

POLITICAL PRAGMEMES ON BILLBOARDS IN INDONESIA'S 2024 ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the pragma-stylistic features of Indonesian legislative campaign billboards during the 2024 general election, focusing on how promises are articulated as commissive speech acts through figurative language, visual design, and cultural symbolism. Campaign billboards, as multimodal texts, compress political identities into succinct slogans and imagery that aim to persuade, legitimize, and establish trust with voters. The research interprets campaign promises not merely as linguistic forms but as context-sensitive communicative events embedded in electoral rituals. A qualitative method was employed by Mey's theory of pragmemes by analyzing 57 billboards collected along major roads in late 2023 and early 2024. Data were categorized according to the framework of figurative language, including personification, symbolism, overstatement, metaphor, synecdoche, and allegory. The analysis demonstrates that figurative devices intensify the persuasive force of commissive acts by embedding them in cultural narratives, national symbols, and ideological discourses. The findings reveal that billboard discourse operates across linguistic, visual, and ideological dimensions, aligning with the semiotics of myth and the view of discourse as an ideology-laden practice. Figurative language and symbolic resources not only ornament campaign texts but also legitimize candidates, mobilize solidarity, and reinforce cultural values. The findings contribute to Indonesian political communication by demonstrating how campaign messages strategically combine linguistic and semiotic resources rooted in national culture, providing an integrated model for analyzing how political persuasion is culturally framed in Indonesian elections.

Keywords: *pragma-stylistics, commissive speech acts, figurative language, political discourse, campaign billboards*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia held general elections in 2024 at the national level to elect the president, Vice President, and members of the legislature. This general election, held once every five years, is conducted under the principles of direct, public, free, confidential, honest, and fair voting, reflecting the constitutional mandate of democratic governance. Legislative candidates are therefore expected to embody these principles not only in their conduct but also in the way they communicate with the public, since their legitimacy depends on voter trust. A smooth and credible election process

contributes to national stability, strengthens democratic institutions, and sustains citizens' confidence in political representation (Mansoor, 2021).

In their efforts to gain parliamentary seats, candidates employ a wide range of campaign strategies such as door-to-door visits, social media outreach, mass rallies, and television advertisements (Baum & Owens, 2023). Among these, however, the use of billboards has emerged as one of the most visible and enduring features of Indonesia's electoral landscape. Situated along major roads, public squares, and marketplaces, billboards serve as unavoidable visual encounters for citizens in their everyday mobility.

Their strategic placement ensures repeated exposure, and their combination of images, text, and symbols compresses political messages into succinct and memorable forms.

As multimodal texts, campaign billboards compress stylistic choices, pragmatic intentions, and visual symbolism into a unified persuasive message. Their slogans reflect stylistic strategies, while the promises embedded in them function as commissive speech acts aimed at securing voter trust. At the same time, the interaction of text, imagery, and cultural markers illustrates how political persuasion is performed through multimodal communication.

Promises expressed in campaign billboards, therefore, become more than mere statements; they are acts of political performance designed to win sympathy, mobilize identity, and secure votes (Kipkemoi & Ngala-dimba, 2022). These promises are often framed through carefully selected stylistic devices, catchy slogans, and emotionally resonant imagery that appeal simultaneously to reason, emotion, and cultural memory. Abusalim et al. (2022) argue that political discourse is inherently rhetorical: it is designed not simply to inform but to persuade, legitimize, and position candidates within ideological and cultural traditions. In this sense, the billboard does not merely announce candidacy; it functions as a persuasive instrument that condenses a candidate's persona, party affiliation, and vision for the nation into a symbolic contract with the electorate.

Campaign promises are particularly interesting from a linguistic perspective because they are articulated through diverse language styles, both directly and indirectly. The act of making promises belongs to the category of commissive speech acts, where the speaker expresses commitment to future actions. Ali and Al-Ahbab (2022) explain that speech acts can be classified into directives, representatives, expressive, commissive, and declarations. Commissive speech acts, which include vows, promises, rejections, and threats, reveal the speaker's intention to act, binding them to a future course of action (Hadiati et al., 2025). Alrufaiey and Alrikabi (2024) note that pragmatics helps uncover how meaning is shaped by context, and commissive acts on billboards can only be fully understood in relation to political, social, and cultural contexts.

Existing studies have investigated commissive speech acts in different domains, such as parliamentary debates, presidential speeches, films, advertisements, and translations. For instance, Ashfiya and Degaf (2023) show how social class shapes commissive strategies in women's speech, while Fitri and Asnawi, (2025) found that commissive speech acts, particularly promises, dominated the candidates' communication strategies during the 2024 Riau gubernatorial debate, serving as rhetorical devices to establish public trust through commitments to future policies. Supri & Rahmatiany (2021) further argue that literal and direct commissive forms often enhance clarity for hearers. However, these works rarely address campaign

billboards as data, despite their public visibility and their role as multimodal persuasive texts.

In contrast, Hadiati et al. (2025) examine commissive speech acts in *The Jakarta Post's* COVID-19 coverage, showing that promises were most dominant, followed by offers, while threats appeared less frequently. Their study highlighted that even indirect forms, often expressed without explicit performative verbs, still relied on futurity markers and context, underscoring the role of felicity conditions in ensuring effective crisis communication and public trust.

This is where the intersection of stylistics and political discourse becomes crucial. While stylistics has traditionally concentrated on the analysis of literary text, for example, Nurhasanah et al. (2024) studied figurative expression in Instagram posts, which is related to recent scholarship that has increasingly recognized that political texts deserve equal stylistic attention. Alrufaiey & Alrikabi (2024) state that political language is no less artful than literature; in fact, it is carefully crafted to persuade, legitimize authority, and position candidates within the ideological spectrum. Billboards, in particular, are compressed sites of stylistic density where a handful of words and visual elements must condense complex promises and political identities into a memorable and emotionally resonant message.

Campaign slogans such as *Bukan janji tapi bukti* (Not just promises but proof) exemplify how stylistic devices perform pragmatic work. On the surface, the phrase uses overstatement, which is a deliberate exaggeration of the candidate's credibility by contrasting empty promises with tangible proof. Yet when analyzed pragma-stylistically, this overstatement functions as a commissive act: the candidate is not only promising to act in the future but is simultaneously binding themselves to an identity of honesty, transparency, and accountability. This dual function illustrates what Lapka (2023) calls the "rhetorical power of metaphor and overstatement" in political discourse, where stylistic devices frame the speaker as trustworthy and morally superior.

Furthermore, such slogans are rarely isolated linguistic artifacts. They are embedded within multimodal arrangements of color, imagery, and typography that amplify their force. For instance, when *Bukan janji tapi bukti* is displayed alongside a smiling portrait, a party logo, or a national symbol, it draws on what Budiman & Khristianto (2023) term the 'rhetoric of the image', where visual and textual codes mutually reinforce meaning. The slogan's overstatement thus acquires a semiotic richness that enhances its commissive power: the candidate is visually and verbally positioned as the embodiment of proof, sincerity, and deliverance. In this way, stylistic analysis reveals that political slogans are not merely ornamental or attention-grabbing devices but strategic tools of identity construction and voter persuasion. They function at the intersection of stylistics, pragmatics, and ideology, turning linguistic

exaggeration into symbolic commitments that resonate with cultural values and democratic expectations.

Charteris-Black (2011) demonstrates that metaphor in political rhetoric is not just a stylistic ornament but a cognitive framing device that shapes voter perceptions. Similarly, Lakoff & Johnson (2003)'s conceptual metaphor theory shows how metaphors structure thought, not just language. In Indonesian campaign discourse, allegories of nationalism, metaphors of kinship (*Wong dewek* means 'our own people'), and symbolic references to party numbers and colors resonate deeply with cultural narratives and collective identities. Figurative language thus amplifies commissive speech acts, reinforcing promises with emotional and symbolic force.

A pragma-stylistic approach requires attention not only to the linguistic elements of billboard texts but also to their visual and symbolic dimensions. Gonçalves et al. (2024) observe that images communicate meaning through semiotic codes that extend and complement textual messages, often working at a level of connotation that appears natural but is in fact ideologically loaded. For instance, the smiling portraits of candidates are not merely aesthetic choices; they perform a symbolic function by projecting friendliness, accessibility, and moral integrity, thereby reinforcing the commissive act of promising service to the people. Similarly, Guo (2025) reminds that all discourse carries ideological weight, highlighting how every element on a campaign billboard whether words, colors, or symbols functions as a vehicle of power and persuasion, subtly positioning candidates within larger political narratives.

The party logos emblazoned on billboards serve as condensed semiotic markers of collective identity, linking the candidate's personal promises to broader organizational commitments and ideological traditions. The strategic deployment of colors, such as the red of PDI-Perjuangan Party to signify courage and struggle, or the green of Islamic-oriented parties to evoke religiosity and moral values, demonstrates how visual symbolism embeds commissive acts within cultural and historical frameworks. These colors do not merely decorate the billboard but act as what Barthes calls 'mythologies': cultural signs that naturalize political ideologies and make them appear self-evident to voters.

In this sense, billboards must be read as multimodal texts where linguistic, visual, and cultural resources converge to strengthen commissive acts. A phrase like *Bukan janji tapi bukti* (Not just promises but proof) gains persuasive force not only from its overstatement but also from its visual framing, perhaps a candidate's gesture of hand-on-heart, a backdrop of the national flag, or a logo that signals institutional credibility. The interplay of words and images thus creates what Zhang (2023) calls a 'grammar of visual design,' in which meaning emerges from the integration of multiple semiotic modes.

Ultimately, analyzing billboards through this multimodal, pragma-stylistic lens reveals that promises

are not conveyed solely through textual slogans but through an ensemble of signs that together perform the commissive act. The candidate's credibility, sincerity, and ideological positioning are constructed not just in what is said but in how it is visually and symbolically encoded. This reinforces the idea that political campaign discourse operates simultaneously as language, image, and cultural performance, each mode indispensable to the persuasive function of commissive speech (Sadirova et al., 2025). Billboard promises can be understood not merely as isolated speech acts, but as context-sensitive pragmatic units that gain their full meaning only within the socio-political ritual of electioneering.

A *pragmeme* is the generalized pragmatic act that manifests itself through text, context, and sociocultural conventions. In the case of campaign billboards, a slogan such as *Nusantara meman9gil* (Nusantara calls) is not merely personification; rather, it functions as a pragmeme by integrating multiple layers of communicative intent.

The analysis of campaign billboards in this study is further supported by Mey's explanation (2001) about Pragmeme Theory, which conceptualizes meaning as a context-dependent pragmatic action rather than a linguistic product alone. A pragmeme is defined as a generalized communicative action that emerges from a specific sociocultural situation and is realized through particular linguistic or semiotic performances known as *practs* (Mey, 2001). These *practs* may take different forms, called *allopracts*, depending on the affordances of a given context, such as media, social norms, cultural symbols, or political expectations.

Within campaign billboards, political promises operate as *pragmemes*, since they are not merely expressed through propositional sentences but performed as communicative commitments embedded in social backgrounds of elections. Verbal slogans thus represent linguistic *practs*, while visual elements such as patriotic colors, bodily gestures, and cultural symbols function as multimodal *allopracts* that reinforce the same pragmatic action, namely a commissive promise directed to voters. This perspective helps explain how persuasive commitments are enacted not only verbally but through the interaction of language, imagery, and social context.

METHODS

This study employs a pragmatic-stylistic multimodal discourse analysis as a specific form of qualitative research because it explores how linguistic styles, speech acts, and visual semiotic resources collaboratively shape persuasive meaning in campaign billboards. A qualitative approach allows meaning to be interpreted within its natural sociopolitical contexts rather than measured through numerical frequency (Creswell, 2014). Within this framework, billboard discourse is treated not merely as a set of slogans but as communicative actions that perform commitments

and ideological positioning in the public sphere.

The pragma-stylistic multimodal discourse analysis integrates three interpretive lenses: (1) stylistic analysis of figurative expressions, (2) pragmatic interpretation of commissive speech acts (it is a future act, and it makes the hearer satisfied), and (3) multimodal examination of visual design elements. This integration is theoretically grounded in Pragmeme Theory by Mey (2001), which views meaning as a context-dependent pragmatic act realized through linguistic practs and multimodal allopracts, as well as Kress & van Leeuwen (2001)'s Social Semiotics, which interprets images as structured semiotic resources that work in tandem with text. Such a combined method is essential for campaign billboards, where words and visuals operate jointly as persuasive political commitments.

The data consist of 57 legislative campaign billboards collected along major protocol roads in Central Java Regency such as Jenderal Soedirman street, Jenderal Gatot Soebroto street, Soekarno Hatta street, Ahmad Yani street, Jenderal Sutoyo street and Letnan Jenderal Suprpto street leading up to Indonesia's 2024 general election. Data were collected in two phases, at the end of 2023 and early 2024, to capture both early passive campaign messages and intensified persuasive strategies as Election Day (February 14, 2024) approached.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages. First, slogans were categorized according to Perrine's stylistic framework of figurative language, including metaphor, personification, synecdoche, symbolism, allegory, and hyperbole (Yulianda & Sunra, 2022; Mang'eni & Schroeder, 2023). Second, these stylistic patterns were interpreted pragmatically to determine their commissive force, following Ferguson's (2024) view that speech acts are socially embedded communicative units. Third, visual elements such as color schemes, poses, national symbols, typography, and cultural attire were analyzed using Barthes' (1977) rhetoric of the image to uncover ideological implications and multimodal meanings.

To ensure coding reliability, three researchers independently coded the 57 campaign billboards using a standardized coding framework. Interrater agreement was calculated by dividing the number of billboards on which all three coders agreed by the total number of analyzed billboards and multiplying the result by 100. Any coding discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. The initial coding achieved the 90% interrater agreement, indicating high coding reliability. This level of agreement reflects strong consistency in identifying figurative devices and corresponding pragmatic functions, thus reinforcing analytical credibility. By combining stylistic categorization, pragmatic interpretation, and multimodal discourse analysis within a pragma-stylistic framework, this methodology captures the layered complexity of campaign billboards as persuasive political texts. It reveals how linguistic style, commissive force, and

cultural symbolism converge to construct ideological meaning in Indonesian political communication.

By combining figurative language analysis, pragma-stylistic interpretation, and multimodal discourse analysis, this methodology seeks to capture the layered complexity of campaign billboards. It addresses not only the stylistic richness of slogans but also their pragmatic force, ideological weight, and cultural resonance. In doing so, the study positions itself within the interdisciplinary fields of stylistics, pragmatics, and critical discourse studies, contributing to the growing scholarship on political communication in multimodal forms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Personification appears when an object, thing, or animal is described as if it can act like a human being. In this figure of speech, non-human entities are given human qualities or abilities, thus making them appear animate or alive. Perrine (2010) highlights that personification enriches language by giving abstract or inanimate elements the qualities of human behavior, thereby making them more vivid and relatable.



Figure 1. "Nusantara meman9gil" ("Nusantara calls")

As shown in Figure 1, the expression *Nusantara meman9gil* is an instance of personification because the subject Nusantara, meaning the Indonesian archipelago, is depicted as performing a human act: calling. In reality, Nusantara is a geographical and cultural entity rather than a living being, yet by attributing the human act of 'calling' (*memanggil*), the slogan positions the archipelago as an active agent that invites, summons, and legitimizes the candidate's political presence. This rhetorical move creates an illusion of necessity and destiny that the candidate is responding not merely to personal ambition but to the voice of the nation itself. The candidate implicitly pledges to respond to the nation's needs, portraying their potential office as a duty to fulfill a call from the country. Thus, the act of 'answering the call' becomes a political commitment to serve national interests, and the slogan serves as a binding promise of service

and dedication, even though no explicit promise verb appears.

From a semiotic perspective, the substitution of the letter 'g' with the number '9' simultaneously encodes a numerical symbol of the party's identity (Partai Kebangkitan Nusantara, party number 9) and plays with visual form to reinforce political branding. Here, the billboard communicates on two levels: denotatively, as a call to serve the nation, and connotatively, as a coded signal of partisan affiliation. This layered signification transforms a simple phrase into an ideological message that naturalizes the party's role as the authentic voice of the people.

According to Oluremi (2023), the pragmeme is also useful in analyzing this text. The slogan is not just a figure of speech but a context-sensitive pragmatic act embedded in the socio-political ritual of campaigning. The act of 'calling' is interpreted within the election context as a commissive act, which is a promise to heed the nation's needs and act accordingly. By embedding personification within the institutional practice of political campaigns, the slogan functions as a pragmeme that integrates textual creativity, partisan identity, and cultural ideology into a unified communicative event.

At the discourse level, political texts always carry ideological weight. *Nusantara meman9gil* constructs a discourse of national unity, suggesting that the nation itself is speaking and summoning the candidate. It creates an asymmetrical relationship: the candidate is positioned as the humble servant of the archipelago's will, while voters are aligned with the symbolic voice of Nusantara. Such a construction legitimizes candidacy by embedding personal ambition within a collective, national mandate.

Finally, Political rhetoric relies on figurative devices such as metaphor and personification to enhance persuasiveness. The act of personifying '*Nusantara*' does more than decorate language; it taps into conceptual metaphors of the nation as a living being capable of calling, demanding, and guiding. This metaphorical framing strengthens the commissive speech act: the candidate is not simply making promises but presenting himself as one who answers the nation's call. This appeal to destiny and duty enhances credibility, evokes emotional resonance, and positions the candidate as the embodiment of patriotic responsiveness.

In sum, the slogan *Nusantara meman9gil* operates on multiple levels: as personification, as a sign system constructing myth, as a context-bound pragmeme, as ideological discourse, and as persuasive political rhetoric. Its stylistic form and pragmatic function converge to transform a simple campaign slogan into a powerful commissive act of service, duty, and political legitimacy.

A symbol refers to an object, sign, or element that stands for or substitutes a broader meaning. Symbols enrich discourse by condensing abstract ideas into concrete forms that are easily recognizable and emotionally resonant. Symbolism in political

discourse is especially powerful because it translates complex ideologies into accessible signs that voters can quickly decode and internalize. The rose is used as a symbol of beauty, sexuality, or secrecy; in political billboards, similar processes occur when numbers, colors, gestures, or icons come to represent political parties, ideologies, and national values.



Figure 2 *M3nang Sp3ktakul3r* (Spectacular Win)

The phrase *M3nang Sp3ktakul3r* (see Figure 2) employs a numerical substitution, where the number 3 replaces the letter E. On the surface, this is a creative play on typography, but semiotically, it functions as a powerful symbol of party identity, directly pointing to Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P), which held ballot number 3 in the legislative elections. According to Juhász & Bene (2022), such a strategy illustrates how signs function at both denotative and connotative levels: denotatively, the 3 is a numeral; connotatively, it signals partisan allegiance, transforming a simple linguistic form into a cultural and ideological marker. Thus, the slogan not only conveys optimism about victory but also encodes loyalty to a specific party brand.

Symbolism is further reinforced through color choice. The red attire of PDI-P candidates, prominently displayed on billboards, draws on deep cultural and historical associations. In Indonesian cultural philosophy, red color is widely associated with courage, bravery, vitality, and the spirit of struggle, as reflected in national symbols and cultural traditions (Nurbaiti, 2025). Within political communication, these symbolic associations enable red to project an image of strength, determination, and emotional intensity, making it an effective visual resource for parties seeking to portray themselves as bold defenders of the people. In Barthesian terms, red becomes a 'mythical signifier,' naturalizing the ideological narrative that PDI-P is the party of courage and people's struggle.

Beyond numbers and colors, nonverbal elements on billboards also serve as symbols. Candidates'

smiles signify friendliness and openness, functioning pragmatically as a gesture of greeting and as a means of relational bonding with voters. A hand placed on the chest symbolizes sincerity and a request for blessings, framing the candidate as humble and devout. The Garuda emblem, worn on caps or displayed on clothing, further extends symbolism by connecting the candidate to the Indonesian state itself. Garuda, the national emblem, symbolizes strength, unity, and sovereignty; by adopting it, candidates imply that their political mission aligns with national integrity and progress.

From a pragmatic perspective, the concept of the *pragmeme* is relevant here. The slogans and symbols are not isolated stylistic choices; they are context-sensitive pragmatic acts embedded in the ritual of electioneering. The use of 3 in *M3nang Sp3ktakul3r* is simultaneously a visual pun, a partisan identifier, and a commissive act promising victory. Within this election context, the entire billboard operates as a *pragmeme*, a socially recognizable unit of action in which symbolic resources and promises converge to perform the speech act of commitment.

From a commissive act perspective, the candidate implicitly commits to achieving a decisive, highly impactful victory, framing success as an obligation rather than a mere hope. *M3nang Sp3ktakul3r* operates as an implicit commissive act because it guarantees victory as a future achievement. The hyperbolic stylistic choice, combined with assertive multimodal cues, transforms the phrase into a politically binding promise of a dominant, celebrated victory rather than a simple prediction.

Critical discourse analysis shows that these symbols are not ideologically neutral. By invoking red, Garuda, smiles, and gestures of humility, the candidates are not merely communicating personality traits but constructing an ideological narrative of courage, nationalism, and moral integrity. These discursive choices legitimize candidates' authority and position them as rightful leaders who embody the spirit of the people and the nation.

Political rhetoric relies heavily on metaphor and symbolism to persuade and legitimize. The slogan *M3nang Sp3ktakul3r* is more than linguistic creativity; it is a rhetorical device that instills confidence, generates enthusiasm, and frames victory as inevitable. By embedding symbolism in language, color, and gesture, the billboard constructs a persuasive narrative of optimism and destiny, ensuring that the commissive act of promising victory resonates both emotionally and ideologically with voters.

In sum, the analysis of *M3nang Sp3ktakul3r* illustrates how symbols such as numerical, visual, and gestural function within campaign discourse. Through Barthes's semiotics, Perrine's literary framework, Mey's *pragmeme* theory, and Charteris-Black's rhetorical insights, it becomes clear that symbolism in billboards does not merely decorate messages but anchors them in cultural values, partisan identities, and persuasive commitments.

Overstatement, often called *hyperbole*, is a type of figurative language that deliberately exaggerates meaning to highlight a particular quality or claim. Hyperbole is not intended to be interpreted literally but functions to intensify expression, dramatize a point, and evoke a stronger emotional response from the audience. In political contexts, hyperbole often serves as a persuasive device, amplifying a candidate's strengths and credibility while appealing to voters' desires for capable, trustworthy leadership.



Figure 3 *Berpengalaman luas, jujur, sederhana dan merakyat* (Widely experienced, honest, humble and gracious)

The slogan *Berpengalaman luas, jujur, sederhana dan merakyat* (see Figure 3) exemplifies overstatement through its sweeping claim that the candidate embodies multiple idealized virtues simultaneously. By presenting himself as 'widely experienced,' 'honest,' 'humble,' and 'gracious,' the candidate projects a near-perfect political persona, designed to persuade voters of his worthiness. While some of these attributes may be grounded in fact, such as his experience as vice governor of Central Java, others are exaggerated to idealized extremes that no individual can fully embody at once. This slogan functions as a myth: it naturalizes the image of the candidate as an ideal leader, transforming personal attributes into universal truths about his political identity.

Hyperbolic claims in political language are not merely ornamental but strategically crafted to legitimize authority and inspire trust. Overstatement here serves a commissive function: the candidate implicitly pledges that his leadership will embody honesty, humility, and closeness to the people, thereby binding his political identity to moral integrity. The exaggeration heightens the illocutionary force of the commissive act by amplifying credibility and fostering emotional resonance with voters.

Pragmeme helps contextualize this hyperbole as a socially embedded pragmatic act. Within the ritual of campaigning, exaggerated self-presentation

is expected and recognized by voters as part of the electoral genre. Thus, this slogan operates as a pragmeme, combining linguistic exaggeration, cultural values (simplicity, humility, sincerity), and institutional practices (campaigning) into a single pragmatic event. The hyperbole does not deceive but rather participates in the culturally sanctioned performance of political commitment.

Political discourse always carries ideological weight, as evidenced by how overstatement constructs ideological narratives of leadership. By emphasizing experience and humility, the slogan aligns the candidate with values of trustworthiness and populism, positioning him as both competent and close to ordinary people. This ideological framing serves to legitimize his candidacy against younger or less-experienced rivals, reinforcing the idea that leadership should be grounded in long service and moral integrity.

Figurative language condenses meaning into memorable forms. The slogan's rhythm and structure create a compact, repeatable, and persuasive message that voters can easily recall. This stylistic economy ensures that the hyperbolic claims remain embedded in public consciousness, enhancing their pragmatic effectiveness.

In summary, the slogan *Berpengalaman luas, jujur, sederhana dan merakyat* illustrates how overstatement in campaign discourse functions beyond mere exaggeration. It operates as a mythical construction, a stylistic intensifier, a contextualized pragmeme, an ideological narrative, and a persuasive rhetorical strategy. By overstating personal qualities, the candidate not only seeks to attract sympathy but also strategically performs a commissive act that reassures voters of his competence, morality, and dedication to the people.

This candidate's statement also acts as a pledge of future governance style. According to Ferguson (2024), commissive forces can be expressed through 'identity-based pledges,' where the speaker commits to act consistently with the character they claim. By presenting themselves as honest, humble, and close to the people, the candidate implicitly promises to govern with honesty, humility, and accessibility.

Metaphor can be defined as understanding one conceptual domain through another that shares similar features (Kovecses, 2022). A metaphor establishes equivalence by declaring that one thing is another, allowing speakers to project meanings from a familiar source domain onto a less familiar or more abstract target domain. In political discourse, metaphor is especially powerful because it simplifies complex social relationships into accessible images that resonate emotionally with voters.

As seen in Figure 4, the slogan *Tuanku ya rakyat* presents a striking metaphor where the people (*rakyat*) are constructed as the master (*tuanku*), while the candidate casts himself as the servant. Here, the metaphor inverts traditional hierarchies: rather than portraying the politician as superior, it positions citizens as the highest authority. The candidate

acknowledges that the people determine his success, thereby grounding his legitimacy in their collective power. This slogan functions simultaneously as a moral pledge and a commissive act, promising that his leadership will prioritize the people's interests above all else.



Figure 4 *Tuanku Ya Rakyat* (My Master is My People)

From a literary-stylistic perspective, metaphor intensifies meaning by layering associations beyond literal reference. In this case, the metaphor transforms the abstract principle of democracy into a vivid relational bond between 'master' and 'servant.' The metaphor dramatizes the candidate's humility, conveying his dependency on the people's approval while suggesting reciprocity: the master provides direction, while the servant responds with loyalty and service.

Slogan functions as a mythic sign that naturalizes democratic ideals within Indonesian culture. By equating 'the people' with 'master,' the slogan embodies the myth of *kerakyatan* (people-centeredness) deeply rooted in Pancasila ideology. The metaphor thus transcends literal language, embedding the candidate's promise within a larger cultural narrative of democracy, solidarity, and servant-leadership. The visual reinforcement of Ganjar Pranowo through his smiling portrait and the slogan *Tuanku Ya Rakyat* ("My Master is my People") adds an important semiotic dimension that strengthens the metaphorical framing of political leadership as service rather than authority. His warm facial expression, simple white attire, and black *peci* project modesty, sincerity, and cultural familiarity, positioning him as an approachable public figure rather than a distant political elite. The slogan further redefines the traditional hierarchical notion of *tuanku* (lord or master) by identifying the people as the highest authority. Together, these visual and verbal signs construct a pragmeme of democratic leadership

grounded in humility, accessibility, accountability, and commitment to serving the collective interests of ordinary citizens.

In political communication, metaphors of submission are not merely expressive. They constitute identity-based commitments to align with public interests. By declaring the people as ‘master,’ the candidate implicitly commits to governing “under public authority, not above it.” This amounts to a pledge of servant-leadership, where their decisions, policies, and conduct are bound to citizens’ needs.

The concept of the *pragmeme* sheds light on how this metaphor operates within the ritual of political campaigning. The slogan is not an isolated metaphor but a context-sensitive pragmatic act that responds to the electorate’s expectations of humility, service, and accountability. Within the Indonesian electoral context, the slogan *Tuanku ya rakyat* is recognizable as a *pragmeme* of democratic promise: a culturally bound communicative act that integrates metaphor, political ideology, and commissive intent into one unified pragmatic event.

Political discourse always conveys ideological positioning. Here, the metaphor serves to construct a discourse of populism, where political power flows upward from the people rather than downward from elites. By portraying himself as subordinate to the *rakyat*, the candidate aligns himself with values of inclusivity and grassroots legitimacy. Yet, at the same time, this ideological construction is strategic: while it appears to decentralize power, it consolidates authority by presenting the candidate as the faithful servant-leader voters can trust.

Metaphors in political rhetoric are not accidental but serve persuasive and legitimizing functions. The metaphor of the people as ‘master’ performs two rhetorical moves: it legitimizes the candidate by showing deference to democratic ideals, and it persuades voters by appealing to their pride and agency. This form of metaphor reinforces the commissive act by binding the candidate’s political identity to an oath of service. In doing so, it strengthens the affective bond between politician and electorate, making the campaign message both memorable and emotionally resonant.

In summary, the slogan *Tuanku ya rakyat* demonstrates how metaphor operates across multiple dimensions: as a stylistic intensifier, a mythic cultural sign, a *pragmeme* of electoral promise, an ideological construction of populist discourse, and a rhetorical strategy of legitimation. By casting citizens as masters, the metaphor transforms the candidate’s campaign into an act of humble service, positioning him not as an authority above the people but as a servant whose political mandate derives entirely from their will.

Synecdoche is a rhetorical device in which a part stands for the whole, or the whole for a part. Synecdoche enriches expression by compressing broader realities into smaller, more manageable symbolic units, enabling complex concepts to be conveyed with simplicity and resonance. In political

discourse, synecdoche often represents entire communities, values, or ideologies through a single phrase or image, making it a powerful stylistic and persuasive tool.



Figure 5 *Bangunlah Jiwanya Bangunlah Badannya*
(Build the Soul, Build the Body)

The slogan *Bangunlah Jiwanya Bangunlah Badannya* (see Figure 5) draws directly from the Indonesian national anthem *Indonesia Raya*, invoking deep emotional and patriotic associations. Here, ‘soul’ (*jiwa*) and ‘body’ (*badan*) are synecdochic expressions: they represent not only parts of an individual but also the collective essence of the Indonesian people. By calling for the building of the soul before the body, the slogan suggests that national progress must be grounded in spiritual, moral, and intellectual development before material or physical advancement can occur. The phrase thus encapsulates a holistic vision of nation-building, in which the mental and physical dimensions of the citizenry serve as the broader project of Indonesian identity and progress.

The reference to the national anthem functions as a cultural code that naturalizes the idea that true patriotism and national strength originate from inner, moral foundations. By reactivating a familiar patriotic lyric, the billboard transforms a campaign promise into a mythic discourse of national renewal, positioning the candidate as a guardian of Indonesia’s spiritual and physical well-being. The intertextual echo of *Indonesia Raya* strengthens the slogan’s symbolic force, embedding it in shared cultural memory.

The slogan distills the vast complexity of national development into two symbolic parts, such as soul and body, that stand in for the entirety of the nation’s needs. This conciseness enhances memorability and ensures that the message resonates emotionally while remaining accessible to all levels of society. The concept of the *pragmeme* highlights how this slogan functions as a context-bound pragmatic act. Within the campaign setting, *Bangunlah Jiwanya Bangunlah Badannya* is not just a poetic line but a commissive act promising comprehensive nation-building. It commits the candidate to fostering both

moral (soul) and material (body) development, integrating cultural heritage (the anthem) and national ideology (Pancasila, unity in diversity) into a single communicative event. Thus, the slogan operates as a pragmeme of patriotic commitment.

In this slogan, ideology is encoded in the sequencing of priorities: the soul before the body. This ordering reflects a political worldview in which morality, spirituality, and national identity are seen as prerequisites for material progress. The slogan thereby legitimizes a nation-first ideology and positions the candidate as a moral leader capable of guiding citizens not just economically, but spiritually and culturally.

The candidate implicitly pledges to develop society in both ethical values (*jiwa*) and material prosperity (*badan*). This duality serves as a commitment to governing holistically and in balance. Thus, the slogan promises three aspects: the development of public morality, education, and character (soul); the improvement of infrastructure, facilities, and economic support (body); and the governance that integrates moral well-being and material progress. The slogan acts as a pledge of comprehensive progress, not a descriptive statement.

This political statement serves to legitimize power and persuade voters. By using synecdoche, the slogan frames national development in terms that are emotionally charged and wearing culturally resonant. The metaphorical relationship between body and soul persuades citizens that their individual development (mental and physical) directly reflects the nation's progress. This rhetorical strategy creates a strong bond between private identity and public duty, persuading voters that electing the candidate is part of fulfilling their patriotic responsibility.

In summary, the slogan *Bangunlah Jiwanya Bangunlah Badannya* illustrates how synecdoche condenses national identity and development into a symbolic dyad of soul and body. Through Barthes's mythic reading, Perrine's literary framework, Capone's pragmeme theory, Fairclough's ideological critique, and Charteris-Black's rhetorical perspective, the slogan emerges as a powerful pragma-stylistic resource. It not only persuades through patriotic resonance but also enacts a commissive act, promising that the candidate will lead Indonesia toward holistic renewal, spiritually, culturally, and materially.

Allegory, often described as an extended metaphor, conveys a meaning beyond its surface level. As Wearing (2022) explains, allegory operates by using symbolic expressions that evoke broader cultural or ideological concepts, frequently appearing in poetry, narratives, and political discourse. Unlike simple metaphors, allegories unfold multiple layers of meaning, requiring readers or listeners to interpret their significance within context.

The slogan *Wonge Dewek* (see Figure 6), written in Javanese, translates as 'our people' or 'our family.' On the surface, it conveys intimacy and solidarity; at a deeper level, it operates as an allegory of kinship and shared identity. By referring to voters as family, the

candidate implicitly equates the political relationship between candidate and electorate with the most intimate and trusting social bond. In Javanese culture, kinship carries obligations of loyalty, mutual support, and moral responsibility. Thus, the allegory promises not only political representation but also familial protection and care.



Figure 6 *Wonge Dewek* (Our People / Our Family)

From a literary-stylistic angle, allegory communicates "beneath the surface." Here, the surface meaning of family masks a broader political project of solidarity: the candidate is not just like family, he is symbolically positioned as part of the voters' own kin group. This blurs the boundary between political authority and personal belonging, reinforcing trust and reducing social distance. Such symbolic construction strengthens the persuasive force of commissive speech acts by making political commitments more emotionally resonant and culturally meaningful. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that commissive speech acts, often combined with expressive speech acts, function as persuasive rhetorical strategies that enable political candidates to communicate commitments, construct credibility, and strengthen public trust during election campaigns (Henita & Azad, 2024).

Wonge Dewek is a mythic sign. While denotatively it means 'our family,' connotatively it encodes ethnic solidarity and cultural authenticity. In regions of Central Java where Javanese language and identity remain strong, the use of local dialect transforms the billboard into a cultural marker. It naturalizes the ideology that "the best leader is one of us," someone who shares blood, heritage, and values. By using local language and kinship allegory, the billboard transforms political campaigning into a myth of cultural unity.

The concept of the pragmeme helps explain why this allegory works pragmatically. Within the electoral ritual, *Wonge Dewek* is not merely symbolic but also a context-sensitive pragmatic act: it reassures voters of

shared background, promises solidarity, and performs a commissive act of loyalty to the community. By calling himself 'one of us,' the candidate implicitly pledges to defend, prioritize, and align with local interests. The slogan promises representation grounded in shared identity, not hierarchical authority.

The accompanying phrase *mohon doa restu* (asking for blessings) further situates the billboard within Indonesian sociocultural norms, where political campaigning often overlaps with religious and communal rituals. The allegory thus functions as a pragmeme of communal belonging and electoral promise.

The allegory of family constructs an ideology of populism and ethnic closeness, reinforcing the idea that leaders should emerge from and belong to 'their own people.' This positioning legitimizes the candidate by embedding him in the social fabric of Javanese identity. However, it also reveals how discourse can be exclusionary: the emphasis on shared ethnicity may implicitly marginalize those outside the cultural group, showing how ideology is both inclusive and strategic.

Metaphor and allegory perform a persuasive function in political rhetoric. By framing the candidate as family, the slogan appeals to deep emotional structures such as trust, loyalty, and affection that are stronger than abstract political promises. The allegory legitimizes the candidate's authority not by policy but by kinship, persuading voters that supporting him is akin to supporting one's own sibling. This rhetorical move is particularly persuasive in collectivist cultures like Indonesia, where the metaphor of family resonates with communal values and obligations.

In summary, the slogan *Wonge Dewek* operates as an allegory of kinship that functions simultaneously as a stylistic device, a mythic cultural sign, a pragmeme of electoral solidarity, an ideological construction of populism, and a persuasive rhetorical strategy. It transforms political campaigning into a discourse of family belonging, creating trust, intimacy, and loyalty that extend beyond policy into the realm of cultural and emotional identity.

CONCLUSIONS

This study advances pragma-stylistics by integrating theories of speech acts, figurative language, and multimodality to explain how Indonesian campaign billboards construct persuasive political meaning. It shows how figurative devices such as personification, metaphor, synecdoche, overstatement, symbolism, and allegory intensify the commissive force of political promises. These stylistic elements function not as decorative embellishments but as cognitive and ideological framing tools that naturalize political identities and commitments.

The study expands pragma-stylistics into multimodal territory, illustrating how visual features such as color, gesture, typography, and national symbols collaboratively shape pragmatic meaning.

This multimodal approach reveals that commissive acts on billboards are performed not through words alone but through culturally loaded visual codes that reinforce identity, trust, and ideological alignment. Overall, the article contributes a holistic model of pragma-stylistic analysis for political communication, showing that promises in election discourse emerge from the interdependence of linguistic style, pragmatic action, and semiotic design. Finally, future research could explore cross-cultural comparisons, diachronic changes in campaign language, voter reception of political promises, and the migration of pragma-stylistic strategies to digital campaign media such as memes and social platforms.

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