

Language Semiotics of Campaign Banners and Billboards of Legislative Candidates in Malang

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Abstract. A large number of Election Contesting Parties makes the parties compete strategically in the political campaign to promote their legislative candidates and attract voters. This triggers the phenomenon of "media war or publication." It can be seen in the language used in the candidate's banners and billboards. This study examines the language of banners and billboards which appear in a variety of linguistic symbols that accommodate the persuasive message from the candidates and the supporting parties. Through a semiotic approach, the verbal texts data as a language symbol are examined, as well as aspects of meanings 'in language' or 'outside language' or nonlinguistic areas. The implied "ideology" behind the utilization of language symbols is also analyzed. The results found the occurrences of either direct or indirect delivery of persuasive messages, genre categories of language symbols conveying persuasive messages, language symbols with implied sympathetic characteristics, diversity of message orientation, and choice of language codes that are used as means of conveying messages, along with ideological descriptions hidden behind the persuasive language symbols.

Keywords: *semiotics, banners and billboards for publications, legislative candidates, election participant parties.*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Indonesian society, the openness of the democratic system has provided opportunities for political parties to participate in democratic parties or general elections. The implementation of the Election is regulated in Law Number 7 of 2017 concerning Elections, which also regulates the involvement of the nominated legislature candidate. The "media wars or publications" by the legislative candidates, especially in the form of the banners and billboards language, appears to give rise to a variety of meaningful symbols that accommodate their persuasive messages. As a means of political communication, languages are covered in symbols or messages that can represent the ideas or thoughts of the speakers. Thus, it can be assumed that verbal or visual symbols used in campaign banners or billboards of the political candidates in Malang certainly have their characteristics that may be different from regular speeches in everyday communication or other persuasive communication.

Given the strategic location of the banners and billboards, which are mostly displayed in intersections, people tend to read them at a glance. Therefore, it is expected that the messages are short but clear [1]-[3]. In this case, the banners and billboards use meaningful verbs and visual symbols, which can represent the candidates' goal to persuade the voters to vote for them. The various forms of language are formed in such a way so as to have a clear sense of persuasion. As an effective media in broadcasting the candidates' vision and mission, the banners and billboards are written with message-loaded language, as seen in the diction or choice of words, the structure of the language used, and the message that creates persuasive effects. Based on the description, this study seeks to examine the language of politics, especially written language in the candidates' banners and billboards in Malang. Furthermore, the forms and meanings of linguistic symbols as a representation of the characteristics of campaign language or propaganda in the context of political interaction are explained. As a campaign or propaganda language, the candidates' banners and billboards language are worthy of being studied, especially from a semiotic perspective.

Semiotics is distinguished into two categories, namely the significance of semiotics and communication semiotics [4]. Communication Semiotics emphasizes the production theory of symbols, which assumes the existence of six factors in communication: the sender, receiver, code, message, communication channel, and references being discussed. On the other hand, communication semiotics prioritizes the understanding of a sign. Thus, the cognition process is more important than the communication process. [5]

Based on the discussion above, the research problems are twofold. 1) How do the language symbols mark the persuasive communication in banners and billboards for the candidate promotion in Malang?, 2) What is the meaning of persuasive language symbols in banners and billboards published for the political candidates in Malang?

METHOD

This study employed a semiotic approach, particularly Communication Semiotics. The data were in the form of verbal and visual language symbols that reflect the persuasive message of candidates and their supporting parties in Malang. Data were collected from the banners and billboards used to promote candidates

and displayed in strategic locations in Malang. Then, the data were selected purposively, processed, analyzed, and approached semiotically [6].

RESULT

The results show that meaningful language symbols in the form of numbers, images, and spoken words were used in the campaign banners and billboards. These three symbols are necessarily persuasive messages which can be analytically classified in the following elements of persuasive messages.

Party Identity includes three elements, namely the party's ordinal number, party logo, and party name. The inclusion of party identity is not mere information that the candidate is supported by the respective party. It actually means that the candidate is genuinely 'blessed' and aims to gather support from avid sympathizers. Language hides the mind. In other words, language is more than a means for expressing thought since behind the mind; there are particular interests that manipulate the language per se. Likewise, the use of various language symbols in the language of the legislative campaign posters seemed to be 'engineered.'

The candidates' identity, which included the candidates' ordinal number, names, and photos, can be interpreted denotatively as the information that marks the order of the candidates' existence as well as an effective alternative reminder. The element of the candidates' ordinal number was followed by the picture of a hand holding nails or spikes or even a tick on the candidates' ordinal number. This can be interpreted as an informative message that the number must be voted or the direct imperative meaning that the voters should vote the candidate. The candidates' names were commonly written together with the self-portrait, ordinal number, that was mostly put in front of the name. The name is a part of their identity. Some names were followed with academic titles, but some other names did not include the title.

Title inclusion, both in the form of academic titles and religious degrees, as information related to academic qualifications or religiosity, also connoted the meaning of the candidates' efforts to gather sympathy from the academic or religious community. In society, academic and religious titles are considered essential to attract voters, although the titles are not required in the administrative process during the nomination. Related to the writing of candidates' name, a new phenomenon arises. The names were rewritten in different formats. The name was written like a ballot format that lists the names of candidates according to the ordinal number, either with or without a picture of a nail, the hand holding the nail or the tick on the candidates' ordinal number.

The candidates' elements of numbers and names indicate an affirmation to remind voters of the existence of the candidates. A large number of candidates' campaign that includes the language symbol repeatedly, implicitly means that there are concerns about whether

the candidates are known by the voters or not. This concern seems reasonable. Besides, the openness of the nomination system in the current election had an impact on a large number of candidates who were running for office or being selected as one of the election contestants. The voters were unfamiliar with or difficult to recognize the candidates. Moreover, it was reported that a quarter of the candidates who competed to win a seat had not reported their details to the General Election Commission (KPU) website. Thus, the voters did not have sufficient information about the candidate.

Regarding the element of self-image, based on the attire worn, it can be identified that there were three categories of attire: white, black, and *batik*. From the ethnic aspect chosen, either by female or male candidates, the attires were in the form of a formal suit, Muslim outfit, or semi-formal suit. The choice of dominant white attire implicitly means that the candidates are clean people. At the same time, it can be interpreted as following President Joko Widodo's recommendation to wear white in their daily duties. The clothes reflect a high sense of nationalism and the love of the local products. The Muslim outfit worn by the candidates (skullcap for men and headscarves or veil for women) signifies the efforts of the candidates to attract voters from religious circles or sympathizers who have the same religious background.

In terms of a persuasive message, the writing appears in the form of a direct sentence in the imperative category, such as "*Coblos Nomor ...!*"; "*Ingat Namanya Coblos Nomornya!*" (Vote the number ...! Remember the name, Vote the number!). The use of this persuasive message shows the direct orders (or the request) to vote for the candidates or parties. Direct imperative sentences are commonly used among "communication participants" who have close relations, especially when it is reinforced by the invitation that is imperative, such as "*Ojo Lali Ker Pilih Nawak Ewed!*" (Don't forget to choose your kind!). It can be interpreted that the candidates or parties have strong self-confidence, have supporters or avid sympathizers who "can be governed" to cast their votes during elections.

Some persuasive sentences were also used, such as Honest, Integrated, *Arema* Native, Trusted, New Generation of Legislative, Clean, Anti-Corruption, *Tlekung* Native, Work with the heart for the people, Caring and Popularizing, Young Entrepreneurs Social and Legal Activists. These are the persuasive messages categorized as indirect types of information. It describes the personal qualifications of candidates or their supporting parties. What is interesting from the sentence nuances is that it portrays the candidates as being honest, clean, anti-corruption and can be trusted. It is as a persuasive diction to mark the candidates' efforts to remind the voters of the recent mass corruption in Malang. This is in line with the opinion of [7], [8] who stated that the use of certain language choices, either in the form of words or prepositions, reflects specific 'ideological values' that can form public opinion, justify the parties themselves, and discredit other parties. In the

context of the legislative campaign's discourse, the choice of language through certain categories of words serves as ideological expressions to form a general view of the good self-image of the candidates.

The persuasive sentences such as: "*Mboten..mboten Lek Ngapusi*" (*Tidak..tidak kalau menipu*); *Siap Mengabdikan*; *Siap mengemban amanat, menunjukkan manfaat*; *Pilihan pasti*; *Wakile Emak-emak*; *Partai PKB Satukan Indonesia, Suara Golkar Suara rakyat*; *Pilih PKS, Makmur bersama Prabowo Sandi, Nasdem Partaiku, Jokowi Presidenku*; *Biarpun bumi berguncang, X tetap pilihanku*; *Berwawasan masa depan Tidak dapat ditukar dengan uang Milyaran*; *Tekat kami sudah bulat Tanpa Anda kami bukan apa-apa*; *Mari Kita Bersatu Menegakkan Hukum dan Keadilan*; *Yang mendirikan PKB Ulama dan Kyai Sebagai Warga NU Kita Wajib Manut*; dan *Sakduleran Saklawase*, (I will not lie; ready to serve; ready to do your mandate; giving help; a sure choice; Moms' representative; PKB unite Indonesia; Golkar's voice is Indonesia voice; vote for PKS; prosper with Prabowo-Sandi; Nasdem is my party, Jokowi is my President; even though earth shakes, X has my vote; a vision of the future, cannot be bought with round figures; we have a round vote, without you, we are nothing; let's unite to enforce a just law; PKB was founded by Ulama and Kyai, as an NU member, we must follow; family forever) resembles spoken speech. They are advertising language, the language of lyrics or poetry of songs or poems, speech, rhetorical sentence, sermon or advice, and slogans. It seems that these styles were used as an alternative persuasion strategy to mark mutual values in tradition, orientation, and the mindset of the candidates and their supporting parties. The choice of genre or choice of language also seems to express an ideology that can shape public opinion while building the self-image of the candidate.

The use of regional language symbols (Java), "*Mboten..mboten Lek Ngapusi*": *Nyoto manfaate; seduleran saklawase, manteb milih nomer ...* (I will not lie, will be helpful, forever family, sure to vote ...) connotes the meaning of effort to build targets or potential sympathizers with general characteristics, avid sympathizers, sympathetic sympathizers with similar status and religious, ideological, geographical, or social backgrounds. It can also be interpreted as displaying the adaptive abilities of candidates and their supporting parties. The diversity of the message's meaning includes instilling the fanatical sense through individual cults that appear in the sentence "*Orangnya Peni; Putra Hayono Isman,*" (Peni's men, Hayono Isman's son). The forming of 'interesting' images that offer a thought to the future is seen in the use of symbols *#Tahun 2019*; *#Ayo Malang lebih baik* (*#2019, #A Better Malang*). It signifies the effort of introducing sympathetic feelings through involvement. Shared responsibility and the sympathetic feelings through emotional interference and other elements mark the moral character possessed by the electoral party as the sender of the message. The use of "#" or hashtag symbols can be associated with an effort to invite participants to be more focused, both in the

context of the election and the vote. Referring to Hooker's theory [9], the interaction of text and context includes three parts of the concept of discourse, field of discourse, and mode of discourse. The exciting thing about the study of the language used in campaign banners and billboards is that the discourse area was dominated by visual symbols, such as photos, logos, hashtags, year numbers, images and minimal use of verbal language symbols. The display was limited to the name and slogan, solicitation, and a little information related to the qualifications of candidates. Thus, the concept of the discourse area tends to be "passive." There is no general past or future review, the formulation is not detailed, the time reference tends to be present, the tenor of the discourse tends to be monologue, the frame of reference of the speaker is the first person, the way or mode of the discourse tends to be formal, impersonal, simple, and repetitive. From the semiotic view, the campaign using banners and billboards suggest less talk and more focus on encouraging participants to come to the elections (no abstentions). In short, it attracts participants subtly through a reminder, affirmation, and focus.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the language and symbols used in the campaign banners and billboards, the following conclusion can be drawn.

1. The persuasive messages are delivered in the form of direct statements and messages of persuasion as if stated by the voters to endorse the candidates and the party.
2. The use of various models of persuasive strategies in the form of advertising sentences, song lyrics, poetry verses, da'wah sentences, oration or speeches, and rhetorical sentences, reveals the differences in tradition, orientation, and mindset of the party.
3. Some symbols can attract targets or potential sympathizers with general characteristics, avid sympathizers, sympathizers who have similar status or religious, ideological, geographical, and social backgrounds, which indicates the adaptation skill of the candidates and their supporting parties.
4. There is a diversity of message meaning orientations which include introducing fanatical sense through individual cults; the formation of 'interesting' images that provide thought to the future; introducing sympathetic feelings through the image of 'shared responsibility'; and introducing sympathetic feelings through emotional interference and other elements that mark the moral character possessed by candidates and their supporting parties as the sender of the message.
5. There are three alternative categories of persuasive codes, namely regional language codes as markers of traditional sympathizers recruitment, foreign language codes as markers of building positive characteristics, and national language codes which indicate a different orientation of the candidates' attitudes and the supporting parties.

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