

Legitimacy Strategies in Political Statements: A Critical Pragmatic Study of The Discourse of National Grief over The Deaths of Three Indonesian Soldiers in The UN Peacekeeping Mission in Lebanon

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ABSTRACT

Based on the theoretical framework of legitimacy strategies, this study uses the Critical Discourse Analysis approach combined with a critical pragmatic perspective to examine how President Prabowo's political statements regarding national mourning over the deaths of three soldiers in the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon are constructed and how these constructions interact with, reproduce, or negotiate broader social, ideological, and cultural structures. There are five key interrelated legitimacy strategies—authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, mythosis, and unification—that are realized through pragmatic mechanisms such as implication, presupposition, and speech acts. The study found that political statements shape meaning not only through expressions of empathy and respect for fallen soldiers, but also through the control of public interpretation, emphasis on moral values, and the building of national solidarity. By exposing the complex dynamics of legitimacy in political statements, this study makes a theoretical contribution to the understanding of discursive practices in political and methodological contexts by offering an applicable approach to the critical discourse analysis of political discourse and public communication more broadly.

Keywords: legitimacy, political statements, critical pragmatics, ideology, critical discourse analysis

INTRODUCTION

In the world of politics, language is never neutral. It is used as the main instrument in building social reality, shaping public perception, and maintaining power structures (Ektrom, 2018). Political statements, as a form of communication between politicians and the public, have an important role in constructing the meaning of certain events, including emotional events such as national mourning.

In sad situations, such as the death of a soldier in an international mission, political statements serve not only as an expression of empathy but also as a means of legitimacy. Through language, politicians can frame events, direct public interpretation, and build support for certain policies or positions. Thus, political statements become an important arena for the production and reproduction of ideology.

Theo van Leeuwen (2007) developed the concept of legitimacy in discourse. He identifies some strategies such as authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, and Mythopoesis. Meanwhile, Fairclough (2023) said that language is a social practice that is closely related to power and ideology. The integration of these two approaches allows for a more comprehensive analysis of political discourse.

Several studies have shown that legitimacy strategies are used not only in formal contexts, but also in digital media and broader public communication (Igwebuiké & Chimuanya, 2020; Fouad, 2024). This shows that legitimacy is a dynamic and contextual discursive phenomenon. Legitimacy strategy follows the time change and public tastes.

However, studies that specifically integrate pragmatic approaches with legitimacy strategies in the context of national mourning statements are still relatively limited, especially in the Indonesian context. Therefore, this study aims to

fill this gap by analyzing how legitimacy strategies are realized through pragmatic mechanisms in political statements.

Research on legitimacy strategies in political statements departs from the understanding that language not only functions as a means of communication but also serves as a social practice which are full of ideological interests and power relations. In this kind of frame of thinking, discourse is seen as a non-neutral medium rather than an arena in which meaning, identity, and interests are negotiated.

One of the most influential theoretical frameworks for analyzing legitimacy is that developed by Theo van Leeuwen, who views legitimacy as a discursive process to justify certain social actions, policies, or practices. According to him, legitimacy can be achieved through four main strategies: authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, and mythosis. Authorization refers to justifications issued by recognized authorities, such as institutions, laws, or traditions. Rationalization is concerned with the use of logical reasons or specific purposes to justify an action. Moral evaluation involves a value-based assessment of what is considered good or bad, whereas mythosis uses narratives or stories to build symbolic and emotional legitimacy. This framework provides a systematic analytical basis for identifying how language is used in the practice of legitimacy.

In addition, the Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) approach developed by Norman Fairclough (2023) offers a broader perspective by emphasizing the relationships among language, power, and ideology. In his view, discourse has three main dimensions, namely text, discursive practices, and social practices. The text dimension concerns the linguistic analysis of word choice, sentence structure, and discourse organization. The dimension of discursive practice encompasses the process of production, distribution, and consumption of texts. In contrast, the dimension of social practice refers to the broader social context in which the discourse operates. The approach enables researchers not only to identify linguistic

strategies but also to understand how they contribute to the reproduction or transformation of power structures in society. Thus, integrating legitimacy theory with CDA provides a comprehensive analytical framework for examining political statements as complex discursive practice.

In a more specific context, pragmatic studies also play an important role in understanding how legitimacy is realized through implicit meaning. Pragmatics focuses on the relationship between language and context, as well as how meaning is generated not only from what is explicitly said, but also from what is implied. Concepts such as *implications*, *presuppositions*, and *speech actions* are keys in this analysis. Implication, as described in the pragmatic tradition, refers to meanings that are not explicitly stated but can be inferred by the listener from context. Presupposition is an assumption that the speaker considers correct and expects the listener to accept, while speech relates to the communicative function of speech, such as declaring, commanding, or inviting. In the context of political statements, this pragmatic mechanism is used to convey a persuasive and ideological message without explicitly stating it. It aligns with Jonathan Charteris-Black's findings that politicians use persuasion in political discourse through implicit meaning and the use of metaphors.

Furthermore, research in the field of political discourse shows that legitimacy strategies are not only limited to formal contexts, but also develop in various forms of modern communication, including digital media. Studies by Igwebuiké and Chimuanya (2020) show that in the context of social media, legitimacy can be built even against inaccurate information through the use of discursive strategies such as authorization and rationalization. This shows that legitimacy is not always about objective truth, but rather about how a message is constructed and received by the audience. Fouad's research (2024) reinforced these findings. He examined legitimacy strategies in news discourse, and found that the media plays an important role in shaping public perception through the choice of language and

certain framing. Thus, legitimacy can be understood as a dynamic and contextual process, which is influenced by the medium of communication and social conditions.

In the field of Indonesian politics, understanding how social actors influence perceptions can help scholars grasp the power dynamics at play. Research by Silaban et al. (2025) and Rihandy and Hidayatullah (2025) shows that the representation of social actors in political discourse plays an important role in legitimization and delegitimization. These representations not only show reality but also shape the public's perception of certain actors and events.

In addition, the ideological dimension in political discourse can also be understood through the concept of nationalism and collective identity. Benedict Anderson in his theory of *imagined communities*, explains that the nation is a social construct built through narratives and symbols. In the context of political statements, the use of terms such as "nation", "we", and "homeland" serves to strengthen collective identity and create a sense of community. This is in line with the *banal concept of nationalism* put forward by Michael Billig, who suggests that nationalism can be subtly reproduced through the use of everyday language. Thus, the strategy of legitimacy is not only concerned with the justification of actions, but also with the formation of identity and social solidarity.

On the other hand, the emotional dimension in legitimacy cannot be ignored. Murray Edelman emphasizes that politics often operates through symbols and emotions, not just rationality. In this context, narratives of heroism, sacrifice, and suffering become effective tools for building legitimacy. The strategy of Mythopoesis allows political actors to connect individual events with broader collective meaning by involving the use of stories and symbols. It not only increases persuasion but also strengthens the emotional engagement of people.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis method to examine legitimacy strategies in political statements. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the meanings contained in the text in depth, including ideological dimensions and power relations that are not always explicitly apparent. The main analytical framework refers to the legitimacy theory of Theo van Leeuwen as well as the Critical Discourse Analysis model of Norman Fairclough, which is combined with a critical pragmatic perspective to uncover implicit meaning in discourse.

The research data is in the form of a political statement text of President Prabowo containing a statement of national mourning for the death of a soldier in an international peace mission. Data are collected through documentation techniques by identifying, copying, and verifying text from credible public sources. The unit of analysis in this study is sentences and phrases that contain indications of legitimacy strategies, such as the use of evaluative lexical, references to authority, and the structure of invitations or narratives.

The analysis procedure is carried out in several stages. First, the researcher conducted an intensive reading of the text to understand the context and structure of the discourse as a whole. Second, a coding process is carried out to identify and classify data based on the categories of legitimacy strategies, namely authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, mythosis, and unification. Third, the data that has been classified is analyzed pragmatically by identifying the implications, presuppositions, and speech actions used in the text. This stage aims to uncover meanings that are not explicitly stated, but have an important role in establishing legitimacy.

Furthermore, the analysis is followed by a critical interpretation using Norman Fairclough's framework, which includes three dimensions: text analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. At this stage, the researcher relates linguistic and

pragmatic findings to the broader socio-political context to understand how these discourses contribute to the construction of ideologies and power relations.

To maintain the validity of the data, this study uses a theoretical triangulation technique by comparing the results of the analysis based on several relevant approaches. In addition, interpretation is carried out systematically and transparently to ensure that the resulting findings can be accounted for academically. Thus, this method is expected to be able to provide a comprehensive analysis of legitimacy strategies in political statements.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

The results of the analysis show that the five legitimacy strategies work simultaneously and support one another. Authorization provides a basis for structural legitimacy, rationalization provides logical justification, moral evaluation provides normative justification, mythosis provides an emotional dimension, and unification strengthens social solidarity.

These findings are in line with Norman Fairclough's view that discourse is a social practice that serves to reproduce power. In addition, Theo van Leeuwen's framework has proven effective in systematically identifying legitimacy patterns.

Discussion

This section presents an analysis of legitimacy strategies in the texts of statements, with reference to Theo van Leeuwen's framework and deepened through a critical-pragmatic approach and Critical Discourse Analysis by Norman Fairclough (2023). In addition, each finding is linked to prior research to strengthen the analysis's validity.

In this study, Van Leeuwen's legitimacy framework is used as the primary analytical model. However, to better explain the construction of collective identity and national solidarity in political discourse, the analysis is extended by incorporating the concept of unification derived from critical discourse studies,

particularly those emphasizing collective identity construction in political communication. Therefore, this study analyzes five legitimacy strategies: authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, mythopoesis, and unification.

1. Authorization Strategy: Legitimacy through Collective Authority and the State

The strategy is seen through the use of collective pronouns and references to the state as the main authority, as in the phrases "*Kami, saudara-saudara sebangsa dan setanah air*" and "*Negara akan selalu hadir*" (*We, our brothers and sisters and countrymen*" and "*The state will always be present*"). The use of "*kami*" constructs a collective identity that unites speakers and audiences in a single national entity.

In the perspective of Theo van Leeuwen's, authorization is a form of legitimacy that relies on socially recognized authority. Meanwhile, according to Norman Fairclough, this strategy serves to naturalize power through language, making it seem unproblematic.

Pragmatically, the statement "*Negara akan selalu hadir*" presupposes that the state has moral legitimacy and absolute authority. This presupposition operates implicitly and leaves no room for negotiation.

These findings align with Ruth Wodak's (2015) research in the *Discourse-Historical Approach*, which shows that politicians often use references to "nation" and "state" to build legitimacy through collective authority. The study found that the use of national identity can strengthen public acceptance of policies by fostering a sense of social consensus.

In addition, research by Teun A. van Dijk (2006) also confirms that political elites often use the strategy of group representation ("we") to control public opinion and strengthen ideological dominance.

According to Theo van Leeuwen, moral evaluation is a value-based legitimacy strategy that assesses actions as good or bad. In this text, the opposing party is positioned as "vile", while the warrior as "the best".

Pragmatically, this strategy produces a persuasive effect through emotional implications. The audience is directed to take a specific moral position without the need for explicit argumentation.

These findings are consistent with the research of Jonathan Charteris-Black (2011) who showed that political language often uses moral evaluations to build legitimacy through emotions and values. In his study of political rhetoric, he found that the use of morally charged words can significantly strengthen persuasion.

In addition, Elena Semino's (2008) research also highlights that lexical evaluation plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of political actors and events.

2. Rationalization Strategy: Justification through Goals and Values

The rationalization strategy is realized through the phrase "*tugas mulia sebagai pasukan perdamaian PBB di Lebanon (noble duty as a UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon)*". The words "*mulia*" and "*perdamaian*" provide purpose-based legitimacy and universal values.

In Theo van Leeuwen's framework, rationalization covers goal-oriented justification and instrumental reasoning. In this case, the soldier's death is constructed as a logical consequence of involvement in a legitimate mission.

Pragmatically, there is an implication that such sacrifices are worth it and cannot be questioned. The audience is directed to accept the event as part of a global moral responsibility.

These findings are supported by research by John Wilson (2015), who shows that political discourse often uses rationalization to frame controversial actions as logical and necessary. In the context of foreign policy, the use of terms such as "peace" and "security" serves to reduce the potential for public criticism.

In addition, Paul Chilton's (2004) study of political language confirms that legitimacy is often built through arguments that link actions to universal goals, such as stability and well-being.

3. Moral Evaluation Strategies: The Construction of the Value Dichotomy

The strategy of moral evaluation can be seen in expressions such as *tindakan keji yang merusak perdamaian* ("heinous act that undermines peace") and *prajurit terbaik bangsa* ("the nation's best soldier"). This lexical choice creates a binary opposition between the moral and the unscrupulous.

From a pragmatic perspective, the lexical expressions "heinous act" and "the nation's best soldiers" generate ideological implicatures that guide the audience toward a particular moral interpretation of the event. The statement presupposes that the soldiers deserve collective admiration and that any action threatening peace is morally unacceptable. In addition, these evaluative expressions function as expressive speech acts that communicate collective respect and condemnation simultaneously. Through these pragmatic mechanisms, moral evaluation does not merely describe reality but actively contributes to the construction of state legitimacy and public consensus.

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4. Mythopoesis Strategy: The Narrative of Heroism as Legitimacy

The strategy of mythopoesis is seen through the mention of the names of the warriors and the narrative of their sacrifices. This turned the event into a story of collective significance.

In Theo van Leeuwen's framework, mythopoesis is a strategy of legitimacy through narrative that features action as part of a larger story.

Pragmatically, the phrase “*pengorbanan mereka tidak pernah dilupakan*” (“*their sacrifice is never forgotten*”) implies that society has a moral obligation to respect and perpetuate those values.

These findings are strengthened by Murray Edelman's (1988) research. It shows that symbolic narratives in politics shape public perception and create collective meaning. Edelman emphasized that stories about heroes and sacrifices are often used to reinforce the legitimacy of power.

In addition, Benedict Anderson's (2006) study of *imagined communities* is also relevant, as it shows that collective narratives play an important role in building national identity and social solidarity.

5. Unification Strategy: Solidarity and Social Control

The unification strategy can be seen in the use of invitations such as *Mari kita lanjutkan semangat...* (“*Let us continue the spirit...*”) and the warning “*tidak memberi ruang bagi siapa pun yang berusaha memecah belah*” (“*leave no room for anyone who tries to divide*”). This strategy builds solidarity while creating social boundaries.

In Norman Fairclough's perspective, unification is part of a discursive practice that constructs social identities through the opposition of “us” versus “them”.

Pragmatically, the form “let us go” is a persuasive directive speech act. The implication is that the audience is expected to follow the invitation.

These findings are in line with the research of Teun A. van Dijk (1998), who showed that political discourse often uses polarization strategies to build group identity. In addition, Michael Billig's (1995) research on *banal nationalism* shows that the use of everyday language such as “we” can subtly reinforce nationalism and solidarity.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that political statements related to national grief are not just expressions of empathy, but also strategic tools to build legitimacy. Five key strategies—authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, Mythopoesis, and

unification—are used systematically to reinforce positions of authority, frame actions as meaningful, emphasize moral values, evoke collective identity, and create social solidarity. These strategies complement each other, forming a persuasive and ideological discourse.

Pragmatically, the legitimacy strategy is realized through realized through implicature, presupposition, and speech-act mechanisms, which allow ideological messages to be conveyed subtly but effectively. The audience is directed to accept constructed meanings without questioning the underlying assumptions, so that language plays a role not only as communication, but also as a tool for shaping social reality and influencing public attitudes.

The research's findings contribute in the integration of legitimacy theory, critical pragmatics, and Critical Discourse Analysis, which strengthens the understanding of the relationship between language, power, and ideology. Practically, these findings can increase public critical awareness of political discourse. Further research is recommended using broader data, corpus-based approaches, or multimodal analysis to make the findings more comprehensive and generalizable.

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