan Hanya Mandat*” (*My Master is the People, Office is Only a Mandate*) places the people as the primary subject in the power relationship. This reflects a populist discourse often used in electoral campaigns, where candidates portray themselves as direct representatives of the people’s will, distancing themselves from elite political imagery. Thus, topicalization in campaign banners serves not only to convey informative content but also to construct ideological meaning intended to shape public perception.

Conclusion

This study reveals that topicalization strategies in the 2024 election campaign banners are selectively employed to construct political representations of candidates and political parties. Through the strategic positioning of specific elements at the beginning of slogans, political actors aim to highlight values, images, or agendas they wish to be closely associated with their identities. Findings from the analysis of 20 banners demonstrate that topicalization functions as an effective rhetorical tool to simplify political messages, reinforce ideological appeal, and shape public perception of the candidates’ closeness, integrity, and commitment.

By employing Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis framework, this study demonstrates that topicalization is not merely a linguistic choice but an intentional political communication strategy laden with social and ideological significance. The initial topics of campaign slogans such as “the people,” “change,” “justice,” or names of national figures reflect a systematic effort to frame discourse in ways that advantage the political actors behind them.

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The impact of this strategy lies in the creation of strong, easily recognizable political imagery through brief but persuasive visual media. This study recommends that future research expand its scope to include multimodal aspects, such as the interaction between visual and verbal elements, as well as public responses to campaign messages. Such an approach will enable a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of political discourse construction through visual campaign media.

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