

Reading Symbolic Identity Smear Campaign on Presidential Candidates Billboards in Indonesia's Post-Truth Era: The 2019 Election

Lely Rahmawati
Applied Linguistic Study
Program, Postgraduate School
Universitas Negeri Jakarta
[lelyrahmawati-
lt17s2@mahasiswa.iunj.ac.id](mailto:lelyrahmawati-lt17s2@mahasiswa.iunj.ac.id)

Eva Leiliyanti, Ph.D.
Applied Linguistic Study
Program, Postgraduate School
Universitas Negeri Jakarta
eleiliyanti@unj.ac.id

Dr. Shafruddin Tajjuddin, M.A.
Applied Linguistic Study
Program, Postgraduate School
Universitas Negeri Jakarta
shafruddin.ta@unj.ac.id

Abstract—The 2019 election Indonesia can arguably be seen as an intriguing election. Not only is it due to the virulent claim contestation between the presidential candidates' camps – Jokowi's and Prabowo's – especially towards the contested versions of the election results based on the real count (the process has not met its end result) and the quick count (Jokowi's votes outnumbered Prabowo), but that the contestation itself represents the long-drawn-out contention that stemmed from the synthesis as well as cleavage of discursive ideological political strands of Nationalist/Islamic(-st?). The smear campaign regarding politics of identity (questioning their Islamic credentials, leadership capability and political platforms) propagated by both camps has perennially circulated and proliferated not only since the 2014 Presidential election, but that it also accumulated since the 2012 Gubernatorial election of DKI province. The latter contested the obscure synthesis and versus polarization of Nationalist/Islamic(-st?) strands represented by the incumbent, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Sino- Indonesian Christian DKI's former Governor, Jokowi's Vice Governor) versus Anies baswedan (Indonesian Yemen Descent, Jokowi's former Minister of Education and Culture). The aforementioned phenomenon foregrounds the presidential candidates' billboard advertisements. This paper investigates the scopes the presidential candidates' billboards represent the symbolic identity smear campaign in Indonesia's post-truth era, deploying social semiotic and language evaluation theories. The preliminary finding demonstrates that from the six billboards investigated (two billboards represent each camp – deploying stratified purposeful sampling), both written and visual texts of the presidential candidates' billboards not only represent the discursive contestation of Nationalist/Islamic(-st?) strands, but that they also reflect the relativization of each camp's beliefs through the supremacy of softening messages aiming at short-circuiting the voters' critical, analytical senses (in this case in the form of textual contradiction) in Indonesia's post-truth era.

Keywords: the 2019 election Indonesia, the presidential candidates' billboards, social semiotics, language evaluation theory, smear campaign in post truth era.

I. INTRODUCTION

The political situation in Indonesia in 2019 has gotten tempestuous and striking to explore. On 17 April 2019 Indonesia holding of general elections for the president, the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) in one day. This is the first time in the history of general elections in Indonesia. Based on website www.kpu.go.id, there are 192.8 million Indonesians registered as voters who would be using their voting rights.

In the 2019 general election, 14 political parties were participating, namely: PKB, GERINDRA, PDI PERJUANGAN, GOLKAR, NASDEM, GARUDA, BERKARYA, PKS, PERINDO, PPP, PSI, PAN, HANURA, DEMOKRAT. In 21 May 2019, KPU published a final vote result of the recapitulation of 2019 legislative election at the national level, as follows: 1. PDI-P 27.053.961 (19,33 percent); 2. Gerindra 17.594.839 (12,57 percent); 3. Golkar 17.229.789 (12,31 percent); 4. PKB 13.570.097 (9,69 percent); 5. Nasdem 12.661.792 (9,05 percent) ;6. PKS 11.493.663 (8,21 percent); 7. Demokrat 10.876.507 (7,77 percent) ; 8. PAN 9.572.623 (6,84 percent) and 9. PPP 6.323.147 (4,52 percent) [1].

Leiliyanti noted that since the Indonesia's independence in 17 August 1945 the major parties have formulated the polarisation of the Nationalist and Islamic strands which characterized the Indonesia political framework. Based on the parties which won the general election in 2019, the parties are included as nationalist are: PDI-P, Gerindra, Golkar, Demokrat, Nasdem, and the parties are included as Islamic are: PKB, PKS, and PAN [2].

The presidential election in 2019 can arguably be seen as a rematch of the 2014 presidential election contesting Jokowi-Ma'ruf and Prabowo-Sandi. Jokowi's camp won the election. In the 2014 presidential election, Jokowi was supported by nine political parties, including the two nationalist parties, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and Golkar, and two Islamic parties, the United Development Party (PPP) and National Awakening Party (PKB).

Jokowi chose Ma'ruf Amin for his running mate, the chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), while Prabowo opted Sandiaga Uno, the former deputy governor of Jakarta as well as the prominent Indonesian businessman. Hadiz claimed that Jokowi gained his national reputation in 2005, especially when he became the mayor of the central Javanese city of Solo [3]. In 2012 he won the election for DKI Jakarta's governor supported by PDI-P chairwoman Megawati Soekarnoputri. Jokowi's popularity skyrocketed during his administration as Jakarta's governor in 2012 and Indonesian president in 2014-now (Jokowi is the first president who does not come from an elite political or military background, unlike Prabowo who came from a prominent political family) .

The survey conducted by Tyson and Purnomo, involving 1400 voters on Surakarta as well as in the Central Javanese districts of Boyolali, Karanganyar, Klaten, Sragen, Sukoharjo and Wonogiri for the length of time since June 13 until July 5, 2014 [4]. The results from the election in Central Java nearly 19.5 million votes with the choice 66.6 percent for Jokowi and 33.4 percent for Prabowo. Survey respondents perceived Jokowi as a straightforward, honest and have a positive record in governance while Prabowo was perceived as forceful, handsome and come from the background of elite figure.

Aspiral noted that Prabowo has a Javanese priyayi aristocratic background, including having ancestors who played a role in the so-called "Java War" against the Dutch (1825–30), Prabowo's grandfather, Margono Djojohadikusumo, was the founder of Bank Indonesia. His father, Sumitro Djojohadikusumo, was one of Indonesia's greatest economists [5]. He was previously married to the daughter of former dictator General Suharto, who ruled Indonesia with an iron fist for 30 years. Prabowo represented as Indonesia's power elite due to he comes from a wealthy family, formerly one of Indonesia's most senior army officers, one of the country's richest men, and the former son-in-law of President Suharto. Based on Sidel when Suharto fell in May 1998, Prabowo was head of the army strategic command [6]. He was alleged as an actor behind the Trisakti shootings of May 12, 1998. In 2008, Prabowo established The Partai Gerindra (Gerakan Indonesia Raya, Greater Indonesia Movement) for helping him become president.

Mietzner examined the contrasting public personal between Jokowi & Prabowo. Jokowi glance and looked like an average lower -middle-class Indonesian [5]. It can be proven through his appearance who wore cheap clothes, looked "villagey" (ndeso), uncultivated manner with Javanese accent. Whereas Prabowo epitomizes as a highly educated person and Javanese aristocrat.

Nowadays, one of the phenomena that are quite prominent on social media during the campaign is labelling "*cebong*" and "*kampret*" amid supporters of Jokowi and Prabowo. *Cebong* as a term has been emerged by the anti-Joko Widodo camp with the intent of mocking its supporters. This term is used due to the habit of Joko Widodo himself who has a hobby of conserving frogs and tadpole in the pool of presidential palace considering to feel the rural ambience that was once inherent in Joko Widodo's life. While the term *kampret* as a response to *cebong* ridicule. *Kampret* is a kind of bat animal that likes to sleep in the upside position of the foot above or was originally used to label someone who often uses inverse logic.

Cebongers has an opinion that Joko Widodo, who most deserves to lead Indonesia for two periods because Joko Widodo built Indonesia in a real way. But for *kampret* camp, Prabowo Subianto is far more feasible, so 2019 must replace the president through hashtag #2019gantipresiden.

the designation of *Cebong* and *Kampret* from the beginning was carried out by the user of social media to classify differences in people's political choices and this kind of labeling was enough to warm up the political situation ahead of the General Election. Wawan also

recognized that this kind of political phenomenon rarely happens in other countries, namely using animal terms to refer or tease toward people who have different political choices. This is indicated that the Indonesian people are not mature in democracy.

On 22 May 2019, one month after the general election, KPU has been announced that Jokowi had won re-election with 55.5 per cent of the vote. After Prabowo denial the result, his supporters who have incriminated election officials of deceit, would rebel against through mass protests in some areas in Central Jakarta, especially in front of the election supervisory building. Indonesian police confirmed that Six people have been killed and 200 injured during mass rallies.

The politic strands were sparked by Geertz is very intriguing for analyzing Indonesia's political map. During Old Order, it was very clear the strands of politic of wrestling in Indonesia. Where there are Masyumi and NU (Santri), PNI (Priayi / Abangan), PKI (Abangan). But over time starting from the Old Order, the New Order, and the Reformation some observers were saying the politics of these strands had disappeared. The reason is that if we still believe the politic strands still works at the grass-root level, we should be 'worried' about the fact that the votes of Islamic parties decreased in the 1999, 2004 and 2009 elections compared to the 1955 elections. The combined Islamic parties in the 1955 elections were 43.7 per cent. while the total votes of nationalist parties were 51.7 per cent.

Relating to religion, and in particular the role of the majority religion and its adherents in the public domain, have always been key dynamics within Indonesian politics. The elections will continue to be influenced by this issue. In late 2016, Indonesian Christian Governor of Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or well known as Ahok faced demands he is jailed for blasphemy and being jailed. On 2 December 2016, about 800.000 Muslim demonstrations spooked the political elite or well known as Aksi 212 and was labelled "Defending Islam Acts". This demonstration has begun since Ahok made a speech in September 2016 about the Quran was being used to justify the claim that Muslims should not be led by non-Muslims. As the result of the demonstration, Ahok who at the time was running for re-election had gotten the numbers of polling decrease significantly.

Fealy examined that after Jakarta's 2017 gubernatorial election, Indonesia's Islamists implied would be more solid than ever in their support for Prabowo Subianto's challenge to Joko Widodo (Jokowi) in Indonesia's 2019 elections [7]. The "212" movement born out of the 2016–17 anti-Ahok demonstrations was institutionalised in the form of the 212 Alumni Brotherhood (or PA212) and the National Movement to Safeguard the Fatwa of Ulama (GNPF-U), both of which have overtly declared their support for Prabowo.

Hadiz stated that in many respects, the two vice-presidential candidates for next year reflect two quite different Islamic communities [3]. Kyai Haji Mar'uf Amin, now 75 years old, is the leader of the quasi-state Indonesian Muslim Leaders Assembly, and is also head of the governing board of Nahdlatul Ulama (Indonesia's largest

mass Muslim organisation. During the Soeharto era, he served in the Jakarta Provincial Council representing the old Islamist party, PPP. With the start of Reformasi in 1998, he moved to support the establishment of the more pluralist PKB, led by former President Wahid. Meanwhile, Mr Sandiaga Solehuddin Uno, who looks more youthful than his 49 years, is a second-generation businessman who has created and built capital market investment vehicles. As he prospered, entering the list of Indonesia's richest 50 people, he has developed assiduously a reputation for doing good public deeds in terms of religious piety and maintaining a good and healthy lifestyle. To this end, he has been active with various Islamic groups, including the progressive Paramadina Foundation.

Language is an effective way of communicating and conveying our intention toward the other people. Language is not only about direct speech. However, there are many factors which have a role to form a meaning in communication such as through text and visual language. This analysis will explore the importance of tracing the meaning of billboards consisting of images and writing. When combined and analyzed will find meaning in depth.

and discussing political branding in billboards which indirectly can penetrate unconsciousness for commuters who see it. Departing from the importance of the linguistic role to dismantle and dissect the meaning, this analysis will use three approaches, namely: social semiotic, Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and appraisal theory to understand slogans or sentences that are invitations to billboards.

Social semiotics is a theory which has been developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen from the Systemic Functional Linguistic theory of Halliday [8]. Social semiotics focuses on the concept of visual grammar that makes audiences see visual images deeply and systematically. In the visual image, we can find meaning from the combined representation that is formed

Appraisal theory from [9] is a theory that describes the way language evaluates, adopts and shapes interpersonal relationships. it consists of three sub-systems, namely: attitude (consisting of affect, judgment, and appreciation), engagement (monogloss and heterogloss), and graduation (consist of force and focus). Here the analysis from the billboard of nationalist and Islamic strands.



Source: calegpkskalbar.com

The analysis from the image no 1: the background of these billboards is yellow which become the official colour GOLKAR as the parties. The legislative candidate looks directly toward the commuters. His name is Olsu Babay who was born at Jakarta, Kotamobagu October 10th 1982. He is a Muslim and the head of Golkar region of North Jakarta. If we analyse from the social distance and intimacy can be seen through his image which from the head until waist, it indicated as far personal distance. Wearing a yellow jacket that seems united with the official colour of GOLKAR. The gesture is thumbs up and hidden his left hand into the pocket of jeans. His appearance looks casual. The size of his image is bigger than Jokowi-Ma'ruf image. the written which is salience in this billboard is "PARTAI GOLKAR" which reflected the "branding" or the name of a political party. Then there is a tagline "MOHON DOA YANG IKHLAS UNTUK KAMI" using a red colour which means "Please a sincere pray for us " and indicated a warning. The word "us" represent Jokowi-



Ma'ruf and Olsu. Then from this tagline, it indicates there is the process of mental which involved the emotion. The number 4 shows the number from GOLKAR in the ballot followed by the symbol of GOLKAR that is Banyan tree. OLSU BABAY also mentioned his degree "S.Kom" (bachelor in Technology of Information) and also his electoral district in Jakarta. The tagline for Jokowi-Ma'ruf is "INDONESIA MAJU" which means "advanced Indonesia" followed by the number 1. GOLKAR. The dominant colour from this billboard is yellow which is the symbol of harvested rice, then white colour represents purity. Overall, we can conclude that this billboard wants to convey about prosperity. Based on the official website of KPU Olsu was lost in general election in 2019.

From the image no 2, there is a candidate's legislative named Iriansyah HN Rizal, he was born at Pontianak, March 12th 1961. From the billboard, we can notice about the logo of 'PKS' party which followed by the number 8 and tagline "Ayo lebih baik" which means "Let's be

better". On the left side, there is an image Prabowo-Sandi using hashtag #2019gantipresiden. On the image of Iriansyah who as the legislative candidates wearing the same white shirt and peci (Muslim cap). (Leiliyanti 2013) in (Adam 2011) argued that peci is recognized as one of the attributed who worn by the Muslim man during praying. Then Soekarno shifted this meaning through his affirmed that using of peci is to differentiate Indonesian people from the colonial Dutch. Since at the time, peci is regarded as the item of Indonesian national custom. (Ajidarma 2009) stated that formerly peci was developed which showed the blend between nationalism and religiosity which reverse socio-moral status.

Hashtag #2019pilihPKS and tagline "untuk Indonesia yang lebih baik" which means be better for Indonesia. It is indicated that Indonesia did not in a good situation during the control of the previous president. There are also "CALEG DPR RI DAPIL 1 KALBAR" which mentions the area of election from Iriansyah. There are three colours on this billboard such as golden yellow, black and white which becomes the dominant colours. Based on the official website PKS: black colour as representing certainty and aspiration, the golden yellow is also used to indicate the prosperity of the area they come from and white means purity. Based on the official website of KPU Iriansyah was lost in general election in 2019.

II. CONCLUSIONS

From two candidates' billboard, we can see that the candidate's billboard did not show clearly about their strands whether nationalist or Islamic. If we see on image number 1 from Iriansyah HN Rizal, the symbol of Islam is not specifically. It is proven that there is only peci and baju koko which indicated the symbol of Islam. Meanwhile, peci was considered by Soekarno as one of item Indonesia national custom. On the image no 2, there is a slogan "Mohon Doa yang Ikhlas untuk Kami" which means request through sincere prayer to the voters. (Suwondo, et al 1987) stated that this phenomenon already had been since the

general election in 1982. At that time, there was a billboard of PDI which asking the pray for the voters. Slogan "Mohon Doa Restu" also become the popular statement on Javanese wedding to the guest which be spoken by the bride. It seemed that this is the phenomenon for a candidate legislative to inquiry the image of pious. From the contrastive between the billboard from nationalist and Islamic strands, we can know that the billboards can embrace both of nationalist and Islamic strands flexibly. In order, they want to gain the voter from various background.

REFERENCES

- [1] KPU. (2019). Hasil Perhitungan Pileg 2019. Retrieved from <https://pemilu2019.kpu.go.id/#/dprri/hitung-suara/>
- [2] Leiliyanti, E. (2013). *Representation and symbolic politics in Indonesia: an analysis of billboard advertising in the legislative assembly elections of 2009*.
- [3] Hadiz, V. R. (2017). Indonesia's year of democratic setbacks: towards a new phase of deepening illiberalism? *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 53(3), 261–278.
- [4] Tyson, A., & Purnomo, B. (2017). President Jokowi and the 2014 obor rakyat controversy in Indonesia. *Critical Asian Studies*, 49(1), 117–136.
- [5] Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2014). Indonesian politics in 2014: Democracy's close call. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 50(3), 347–369.
- [6] Sidel, J. T. (1998). Macet total: Logics of circulation and accumulation in the demise of Indonesia's New Order. *Indonesia*, (66), 159–195.
- [7] Fealy, G. (2016). Bigger than Ahok: explaining the 2 December mass rally. *Indonesia at Melbourne*, 7.
- [8] Kress, G. (1976). Halliday: System and function in language: Selected papers. *London: Oxford UP*.
- [9] Martin, J. R., & White, P. R. (2003). *The language of evaluation* (Vol. 2). Springer.