

Strategies of Language Use in Indonesian Vice Presidential Candidates Debate in the 2024 Election

Juamdan Zamha Zamihu

*English Department, School of Teacher Training and Pedagogy
Universitas Dayanu Ikhsanuddin
e-mail: juamdan73@gmail.com*

Abstract:

Understanding the language use strategies in political debates helps candidates craft their communication strategies strategically. Candidates need to resonate with voters, address their concerns, and effectively communicate their vision for the nation through their language and communication style. The objective of the study is to provide a comprehensive description of the strategies of language use in the Indonesian vice presidential candidates debate in the 2024 election to construct their identities, to frame issues in a particular way, to manipulate information to gain an advantage over their opponents, to establish authority and credibility, to persuade voters, and to present themselves in a certain light. It used content analysis to understand the main issues addressed and the candidates' stances on the issues. The data were collected by transcribing spoken content from video and audio recordings and then analyzed using thematic analysis, consisting of familiarization, generating themes, review, refinement, and defining and naming themes. The results showed that all three candidates aimed to project an image of trustworthiness and competence, but each used different techniques to achieve it. Muhaimin Iskandar focused on experience and continuity, Gibran on pragmatism and youth appeal, and Mahfud on intellectual authority and good governance. The choice of language was crucial to their strategies. Muhaimin Iskandar's populism resonated with rural voters, while Gibran's modern vocabulary appealed to the urban youth. Mahfud's academic tone established him as a knowledgeable figure.

Keywords: *debate, image of trustworthiness and competence, strategies of language use*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian vice presidential candidates debate in the 2024 election was a crucial event in the political landscape, showcasing the candidates' strategies, policies, and personas. The debate drew considerable public attention as it provided a platform for candidates to articulate their ideas, critique opponents, and engage with pressing issues facing Indonesia, particularly in the economic domain. The debate centered on critical financial issues such as carbon trade regulations, Islamic economy development, taxation, infrastructure, and urbanization. Candidates articulated their policy proposals, demonstrating their understanding of economic challenges and presenting solutions.

During the debate, one of the most outstanding aspects is the use of language between them. In this case, language was a tool for projecting identities. Candidates aimed to portray themselves as knowledgeable, critical thinkers, or experienced leaders through their language use strategies. They strategically used language to persuade voters. Mahfud's critiques aimed to cast doubt on opponents' plans, while Gibran and Muhaimin attempted to highlight their strengths and past achievements. The debate served as a platform for candidates to engage directly with the electorate, presenting their visions and policies to gain support.

In the context of the Indonesian vice-presidential debate in the 2024 election, it is necessary to employ the linguistic frameworks (Christensen, 2008) to dissect the candidates' language use (Del Rosso, 2015; Stecker, 2011), strategies and the impact of their discourse on voter perceptions. Examining the linguistic aspects (Del Rosso, 2015) is expected to uncover more profound insights into political communication, identity construction, persuasion techniques, and the dynamics of power and language in political debates.

The debate could influence voter opinions (Glassman, 2019; Stark, 1992; Mark-Ungericht & Weiskopf, 2007; Benoit & Hansen, 2001) by providing insights into candidates' competencies, policy understanding, and communication skills. Strong performances or weaknesses in the debate might impact the candidates' campaign momentum leading to the elections (Mascaro & Goggins, 2015). The phenomena observed in this debate encompassed a spectrum of political communication strategies, policy discussions, linguistic dynamics, and audience engagement tactics (Proctor & Su, 2011; Rowbottom, 2006; Whitney & Wartella, 1992; Bilmes, 2001). Understanding these aspects provides insights into how political discourses unfold, how candidates communicate their visions and policies, and the potential impact on voter perceptions and electoral outcomes (Brown, 2007; Hwang et al., 2007; Marietta, 2009; Richardson et al., 2008; Self, 2005; Yawn et al., 1998).

The tone of these debates can vary, ranging from spirited discussions to more formal exchanges, depending on the candidates' styles and the specific issues being addressed. Fact-checking and rebuttals are common during these debates, with candidates often challenging each other's claims or proposed policies. It is essential to note that the dynamics of the debate can vary widely based on the candidates' strategies, the moderators' approach, and the prevailing socio-political climate (Glassman, 2019; Meany & Shuster, 2002). These debates served as a crucial part of the democratic process in Indonesia, allowing voters to assess and compare the candidates' platforms and competence before casting their votes in the elections.

The focus of the problems encompasses constructing identities (Bailey et al., 2016; Butler et al., 1992), framing issues (Lakoff, 2010), manipulating information (Staubach, 1941), establishing

authority and credibility (Braet, 1992), persuading voters (Bailey et al., 2016); (Popkin, 1991) and presenting a specific image (Goffman, 1981). In essence, these candidates likely utilized language strategically across these facets to influence public perception, advance their agendas, and garner support during the debates, all of which align with the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Strategies of language use in presidential debates have been investigated by Rosyidah (2020), focusing on the violation of the cooperative principle in the conversational style of the Indonesian presidential debate 2019, and found that President and Vice President candidate number 01 violated maxim of relevance and maxim of quality. Joseph & Widyastuti (2023), investigating the impact of intensifiers as women's persuasion strategy in the vice-presidential debate, contended that the most prevalent sort of intensifier used by Kamala and Hillary was the emphazier attitudinal disjunct and the most prevalent varying levels of certainty and uncertainty lies on what is being conveyed. Yuliawati et al. (2019) revealed that Joko Widodo was inclined to give more information and entities, while Prabowo Subianto tended to provide more explanations to divulge information.

In the context of politeness in the Indonesian vice-presidential debate in 2019, Rosyidah (2021) contended that the vice-presidential candidates employed positive politeness. Putra & Widodo (2020), investigating the use of euphemisms in the 2019 presidential election debates, revealed that there are nine forms of euphemism, namely figurative expression, metaphor, flippancy, circumlocutions, clipping, acronym, abbreviation, one-for-one substitution, borrowing, and hyperbole used by the candidates. The speech with the most euphemism was Joko Widodo, with 113 euphemisms or 42.3%. Finally, it also showed four functions of euphemism: a form of positive imaging, criticism or insinuating opponents, refining speech, and being a tool for diplomacy.

Ghofur et al. (2021), discussing the independence of the mass media in Indonesia, especially in reporting on the presidential candidates' debates in the General Election, stated that the "Media Indonesia" newspaper is not yet objective in reporting the presidential debate. "Media Indonesia" was clearly at the forefront to defend the interests of the incumbent. Media Indonesia has become an influential discourse in leading public opinion to provide support candidate pairs of Jokowi-Amin. It is seen from some indicators used in research, namely personalization, sensationalism and emotionalism, stereotypes, juxtaposition/linkages, and the last is accuracy.

Rarely research on the language use of the Indonesian vice presidential candidates debate viewed from comprehensive debate strategies. Thus, the objective of this study is to provide a comprehensive description of the strategies of language use in the Indonesian vice presidential candidates debate in the 2024 election to construct their identities, to frame issues in a particular way, to manipulate information to gain an advantage over their opponents, to establish authority and credibility, to persuade voters, and to present themselves in a certain light.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used to analyze the Indonesian vice presidential candidate debate in the 2024 election was based on content analysis to systematically analyze and interpret the content of various forms of communication, such as written, verbal, visual, or recorded data. Its primary goal is to objectively and qualitatively describe the content, structure, and characteristics of the information being studied. Content analysis encompasses two main components: *transcript*

analysis and *thematic analysis*. Transcript analysis conducted a detailed examination of the debate's transcripts. They could analyze the language used, the topics covered, the frequency of specific keywords or phrases, and the overall structure of arguments presented by each candidate.

On the other hand, thematic analysis involves identifying and categorizing themes or recurring topics discussed during the debate. It aims to understand the main issues addressed, the candidates' stances on them, and how they align with public concerns. The data were derived from the audiovisual recording of the debate from a TV broadcast, while the source of data was obtained from the written transcript of the debate.

The data were collected by transcribing spoken content from video and audio recordings, extracting text data from social media platforms or online forums using relevant APIs or web scraping tools, organizing the collected data systematically, labeling and categorizing it based on the predefined coding framework, ensuring accuracy and completeness of transcripts by cross-checking against original recordings or multiple sources and maintaining consistency in applying coding categories across the collected data to ensure uniformity in coding practices.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, consisting of familiarization, generating themes, reviewing and refining, and defining and naming themes. On the other hand, contextual understanding analysis involves political context, candidates' backgrounds and policies, audience perception and reactions, cultural and societal influences, and ethical considerations.

3. RESULTS

Under the skillful guidance of Alfito Deannova Ginting and Liviana Cherlisa, the 2024 vice presidential candidates engaged in a lively 120-minute debate divided into six thematic segments. The program, spanning 2.5 hours, also included 30 minutes of advertising breaks. Here are the data from the vice presidential debate.

Data 1: Gibran

Gibran: "Asalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Peace be upon you, Shalom Om Swastiastu, Namo Buddhaya, Greetings of Virtue. Indonesia is a big country, we must be able to get out of the middle income trap. The key is, we must be able to increase added value domestically amidst the onslaught of global recession, trade wars and geopolitical conflicts. Our country's average economic growth remains resilient at an average of 5%. Quality economic growth is supported by a reduction in unemployment rates, poverty rates, a reduction in the GINI Ratio and also controlled inflation rates. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, fellow young people, what is your agenda for the future? We will continue downstreaming. Not only mining downstream, but also agricultural downstream, fisheries downstream, digital downstream, and so on. We will also continue to distribute development that is no longer Java centric. We continue to boost the creative economy and also MSMEs. We have 64 million MSMEs which contribute 61% to GDP. We, if we can fulfill these 4 steps, God willing, 19 million jobs will be opened. Equitable development is mandatory. Now there is 53% investment outside Java. This sustainable IKN development will open up new economic growth points, will open up access and connectivity as well as open up employment opportunities. This IKN not only builds government buildings, but also serves as symbols of equitable development in Indonesia and also as a symbol of the transformation of Indonesia's development. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I also believe that one day Indonesia will become the king of green energy in the world by continuing to develop bio diesel, bio avtur from palm oil, bio ethanol from sugar cane, as well as sugar independence. To achieve a golden Indonesia, a golden generation is needed. We must be able to turn future challenges into future opportunities. We must have future talents equipped with future skills. For this reason, we will boost digital futurization. We will prepare young people who are experts in artificial intelligence, young people

Strategies of Language Use in Indonesian Vice Presidential Candidates Debate in 2024 Election who are blockchain experts, young people who are robotics experts, young people who are sharia banking experts, young people who are crypto experts . Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the big narrative here is the continuation of acceleration and improvement. Thank You. Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Happy mother's day. Congratulations to the great women in Indonesia. Thank You”.

Data 2: Mahfud

Mahfud: “Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Let us all bow down, brothers and sisters, throughout Indonesia, to our mother in order to wish her a Happy Mother's Day, December 22 2023. And after this, we continue our service to Mother Earth. Someone asked us, maybe don't you target to get 7% economic growth in one year? Because in the history of reform, it has never grown by 7%. Previously, this was only achieved in 1989-1991 in the New Order era. Then, I conveyed this question to several experts, and they said that only because of our stupidity we cannot increase economic growth to 7% because we are very rich with great natural resources and human resources. What's the problem? The problem is that there is a lot of corruption and inefficiency in sectors of economic growth, namely in the consumption sector, government spending, export-import, and ready-made investment. Thus, because there is a lot of corruption and that really happens. Take a look; based on the results of international transparency, corruption occurs in the legislative, executive, and judicial institutions on a large scale.

Corruption also occurs in three dimensions of our nature. This is where we step on the earth; there is corruption in land and mining. We go to sea; there is corruption in maritime matters. We look at the air and our airplanes, and it turns out there is also a lot of corruption in the air. What's the consequence? Poor people. I met someone named Teddy and Joni in Padang, one or two employees of a trucking company, who stated that they had never been able to get oil subsidies provided by the state because they never arrived; they were corrupted. I also met a Sriwulan, a small child in Parongpong, West Bandung. He invited me to fly a kite. He said, "Father, I want to fly like a kite to achieve my dreams, but I can't." Then, I remembered my island, Madura. Madura is rich in natural gas, but until now, it has never been optimized for use. So, the key is how we eradicate corruption. Then, someone asked me, "Sir, if you were Vice President, people would be afraid of being arrested." I called economists and business people, "Are you really afraid of me?"

"I'm fine. In fact, we need a law enforcer like you because of what? If we want to invest in Indonesia, we will be squeezed; if we want to try, we will be squeezed. If we pay, even though we are being extorted, then we are found out, we are arrested. He said we bribed."

That's what Indonesia is like at the moment. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we must fight corruption. To borrow a term from young people, "Hey Wir, I hit you. Hey Wir, back off, Wir. You are corrupt. I will hit you." Ladies and gentlemen, this is all in order to achieve equality as stipulated in Article 3 of the Constitution. In the Qur'an, it is called Kayla Tan parasite (quoting a verse from the Qur'an). "Don't let wealth only circulate among the rich." OK, thank you”.

Data 3: Muhaimin

Muhaimin: “Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Good evening. Best wishes to all of us. I should have spoken at the first debate, but today, I am truly grateful to finally be able to meet. But don't get me wrong, it's not because I have ambitions to become President, but because I have learned important lessons during my struggle in politics. What's that? I witnessed and was part of the existence of a government that has absolute authority, especially the highest leadership, to be able to bring justice and prosperity to the people. This is what is known as slepet (to whip). This Slepet (to whip) is part of the authority to bring prosperity and justice. “Slepet”. This, like the sarong I brought, is commonly used among students. It can wake up those who are sleeping, move those who are sluggish, and at the same time, remind those who are inattentive. Thank God, Gusti Allah gave me the opportunity to be with Mas Anies, who has the same thoughts about bringing about change and improvement. In fact, the two of us are like bottles with lids. Make no mistake because disruption is the beginning of change. Imagine 100 Indonesians who have wealth above 100 million in Indonesia's population. This means that this is an unfair situation. We have to catch up on this. We must also have confidence that we will tax these 100

Juamdan Zamha Zamihu

rich people at the same time by lowering taxes on the middle class in Indonesia. Today, expensive chilies, eggs, rice, goods, evil middlemen, ruling mafia, and auction kings are everywhere. In fact, people are already working, working, working. We have to catch up on this. The unemployment figure is already 8 million. Eighty million do work but in the informal sector. They don't get a certain income, and even their wallets are guaranteed to be thin. This is what we have to be careful about. AMIN (a nickname and abbreviation of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar) wants social assistance, which is the state's obligation to continue and even be increased, so we want social assistance which will increasingly bring our people to have purchasing power that will boost the economy of our society. God willing, AMIN will ensure that 5% of the budget from the APBN (National Income and Expenditure Estimates), or around 150 trillion, is specifically for you, you, the young people of Indonesia. You have great energy to be at the forefront of our nation's progress. One of them is KAMU, Youth Business Credit, which is given the opportunity to access as many as possible to become good economic actors. We will present how to make villages grow and develop. God willing, we will realize 5 billion per village every year for our national development. We will also provide all the assistance that will enable it to grow and progress”.

Data 4: Mahfud

Mahfud:” OK. Regarding digital data policy, we have already had two laws recently. What's new is the PDP Law and the ITE Law, which have just been adjusted, but it's more than that. In my opinion, anyone cannot avoid digital or digital economy. Therefore, yes we cannot reject it, but we have to be careful because there is extraordinary disruption in digital development. I handle cases, for example, Pinjol, where people are victims of digital economic activities, including crypto for example. The pinjol case itself is very problematic. Why? Because he was created under civil law through substances. People who don't know immediately say, do you want to borrow that much money? Yes. How many flowers? Yes. What if you don't pay that much? Yes. It was civil, and there were many victims; many even committed suicide. There was a person from Semarang, a teacher, who borrowed only 500 thousand, and his debt became 240 million because the interest was always increasing. Then, someone committed suicide. In this case, when I conveyed it to the National Police, “I can't, sir. That's civil law.” When it was submitted to the OJK, the OJK said, “That is not our authority; that is not our authority because they are illegal and not registered.” I repeatedly summoned and then invited joint meetings at the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs. We state that this is a criminal offense and must be arrested immediately. That was the day after. 144 people were arrested that same day. That's all”.

Data 5: Muhaimin

Muhaimin: “It is absolutely true that there is still a gap between the development of digital technology and the capabilities of our MSMEs. Therefore, it must be followed up, Mr Mahfud. Apart from eradicating online loans and online gambling, this still needs to be slowed down further because it is not comprehensive in handling this, so borrowing is still rampant. Online gambling is still rampant. What is more important than that, Mr Mahfud, is that the ability to enter the digital world requires assistance from the government to intervene. Handle what? Starting from digital literacy for MSMEs. Second, to help push marketing for the sustainability of MSMEs facing very tight competition. On the other hand, we also need our technological capacity to be more helpful, as the current internet speed in our society is still very low”.

Data 6: Gibran

Gibran: “OK, thank you. Maybe we should be careful too. Apart from borrowing and online gambling, we also have to be careful about data theft. For this reason, we must strengthen our cyber security and cyber defense. We have done that in Solo. In Solo, there is a techno-park and a cyber security school, and what needs to be emphasized again is how these e-commerce players can complain about our regulations. So, in the future, there will be no such thing as shadow painting, price dumping, or cross-border goods that will kill our MSMEs. In the future, we must protect MSMEs, and we want to do so once again because we want to talk about financial literacy and digital literacy. What we are preparing for in the future must be strengthening human resources and digital people. Therefore, we want young people to participate in the digital downstreaming we will launch soon”.

Here is the in-depth data analysis:

3.1 Constructing Identities

In the first round, Gibran employs a multi-religious greeting at the beginning, showcasing inclusivity and respect for diverse identities in Indonesia. In other words, he opens with greetings from various religions, showing respect for Indonesia's diversity and attempting to connect with a broad audience. In constructing identities as a youthful leader, he addresses "*fellow young people*," highlighting his youth and appealing to a younger generation. In constructing identity as a modern and tech-savvy, he references his familiarity with concepts like AI, blockchain, and crypto, portraying himself as a forward-thinking leader. Then, he emphasizes his vision for economic growth, focusing on downstream industries, equitable development, boosting the creative economy, and supporting MSMEs. This projects an image of a candidate who is forward-thinking, economically focused, and inclusive. *In the second round*, he emphasizes his role in advancing cyber security and defense, drawing from his experience in Solo, where he mentions the existence of a techno-park and a cyber security school. By highlighting these initiatives, he aims to craft an identity as someone knowledgeable about and actively involved in addressing modern technological challenges. He emphasizes his plans for "*digital downstreaming*" and strengthening digital human resources, portraying himself as a forward-thinking leader pushing for digital progress.

In the first round, Mahfud starts by invoking Islamic greetings and connects the debate context to Mother's Day's cultural event, highlighting a familial and empathetic identity. He then aligns himself with the cause of eradicating corruption, portraying himself as a champion for the marginalized and disadvantaged. He uses anecdotes about individuals affected by corruption to create an emotional connection. *In the second round*, he constructs his identity as someone with a deep understanding of legal and regulatory matters, particularly concerning digital data policy and the challenges associated with the digital economy. He portrays himself as a problem solver and someone who takes decisive action to address issues affecting people, referencing his involvement in handling cases like Pinjol (online lending) and emphasizing his role in seeking solutions. He describes taking initiative by convening meetings and pushing authorities to act against illegal loan services, portraying himself as a proactive leader who gets things done.

In the first round, Muhaimin begins with Islamic greetings, establishing a connection with religious and cultural values. He positions himself as someone experienced in politics and governance but clarifies that his aim is not personal ambition but to utilize his political insights to benefit the people. His reference to "*Slepet*" and its potential to awaken and prod people hints at his role as a catalyst for change. *In the second round*, he seeks to portray himself as a candidate who understands the challenges faced by Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in adapting to digital technology. He positions himself as someone who advocates for government intervention to assist MSMEs in navigating the digital world. By emphasizing the need for digital literacy, marketing support, and technological advancement, he positions himself as a champion for empowering small businesses in the digital era.

3.2 Framing Issues

In the first round, Gibran frames Indonesia's challenges as being caught in a middle-income trap amidst global economic issues. His emphasis on downstreaming various sectors and distributing development away from Java illustrates a broader concern for economic balance and diversification. His emphasis on sustainable and equitable development reframes economic

growth as something that needs to benefit all regions of Indonesia, not just the central ones. In framing the issue of green energy champion, he portrays himself as environmentally conscious and advocating for Indonesia's leadership in this sector. *In the second round*, he frames the issues of concern by mentioning specific problems such as borrowing, online gambling, data theft, shadow painting, price dumping, and cross-border goods harming MSMEs. This framing positions him as someone who understands and is willing to tackle various complex issues, particularly those related to technology, cybersecurity, and the protection of MSMEs. He frames e-commerce regulations as essential for protecting small businesses from predatory practices, aligning himself with their interests.

In the first round, Mahfud frames the core issue as corruption, intertwining it with economic growth. Mahfud portrays corruption as the main obstacle preventing Indonesia from achieving a higher economic growth rate. By associating corruption with various sectors (consumption, government, investment), he emphasizes its pervasive nature and its impact on the economy and the lives of ordinary people. *In the second round*, he frames the discussion around the digital economy by highlighting its unavoidable nature while cautioning against its disruptive potential. By focusing on specific examples like *Pinjol* and referencing victims' stories, he frames the issue as critical and requires immediate attention and regulatory intervention. He highlights the complexities of such cases, emphasizing the need for legal action to protect citizens from exploitation in the digital sphere.

In the first round, Muhaimin frames the issues around economic disparity, unfair wealth distribution, rising living costs, unemployment, and the challenges the informal sector faces. Muhaimin emphasizes the need for change, particularly regarding taxation policies and tackling the dominance of certain groups like middlemen and ruling mafias. *In the second round*, he frames the issue by highlighting the gap between the advancement of digital technology and the capabilities of MSMEs. By mentioning problems like online loans and gambling, he aims to draw attention to the negative consequences of the digital realm, suggesting that the current regulatory measures are not comprehensive enough to address these issues effectively. He emphasizes the importance of government intervention in supporting MSMEs in leveraging digital tools for their growth and sustainability in a competitive environment. He critiques Mahfud's focus on eradicating online loans and gambling as insufficient, implying a broader range of digital challenges faced by MSMEs.

3.3 Manipulating Information

In the first round, Gibran presents positive statistics about economic growth, reduction in unemployment, poverty, and inflation rates, and he does not offer detailed data or sources. This lack of specific evidence might be a strategy to avoid being fact-checked or countered by opponents during the debate. In his economic claims, while mentioning positive economic indicators, he does not address potential vulnerabilities or acknowledge alternative perspectives. Regarding the IKN project, he paints a rosy picture of the new capital project's benefits without discussing potential drawbacks or criticisms. In his job creation claim, he presents a bold prediction of job creation without detailing its feasibility or underlying calculations. *In the second round*, he does not directly target opponents; Gibran uses the language strategically to showcase his understanding and potential solutions to prevalent issues. He avoids direct accusations or aggressive statements, maintaining a more diplomatic stance. While mentioning data theft, he does not provide specific data or elaborate on its prevalence. This selective focus creates a

potentially incomplete picture of the digital landscape's dangers. "*Digital downstreaming*" and "*strengthening digital people*" remain broadly defined, leaving room for interpretation and potentially downplaying the complexity of implementing such initiatives.

In the first round, Mahfud utilizes emotional anecdotes to illustrate the effects of corruption on individuals' lives, creating a narrative that resonates with voters. He generalizes corruption across various sectors without providing specific evidence or statistics, which might be a strategic move to appeal to emotions rather than relying on complex data. *In the second round*, he uses specific anecdotes, like the case of a teacher who borrowed a small amount and ended up with an exorbitant debt leading to suicide, to emotionally engage the audience and emphasize the severity of the issue. He presents a narrative that positions himself as a proactive figure who took decisive steps to resolve the problem by involving different authorities, such as the National Police and OJK (Financial Services Authority), eventually leading to arrests. While highlighting the tragic suicide case, he does not mention the full scope of Pinjol users or the positive impact of digital finance. This selective focus creates a potentially biased impression. Using terms like "victims" and "committed suicide" evokes empathy and fear, influencing voters emotionally rather than through objective data.

In the first round, Muhaimin highlights societal issues such as expensive goods and the struggles of the informal sector. He does not provide detailed plans on how to address these problems. His language focuses more on vividly painting the issues rather than presenting specific strategies or data-driven solutions. *In the second round*, he does not heavily manipulate information; instead, he presents a narrative that emphasizes the challenges faced by MSMEs in adapting to the digital world. By mentioning specific issues like online loans and gambling, he positions these problems as ongoing challenges that require further attention and intervention, possibly suggesting that the current efforts to tackle these issues have been insufficient. While mentioning rampant online borrowing and gambling, he does not acknowledge the potential benefits of digital finance or mention specific data about their prevalence. This selective focus creates a potentially biased impression of the digital landscape. Though not explicitly criticizing Mahfud, his statements highlight perceived shortcomings in existing solutions, subtly undermining his opponent's position.

3.4 Establishing Authority and Credibility

In the first round, Gibran attempts to establish credibility by citing economic growth indicators and statistics related to poverty reduction, employment, and the contribution of MSMEs to GDP. He positions him as someone informed about the country's economic landscape and suggests that he has a plan to continue and improve these trends. His experience in downstreaming, he highlights his success in Solo with downstreaming agricultural and creative industries. In his data and numbers, he uses statistics like investment percentages and GINI ratios to appear knowledgeable and data-driven. His confident tone maintains a positive and assured language throughout, projecting confidence in his ideas and solutions. *In the second round*, he leverages his experience in implementing cyber-related initiatives in Solo to establish credibility in addressing cybersecurity concerns. He presents himself as someone who has actively worked on these matters, implying that he can replicate similar success on a larger scale. His use of phrases like "*we have done that*" and "*what we are preparing*" shows confidence in his achievements and plans.

In the first round, Mahfud presents himself as someone concerned about corruption's widespread effects and claims to have consulted experts, lending credibility to his statements. By referencing economists and businesspeople who supposedly aren't afraid of his enforcement approach, he aims to establish authority and a perception of being tough on corruption. *In the second round*, his mention of specific laws (PDP Law and ITE Law) demonstrates his knowledge of existing regulations related to digital data policy. He also establishes credibility by referencing his interactions with various governmental bodies like the National Police, OJK, and the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs. This implies he has the experience and connections to address complex issues effectively. Sharing the Semarang teacher's story personalizes the problem and adds credibility to his claims.

In the first round, Muhaimin leverages his political experience and positions himself as someone aligned with Anies Baswedan, associating himself with a like-minded figure to enhance credibility. However, beyond this alignment, specific policy initiatives or past accomplishments are not elaborated upon to solidify his authority on the matters discussed. *In the second round*, he establishes credibility by addressing the specific issues faced by MSMEs in the digital landscape. By highlighting the need for digital literacy and marketing support and pointing out the deficiencies in internet speed, he demonstrates an understanding of the technical and infrastructural challenges hindering MSMEs' digital integration. He positions himself as someone knowledgeable about the hurdles faced by small businesses in embracing digital technology. Addressing Mahfud by name adds a sense of confidence and directness, projecting authority in the debate. Proposing concrete actions like digital literacy training and marketing support demonstrates knowledge of MSME challenges and suggests practical solutions.

3.5 Persuading Voters

In the first round, Gibran emphasizes job creation, equitable development, and the potential for future growth through investments in digitalization and technology. He aims to appeal to voters concerned about economic stability, unemployment, and prospects for the country. Regarding appeals to national pride and optimism, he emphasizes Indonesia's potential and calls for achieving a "golden age." In his focus on the future and opportunities, he frames his policies as proactive responses to future challenges, appealing to voters' aspirations. In his direct engagement, he addresses "*distinguished ladies and gentlemen*" and "*fellow young people*," creating a sense of connection. *In the second round*, his emphasis on protecting MSMEs and promoting financial and digital literacy aims to resonate with voters concerned about economic stability, small business protection, and technological advancement. By positioning himself as a proponent of these issues, he seeks to persuade voters who prioritize these aspects. Highlighting his focus on youth involvement in digital development resonates with younger generations interested in digital opportunities. Protecting MSMEs from unfair competition suggests potential economic growth and stability, appealing to voters concerned about livelihoods.

In the first round, Mahfud's emphasis on fighting corruption aligns with a significant concern among voters in Indonesia. By portraying himself as a force against corruption and inequality, he attempts to persuade voters that tackling this issue is crucial for the country's progress and the welfare of its citizens. *In the second round*, he aims to persuade voters by showcasing his proactive stance in addressing pressing societal issues like digital economy-related exploitation. He appeals to voters' concerns about consumer protection, financial security, and the need for decisive regulatory action to prevent such incidents. The emotional anecdotes of victims and his

role in their rescue attempts to connect with voters on a human level, evoking empathy and a sense of urgency for his proposed solutions. He identifies the problem (Pinjol victims) and presents himself as the one who took action to solve it, connecting with voters seeking decisive leadership. Highlighting suicides and risks associated with an unregulated digital economy taps into voters' concerns about personal safety and financial security.

In the first round, Muhaimin attempts to resonate with voters by addressing economic concerns, promising to increase social assistance, lower taxes for the middle class, and allocate a substantial portion of the budget for youth-related initiatives and village development. He aims to appeal to voters' desires for economic relief and empowerment. *In the second round*, he seeks to persuade voters by presenting himself as a candidate concerned about the well-being and growth of MSMEs. He appeals to the audience's empathy by highlighting the difficulties faced by small businesses due to inadequate digital infrastructure and the prevalence of online issues like loans and gambling. His proposed solutions, centered around government intervention and support, are aimed at garnering support from those who prioritize economic empowerment and small business development. By focusing on MSMEs, he targets a significant voting bloc with tangible economic concerns that resonate with their desire for government support in the digital age. Highlighting digital literacy and marketing assistance suggests quick wins for struggling businesses, appealing to voters seeking economic improvement.

3.6 Presenting a Certain Light

In the first round, Gibran portrays himself as a visionary leader focusing on future talents and skills needed in a rapidly changing world. His mention of expertise in AI, blockchain, robotics, and other fields aligns with the idea of preparing Indonesia for a digital future. This positioning aims to present him as a candidate aligned with progress and technological advancement. He is competent and solution-oriented, and he positions himself as someone who understands the nation's problems and has well-defined solutions. The most conspicuous thing is his forward-looking and innovative ability, where he emphasizes his focus on digital futurization and technological advancements. With his inclusive and unifying characteristics, he promotes ideas like equitable development and religious inclusivity, projecting an image of a leader for all Indonesians. *In the second round*, he presents himself as a forward-thinking candidate focused on preparing for the future, emphasizing the importance of digital transformation and the involvement of young people. This portrayal aims to align him with the aspirations of a modern, tech-savvy society. His focus on concrete initiatives like the Solo techno-park and plans suggests he gets things done.

In the first round, Mahfud positions himself as a law enforcer who will not hesitate to tackle corruption. He uses colloquial language ("Hey Wir, I hit you") to depict a no-nonsense approach, attempting to portray himself as someone unafraid to confront corruption directly. *In the second round*, he presents himself as a compassionate figure, deeply concerned about the well-being of citizens affected by digital economic activities. His narrative portrays him as a decisive leader capable of navigating complex legal and regulatory landscapes to protect vulnerable individuals. By highlighting his involvement in resolving these issues, he positions himself as an effective problem solver and a proactive advocate for justice. Describing his successful intervention against illegal loan services projects him as a capable leader who can tackle complex issues.

In the first round, Muhaimin presents himself as someone aware of the struggles of ordinary Indonesians, positioning the proposed partnership with Anies Baswedan as a force for positive

change. His simple metaphors, like the sarong and the analogy of being bottles with lids, portray readiness for disruptive change. *In the second round*, he positions himself as a proactive advocate for MSMEs, someone who recognizes the challenges they face in adapting to the digital age and is committed to providing them with the necessary assistance. His focus on digital literacy, marketing support, and technological enhancement portrays him as a candidate who understands the complexities of the digital economy and is willing to address them to benefit small businesses and economic growth. He actively identifies problems and proposes solutions, portraying himself as taking initiative and addressing challenges head-on.

4. DISCUSSION

The Indonesian vice presidential candidates debate in the 2024 election has several implications regarding constructing identities, framing issues, manipulating information, establishing authority and credibility, persuading voters, and presenting a specific image.

This current study found that Gibran utilizes language that emphasizes economic development, inclusivity, technological advancement, and a vision for a more balanced and prosperous Indonesia. However, the lack of specific details or references might leave room for opponents to question the depth and feasibility of his plans. In other words, Gibran's language use in the debate constructs a specific identity, frames issues in his favor, establishes authority, and ultimately persuades voters. He employs positive framing, future-oriented perspectives, and data-driven approaches to present himself as a competent, innovative, and inclusive leader capable of steering Indonesia toward a bright future. His claims and projections require further scrutiny. His language effectively conveys his desired image and message to the electorate.

This study uncovered that Mahfud strategically uses emotive language, personal anecdotes, and references to Islamic and constitutional principles to construct an image of a candidate committed to combating corruption and advocating for economic progress with equality. However, the lack of specific plans or strategies beyond the focus on eradicating corruption might leave some voters questioning the depth of his policy proposals. In addition, Mahfud strategically utilizes language to convey his expertise, showcase his proactive approach, and position himself as a credible, compassionate leader capable of addressing contemporary societal challenges related to the digital economy. It is important to note that this is just one perspective on Mahfud's statement. Different interpretations could arise depending on individual voters' backgrounds, prior knowledge, and political leanings.

This study also highlighted that Muhaimin employs a language focused on economic disparity, promising solutions through increased social assistance, taxation reforms, and youth-focused initiatives. However, his presentation lacks detailed plans or specific policy outlines, relying more on emotive language and broad strokes to connect with voters. He strategically uses language to position himself as a candidate empathetic to the struggles of MSMEs in the digital age and advocates for government intervention to bridge the gap and empower small businesses in Indonesia.

In constructing identities, this study found that Gibran emphasized his position as a progressive and tech-savvy leader, Muhaimin focused on his experience in social welfare and stressed his dedication to improving the people's wealth, and Mahfud highlighted his legal expertise to portray himself as a stable and authoritative figure. The vice presidential candidate constructed

their high identities to win the voters' hearts. Our actions, language, and behaviors help "construct" and reify our identities over time (Bailey et al., 2016; Butler et al., 1992).

In terms of framing issues, Gibran likely framed issues around technology and economic development. Muhaimin framed social welfare, poverty alleviation, education, and healthcare issues. Mahfud framed governance, law enforcement, stability, and national security issues. Those vice presidential candidates adhered to Lakoff (2010), that is, carefully choosing language and metaphors that align with particular values and resonate emotionally, guiding how an issue is perceived and understood, potentially influencing public opinion and policy decisions.

Regarding manipulating information for advantage, this study found that each candidate selectively presented information to showcase their strengths or downplay their weaknesses. They avoided directly attacking opponents but could subtly undermine their positions by highlighting their accomplishments or policy proposals. Staubach's analysis (1941) underscores that manipulating information doesn't always mean outright falsification; it often involves strategically shaping the presentation and context to create a specific desired impact on the audience.

Referring to establishing authority and credibility, the researchers found that Gibran is likely to emphasize his successful initiatives in Solo related to cybersecurity and economic development to develop credibility in tech-related matters. Muhaimin cited his track record in social welfare policies and initiatives to establish authority in social development matters. Mahfud leveraged his legal background and experience in government to develop authority in matters of governance and law. Braet (1992) emphasizes the combination of expertise, ethical alignment, and consistent professionalism to establish credibility and authority.

Highlighting about persuading voters, this study uncovered that each candidate aimed to appeal to specific voter segments. Gibran targeted tech-savvy and entrepreneurial-minded individuals, Muhaimin focused on voters concerned about social welfare, and Mahfud appealed to those valuing stability and lawfulness. Persuading voters can be done by aligning with voters' identities, simplifying information, building trust, and employing repetition. Campaigns can influence voter perception and decision-making (Bailey et al., 2016; Popkin, 1991).

In the issue of presenting the candidates' image, Gibran likely presented himself as a forward-thinking, innovative leader ready to tackle modern challenges. Muhaimin presented himself as a compassionate, people-centric leader focused on social justice and welfare. Meanwhile, Mahfud presented himself as a steady, experienced figure prioritizing governance, order, and the rule of law. Goffman (1981) suggests the importance of adapting to situational contexts while maintaining coherence in one's self-presentation. By thoughtfully managing behavior, setting, and appearance, individuals can cultivate and project a specific image that resonates with their audience.

5. CONCLUSION

The three vice presidential candidates have shown diverse language strategic approaches. The language strategies used by Gibran, Muhaimin, and Mahfud during the debate reflected their attempts to resonate with specific voter segments, establish credibility in their chosen domains, project a vision for the nation's future, and avoid direct confrontation while highlighting their strengths. These strategies were aimed at securing voter support by aligning with the diverse concerns and priorities of the electorate in the 2024 election. The language strategies employed

by these candidates played a crucial role in shaping their identities, framing issues, manipulating information, establishing authority and credibility, persuading voters, and presenting themselves in a particular light throughout the debate. Somehow, these strategies were tailored to resonate with specific voter segments and highlight their strengths in crucial areas, ultimately aiming to secure voter support in the 2024 election. The debates have not produced a clear winner yet. However, the candidates' language strategies offer valuable insights into their personalities, political strengths, and target audiences. The final rounds of debates and the general election itself will ultimately determine who emerges victorious.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, M. A., Hopkins, D. J., & Rogers, T. (2016). Unresponsive and Unpersuaded: The Unintended Consequences of a Voter Persuasion Effort. *Political Behavior*, 38(3), 713–746. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-016-9338-8>
- Benoit, W. L., & Hansen, G. J. (2001). Presidential debate questions and the public agenda. *Communication Quarterly*, 49(2), 130–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370109385621>
- Bilmes, J. (2001). Tactics and Styles in the 1992 Vice Presidential Debate: Question Placement. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 34(2), 151–181. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327973RLSI34-2_1
- Braet, A. C. (1992). Ethos, pathos, and logos in Aristotle's Rhetoric: A re-examination. *Argumentation*, 6(3), 307–320. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00154696>
- Brown, L. M. (2007). The Contemporary Presidency: The Greats and the Great Debate: President William J. Clinton's Use of Presidential Exemplars. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 37(1), 124–138. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2007.02588.x>
- Butler, J., Aronowitz, S., Laclau, E., Scott, J., Mouffe, C., & West, C. (1992). Discussion. *October*, 61, 108–120. <https://doi.org/10.2307/778790>
- Christensen, E. (2008). *The Heretical Political Discourse: A Discourse Analysis of the Danish Debate on Basic Income*. Aalborg University Press.
- Del Rosso, J. (2015). *Talking About Torture: How Political Discourse Shapes The Debate*. Columbia University Press.
- Ghofur, M. A., Widodo, H. P., & Anggur, R. (2021). Independence of Reporting on Presidential Debates in Indonesian Media. *MEDIO*, 3(1).
- Glassman, R. M. (2019). Words vs Violence: Democratic Debate and Civility in Political Discourse. In R. M. Glassman (Ed.), *The Future of Democracy* (pp. 103–132). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16111-8_13
- Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Hwang, H., Gotlieb, M. R., Nah, S., & McLeod, D. M. (2007). Applying a Cognitive-Processing Model to Presidential Debate Effects: Postdebate News Analysis and Primed Reflection. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 40–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0021-9916.2007.00328.x>
- Joseph, B. C., & Widayastuti, W. (2023). The Impact of Intensifier as Women's Persuasion Strategy in Politics Vice-Presidential Debate. *EduLitics (Education, Literature, and Linguistics) Journal*, 8(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.52166/edulitics.v8i1.3962>
- Lakoff, G. (2010). The Poll Democrats Need to Know About Framing, Value-Shifting, the California Budget Crisis, and Why Democrats So Often Act Like Republicans. *California Journal of Politics and Policy*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.5070/P2W898>

- Marietta, M. (2009). The Absolutist Advantage: Sacred Rhetoric in Contemporary Presidential Debate. *Political Communication*, 26(4), 388–411.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600903296986>
- Mark-Ungericht, B., & Weiskopf, R. (2007). Filling the Empty Shell. The Public Debate on CSR in Austria as a Paradigmatic Example of a Political Discourse. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 70(3), 285–297. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9111-8>
- Mascaro, C. M., & Goggins, S. P. (2015). Technologically Mediated Political Discourse During a Nationally Televised GOP Primary Debate. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 12(3), 252–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2015.1071687>
- Meany, J., & Shuster, K. (2002). *Art, Argument and Advocacy: Mastering Parliamentary Debate*. International Debate Education Association.
- Popkin, S. L. (1991). *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. University of Chicago Press.
- Proctor, K., & Su, L. I.-W. (2011). The 1st person plural in political discourse—American politicians in interviews and in a debate. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(13), 3251–3266.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2011.06.010>
- Putra, H. P., & Widodo, P. (2020). *Euphemisms in 2019 Presidential Election Debates*. 5(2), 123–134. <https://doi.org/10.22515/ljbs.v5i2.2656>
- Richardson, J. D., Huddy, W. P., & Morgan, S. M. (2008). The Hostile Media Effect, Biased Assimilation, and Perceptions of a Presidential Debate. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 38(5), 1255–1270. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2008.00347.x>
- Rosyidah, R. H. (2020). The Violation of Cooperative Principle in Conversational of Presidential Debate Indonesia 2019. *English Learning Innovation*, 1(1), Article 1.
<https://doi.org/10.22219/englie.v1i1.13165>
- Rosyidah, R. H. (2021). Politeness As a Strategy of Attack in Presidential Debate in Indonesia 2019. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning (JETLE)*, 3(1), Article 1.
<https://doi.org/10.18860/jetle.v3i1.13456>
- Rowbottom, J. (2006). Media Freedom and Political Debate in the Digital Era. *The Modern Law Review*, 69(4), 489–513. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2230.2006.00597.x>
- Self, J. W. (2005). The First Debate over the Debates: How Kennedy and Nixon Negotiated the 1960 Presidential Debates. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35(2), 361–375.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2005.00253.x>
- Stark, A. (1992). “Political-Discourse” Analysis and the Debate over Canada's Lobbying Legislation. *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, 25(3), 513–534.
- Staubach, C. N. (1941). Propaganda in General Language Texts. *The Modern Language Journal*, 25(7), 515–520. <https://doi.org/10.2307/317804>
- Stecker, F. (2011). *The Podium, the Pulpit, and the Republicans: How Presidential Candidates Use Religious Language in American Political Debate*. Praeger.
- Whitney, D. C., & Wartella, E. (1992). Media Coverage of the “Political Correctness” Debate. *Journal of Communication*, 42(2), 83–94. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00780.x>
- Yawn, M., Ellsworth, K., Beatty, B., & Kahn, K. F. (1998). How a Presidential Primary Debate Changed Attitudes of Audience Members. *Political Behavior*, 20(2), 155–181.

Juamdan Zamha Zamihu

Yuliawati, S., Sujatna, E. T. S., & Suganda, D. (2019). 2019 Indonesia Presidential-Vice Presidential Debate in Corpus Linguistics Perspective. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(4), 150-156.