

LANGUAGE AND POWER: PRESIDENT JOKO WIDODO'S 2014 & 2019 INAUGURATION SPEECH

Anastasia Michelle Sindhunatha¹, Eka Fadilah², Yulius Kurniawan³

michellesindhunatha@gmail.com¹

Universitas Widya Kartika Surabaya

ABSTRACT

This study explores how language is employed to construct and exercise political power in President Joko Widodo's 2014 and 2019 inauguration speeches. Utilizing Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis—which includes textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice—the research examines rhetorical strategies, thematic emphases, and linguistic choices within each speech. The study is qualitative in nature, relying on close reading and discourse analysis to identify patterns of meaning, ideology, and power embedded in the speeches. Four key aspects are analyzed: expressions of power and authority, inclusive versus exclusive language, shifts in policy messaging, and rhetorical adaptation to evolving sociopolitical conditions. The findings reveal that Jokowi's 2014 speech emphasizes a populist and inclusive tone rooted in unity, cultural identity, and collective effort. Conversely, his 2019 speech adopts a more technocratic and results-oriented approach, stressing institutional reform and productivity. This discursive evolution highlights how political language adapts to maintain legitimacy and reflect changing governance priorities. The study contributes to understanding language as a social practice in shaping leadership identity, constructing authority, and signaling ideological transitions in Indonesia's political landscape.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Political Speech, Joko Widodo, Language And Power, Rhetoric, Indonesia.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana bahasa digunakan untuk membangun dan menjalankan kekuasaan politik dalam pidato pelantikan Presiden Joko Widodo tahun 2014 dan 2019. Dengan menggunakan model tiga dimensi Analisis Wacana Kritis (AWK) dari Norman Fairclough—yang mencakup analisis tekstual, praktik wacana, dan praktik sosial—penelitian ini menganalisis strategi retorik, penekanan tematik, dan pilihan kebahasaan dalam masing-masing pidato. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis, melalui pembacaan dekat dan analisis wacana untuk mengidentifikasi pola makna, ideologi, dan relasi kuasa yang terkandung dalam teks. Empat aspek utama yang dianalisis meliputi: ekspresi kekuasaan dan otoritas, penggunaan bahasa inklusif dan eksklusif, pergeseran pesan kebijakan, serta adaptasi retorik terhadap perubahan kondisi sosiopolitik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa pidato tahun 2014 menonjolkan nada populis dan inklusif yang berakar pada semangat persatuan, identitas budaya, dan kerja kolektif. Sebaliknya, pidato tahun 2019 menunjukkan pendekatan yang lebih teknokratis dan berorientasi pada hasil, dengan penekanan pada reformasi institusi dan produktivitas. Evolusi diskursif ini menegaskan bagaimana bahasa politik beradaptasi untuk mempertahankan legitimasi dan mencerminkan prioritas pemerintahan yang berubah. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi dalam memahami bahasa sebagai praktik sosial dalam pembentukan identitas kepemimpinan, konstruksi otoritas, dan penanda transisi ideologis dalam lanskap politik Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Analisis Wacana, Pidato Politik, Joko Widodo, Bahasa Dan Kekuasaan, Retorika, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

This research is started from a strong interest in political discourse and how it can shape society. As observed in Indonesia's changing political scene, in particular Joko Widodo's leadership during important times in the country's history.

Using critical discourse analysis as the method, this study aims to explore the connections between language, power, and ideas. Examining how rhetorical strategies can influence how

people view politics and democracy. Therefore, this research was conducted as a contribution to the study of political communication, especially in non-Western contexts. Ultimately, this research also aims to improve a better understanding of political leadership in Southeast Asia, providing insights that can benefit both academic discussions and real-world political engagement.

Through the use of language, leaders can reveal power structures, convey political ideologies, and influence public opinion. Language in political settings is not merely a tool for communication. It is a mechanism through which power is exercised, legitimized, and maintained. Political leaders use language strategically to frame issues, control narratives, define group identities, and influence public perception. In this way, language becomes a vehicle for power, shaping how reality is constructed and how authority is accepted or contested.

Political speeches serve as a crucial platform for leaders to articulate their vision, assert authority, and engage with the public. This study compares and examines the inaugural speeches of President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) in 2014 and 2019, utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate the power dynamics and leadership narratives within these speeches. CDA provides a framework for understanding how language constructs and maintains power relations, particularly in political contexts (Fairclough, 1995, pp. 2–10). Jokowi's election to the presidency in 2014 represented a major shift in Indonesian politics, as he positioned himself as a populist leader, distancing himself from the traditional political elite. Meanwhile Jokowi's re-election in 2019 offers unique opportunities to assess how his rhetorical strategy evolved after his first term. These opportunities opened a possibility of changes, evolutions, made to assert Jokowi's authority as Indonesia's leader. Therefore, this study was intended to explore how Jokowi's language usage in his inaugural speeches highlighted evolution and shifts in his leadership approach as a form to express his power as a leader.

By comparing these two speeches, the research aims to identify changes in themes, and rhetorical strategies which Jokowi used to construct his leadership identity and communicate with the Indonesian people. Understanding this development is key to understanding how political figures maintain legitimacy and authority over time. This research is driven by the observation that while political speeches are frequently analyzed through discourse studies, there is a notable lack of longitudinal analyses focused on the same leader across multiple terms. Existing research on political discourse often centers on Western leaders and isolating individual speeches. By comparing Jokowi's 2014 and 2019 inaugural addresses, this research was done to fill the gap in the exploration of Indonesian political discourse and provide insights into how a leader's rhetoric evolves in response to changing political conditions. In his 2014 inaugural address, Jokowi emphasized themes of unity, reform, and the promise of improved governance. On the contrary, his 2019 speech continued to focus on these themes but placed greater emphasis on development and consolidating previous achievements. In this research, the challenge of how political leaders modify and adapt their language over time to retain power and maintain public trust is addressed. As well as seeking to analyze how Jokowi's rhetorical techniques shifted between his first and second terms, and what these shifts reveal about the relationship between language, power, and leadership.

Norman Fairclough's and Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework is used in this research to compare and examine deeply the key elements such as discourse, power, and hegemony in Jokowi's speeches. Utilizing Fairclough's theory to guide the exploration of how language creates social realities and legitimizes authority, particularly in the realm of political communication. The study focuses on the linguistic choices Joko Widodo (Jokowi) makes in his speeches, such as his use of pronouns, metaphors, and appeals to national unity. And how these reflect his leadership style and the political environment in which he operates. A review of the existing literature shows that while many studies have

focused on political discourse and leadership, particularly only in Western contexts, there is very limited research on Southeast Asian political rhetoric, and even fewer studies have conducted a comparative analysis of a leader's speeches over multiple terms.

This research contributes to a growing field of studies on Indonesian political communication, offering a nuanced understanding of Jokowi's rhetorical strategies evolution and how language functions as a tool for power and persuasion in the Indonesian political weapon. By doing so, there is a different perspective on leadership in a non-Western context provided in this research, contributing to the global discourse on political communication. The uniqueness of this study lies in its comparative analysis of a Southeast Asian leader, President Joko Widodo, utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to explore the two of his significant speeches given at crucial points in his presidency. By focusing on Jokowi's inaugural speeches from 2014 to 2019, this research compares and examines a transformative period in Indonesian politics, offering key insights into the ways political language evolves over time. Highlighting how leaders strategically adjust their rhetoric to navigate the challenges of maintaining authority, particularly in diverse and politically complex environments like Indonesia.

This focuses on non-Western political discourse is also added to the existing body of research, offering a fresh contribution for a better understanding towards leadership and communication in a global context. Moreover, this research provides a new perspective on the continuity and shifts within political rhetoric. It explores how a leader's use of language and rhetorical choices change in response to internal factors, such as public expectations and other influences, as well as external pressures like international trends. Through a comparison between both of Jokowi's speeches, which were done at two distinct points in his presidency, the research demonstrates how Jokowi's rhetoric mirrors both his evolving leadership approach and the changing socio-political environment in Indonesia. While the Longitudinal analysis provides a more nuanced view of how leaders modify their public messaging to maintain legitimacy and authority as circumstances change.

Previous studies on President Joko Widodo's political discourse have provided valuable insights into the linguistic and ideological dimensions of his speeches. Kusumawardani and Putra (2021) employed a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) approach to examine the textual structures of Jokowi's 2014 and 2019 inauguration speeches, identifying a notable increase in thematic structuring over time, which reflected shifts in rhetorical focus. Meanwhile, Santoso and Aji (2021) applied Huckin's CDA framework to analyze how lexical and pragmatic choices in Jokowi's formal policy speech on capital relocation and human capital development projected ideological stances and reinforced authority. Additionally, Megah et al. (2021) combined Fairclough's CDA model with the Appraisal framework to explore ideological positioning in the speeches of both Jokowi and Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, highlighting how evaluative language was used to align with "the people" and legitimize leadership.

While the previous studies offer meaningful contributions to the understanding of Indonesian political discourse, they are either limited to single-term speech analysis, policy-specific addresses, or comparative studies between leaders. There remains a notable gap in longitudinal research focusing on the evolution of a single leader's rhetorical strategies across multiple terms, particularly using Fairclough's full CDA model to uncover deeper links between discourse, power, and social change. By conducting a comparative analysis of Jokowi's two inaugural speeches using a multidimensional CDA approach, this research addresses that gap and contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how political leaders strategically adjust their language to maintain authority, respond to shifting socio-political contexts, and shape public perception over time.

This research was aimed to compare and investigate deeply towards the links between language and power analyzed in Joko Widodo's different speeches. Through these

explorations, it should provide a broader understanding of political discourse, particularly in non-Western context where cultural, social, and political dynamics can shape a leader's rhetoric and strategies differently than in Western contexts (Fairclough, 2001). Informed by Fairclough's work on discourse as means of social practice, this research examines how Joko Widodo's rhetorical choices reveal underlying power structures and ideological stances. By comparing and deeply examining Joko Widodo's rhetorical approaches, it was highlighted how political figures use language not only to convey ideas but also as a means to shape public perception, address political challenges, and build a consistent public image over time.

Therefore, this research was done to provide insights over how language functions as a tool for sustaining leadership and influence within shifting political environments (Van Dijk, 2006). Comparing Joko Widodo's speeches as the main study case, explained in this research how leaders adjust their communications to resonate with diverse audiences, confronting new challenges, and promoting political cohesion. This research is a contribution towards political communication through uncovering the nuanced ways discourse can be employed to achieve both immediate political objectives and long-term leadership goals. Ultimately, these novel findings should offer valuable insights for scholars and practitioners in political communication and leadership studies, enriching our understanding of how political leadership operates across varied cultural and political landscapes.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its central analytical framework. A qualitative design is considered appropriate as the research aims to explore how language is used to construct, convey, and maintain power and authority in political discourse, particularly in President Joko Widodo's 2014 and 2019 inauguration speeches. Rather than focusing on quantifiable data, qualitative research allows for the interpretation of language in its social, political, and ideological context, which is essential for uncovering the deeper meanings and functions embedded in presidential rhetoric.

The study specifically applies Norman Fairclough's (1992, 2001, 2006) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, which enables a comprehensive investigation into the relationship between discourse and power. Fairclough's model consists of three interrelated levels:

1. Textual analysis (description)

Focusing on linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and rhetorical devices;

2. Discursive practice (interpretation)

Examining how the speeches are produced, distributed, and consumed, including intertextuality and institutional contexts;

3. Social practice (explanation)

Analyzing how broader ideological, political, and cultural structures influence and are reinforced by the discourse.

By integrating these three levels of analysis, the research aims to identify how Jokowi's language use reflects both continuities and shifts in his leadership discourse across two presidential terms. The CDA framework also allows the researcher to critically assess how rhetorical strategies, policy narratives, and inclusion/exclusion language serve to legitimize political authority and respond to changing sociopolitical climates.

In summary, this study uses Fairclough's CDA model to systematically analyze and compare the speeches, offering insights into how language functions as a tool of power within the evolving context of contemporary Indonesian politics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of Jokowi's inaugural speeches in 2014 and 2019 reveals the strategic use of language to project authority, unity, and national optimism. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), it becomes evident that Jokowi's rhetorical choices are not arbitrary, but reflect intentional discursive strategies to reinforce his image as a people-oriented, reform-driven leader.

One of the most prominent strategies found in both speeches is the use of inclusive pronouns, such as *kita* (we) and *bangsa kita* (our nation), which serve to create a sense of shared identity and collective responsibility. This aligns with Fairclough's (1995) concept that discourse can be used to construct social relations and to position the speaker in relation to the audience. By employing such language, Jokowi narrows the perceived gap between the government and the people, which helps to foster trust and emotional alignment.

Additionally, repetition of key phrases such as *kerja, kerja, kerja* in 2014 and *SDM unggul, Indonesia maju* in 2019 demonstrates how political discourse simplifies complex policy goals into memorable slogans. These slogans serve not only as motivational tools, but also as ideological constructions that reflect Jokowi's vision of development, discipline, and nationalism. According to Van Dijk (1997), repetition in political discourse is an effective rhetorical device to reinforce dominant ideologies and normalize certain values within the public mindset.

Moreover, political rhetoric is not solely aimed at presenting facts, but at persuading and shaping public perception. As noted by Woods (2006) and Jost & Olmsted (2004), political language is often used to obscure or distort the truth and to lead audiences toward particular thoughts, opinions, and actions. In the context of Jokowi's speeches, this persuasive dimension becomes evident through his strategic use of rhetorical language that simplifies complex national issues into accessible and emotionally resonant messages.

Jokowi's use of metaphorical language also contributes to the projection of ideological meaning. Terms like *tol laut* (sea toll) and *revolusi mental* (mental revolution) function as symbolic markers of transformation. These metaphors serve to dramatize development and modernization while masking the slower, more complex realities of policy implementation. In CDA, metaphors are understood as framing devices that shape how reality is perceived (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

When these rhetorical strategies are viewed through the lens of power relations, it becomes clear that Jokowi's discourse does more than just inform—it shapes public consciousness. His speeches seek to legitimize authority, mobilize national sentiment, and maintain hegemony through the subtle use of persuasive and symbolic language. This aligns with Fairclough's view that language both reflects and constructs social structures, including political power.

In conclusion, the rhetorical strategies employed in Jokowi's 2014 and 2019 speeches illustrate how language can function as an instrument of political power. Through inclusive language, repetition, metaphor, and slogans, Jokowi constructs a persuasive narrative of unity, development, and leadership. These strategies not only reflect his political persona but also contribute to the broader ideological framework of Indonesia's political discourse in the post-reformasi era.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed President Joko Widodo's 2014 and 2019 inauguration speeches using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, examining textual features, discursive practices, and social contexts to understand how language constructs political power and leadership identity.

Findings reveal a rhetorical shift from a populist and inclusive style in 2014—emphasizing collective struggle, cultural values (e.g., *gotong royong*), and national unity—to a more

assertive, technocratic discourse in 2019, focusing on productivity, bureaucracy reform, and economic modernization. This evolution reflects Indonesia's broader move from post-reform idealism to performance-driven governance.

Jokowi's discursive strategies illustrate how political language adapts to changing ideological and institutional demands, reinforcing Fairclough's idea that discourse both reflects and reproduces power structures. The study demonstrates the usefulness of CDA in revealing these dynamics by integrating linguistic features (such as pronouns, modality, and metaphor) with broader socio-political shifts.

Practically, this research offers insights into how leaders communicate legitimacy and authority over time. It also suggests that effective political discourse must evolve in response to shifting public expectations. For Southeast Asia's hybrid democracies, these findings highlight how populist narratives may transform into technocratic ones to maintain leadership appeal.

Limitations include the focus on only two speeches and one leader. Future research could explore comparative presidential discourse, audience reception, or multimodal elements like gesture and tone to deepen understanding.

Ultimately, this study reaffirms that inaugural speeches are not mere formalities—they are strategic acts of political positioning that help shape national identity, authority, and the trajectory of leadership in Indonesia.

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