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Language of Political Campaign: Unraveling the Linguistic Landscape in Billboard Advertisements

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Abstract**: Billboard advertisements for legislative and senatorial campaigns are integral to the cityscape leading to the general elections, reflecting local political dynamics. This study examines the linguistic landscape in billboard advertisements for legislative and senator campaigns heading for the general election in Indonesia. A qualitative method was employed, gathering data from billboard advertisements across various city areas. Analysis was conducted on the language usage, stylistic features, word choice, sentence structure, and visual representations in these billboard advertisements. Findings indicate a variation in language usage, with standard Indonesian predominating but also a presence of local language mixtures. Stylistic features range from persuasive to informative, while word choice tends toward positively connotated terms. Sentence structures tend to be simple and direct, while visual representations emphasize the candidates and symbols reflecting political aspirations. These results depict candidates' complex communication strategies influencing voter opinions and attitudes. A profound understanding of this linguistic landscape is crucial for political observers and candidates to comprehend local political campaign dynamics and effective communication strategies. This study added a new dimension to understanding how political communication is manifested in public spaces. By focusing on billboards as an outdoor media, which often serves as a daily backdrop for many people, this study explores how language can effectively capture voters' attention and influence their political attitudes. Thus, this study is expected to significantly enrich the understanding of political linguistics and communication strategies in the context of election campaigns.

Keywords: Political Language, Campaign, Billboards, Language, Linguistic Landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the bustling and ever-changing cityscape, billboard advertisements for legislative and senatorial campaigns are inseparable. These campaign billboards transform into visual icons that accompany the city's residents as they approach the period of general elections, saturating the city's corners with political messages and promises of change and sustainability. The dynamics of political campaigns are represented by various billboard advertisements scattered along its main streets and corners. The city's public spaces become an engaging arena for political battles leading to the general elections. Billboard advertisements are the primary means for legislative and senatorial candidates to capture voters' attention [1]; [2]. Billboard advertisements are informative media and serve as persuasive instruments to influence public opinion and attitudes toward competing candidates [3], [4], [5]; [6]. Using language in billboard advertisements for legislative and senatorial campaigns becomes a crucial focal point in this analysis. Language can be used to create images, build political narratives, and consolidate voter bases [7]. The chosen language can depict each candidate's character, vision, and mission and reinforce their political identity [8].

Previous studies have shown that the linguistic landscape in legislative campaign billboard advertisements reflects the diversity of language usage [9], [10], [11], [12], [13]. The majority of advertisements use standard Indonesian as the primary medium. However, there are also instances of using local or mixed languages to strengthen the emotional bond between candidates and voters who are more connected to their local identity [5]; [14]. Some advertisements use emotional and persuasive language, while others are more formal and informative [15]; [16]. The chosen linguistic styles can reflect the communication strategies of each candidate and mirror their character and personality as legislative candidates [17]; [18]; [19]. Baker [20] proposed seven persuasion techniques in political campaigns, namely bandwagon, the claim that the voters like the candidate, using appealing language, putting unfavorable labels to opponents to voters' minds, pretending that the candidate is one of the voters, using scaring tactics in terms of language or images, presenting support from a well-known person to the candidates, and presenting the succes stories.

The use of the linguistic landscape [21] as an approach in this research is based on the notion that individuals process information from what they see or perceive, and thus, the written language present in this public space will undoubtedly influence their perceptions [22]; [23]. Meanwhile, representation theory of representation [24] states that everyone can freely construct meaning based on language, images, symbols, and also their experiences.
This research aims to uncover the linguistic strategies employed in political billboard campaigns and their impact on public perception and voters responses. Building upon prior studies, the novelty offered in this research includes identifying typical linguistic patterns in political billboard advertisements, such as using keywords, stylistic devices, and various rhetorical strategies. Furthermore, this research also elucidates how social, cultural, and local political contexts influence language usage in billboard advertisements and their effects on voters. The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for political candidates,

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campaign teams, and political analysts to develop more effective communication strategies in future political campaigns.

2. RELATED WORKS

Today's political landscape has increasingly relied on media, one of which is billboards, to convey messages and influence public opinion [25]. Additionally, using persuasive and manipulative language in political contexts provides insights into how power and politics are represented through language [26], offering a useful framework for understanding linguistic strategies in political campaigns. Framing theory [27] also provides important concepts to be applied in a political context. Framing is a crucial concept in understanding how political messages are designed to influence public perception. Analysis based on this framing theory can help explore how language in political billboard advertisements is formulated to construct effective framing.

Previous research has highlighted the critical role of language in political campaigns. According to Fairclough [28], language is not just a tool for conveying messages but also a tool for influencing the thoughts and behaviors of society. In political campaigns, language use significantly impacts voters' perceptions and choices [29]. Language variations are essential to achieve practical communication goals in the local context. Using local or regional languages in political campaigns can strengthen the identity and familiarity between candidates and voters, especially in areas with cultural and linguistic distinctiveness [5].

The research studies mentioned above on the use of language in political advertisements have been conducted in various contexts. For example, Fairclough [30] applied critical discourse analysis to dissect sentence structures and word choices in political speeches. Such research provides profound insights into how language builds images and political messages. Besides language, visual elements also play a crucial role in political campaigns. According to Hall [24], images and graphic designs can influence voters' perceptions of candidates and the political messages conveyed. In legislative and senatorial campaigns, billboard advertisements, images, and graphic designs can provide an additional communication dimension that reinforces the political messages [9]. However, specific research has yet to focus on the linguistic landscape in legislative campaign billboard advertisements. Research on the language of billboard advertisements in political campaigns adds a new dimension to our understanding of how political communication is manifested in public spaces.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the linguistic landscape in campaign billboard advertisements for legislative elections in Kupang. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to explore various aspects of language and linguistic elements in these billboard advertisements in detail. Qualitative research emphasizes direct observation (participative observation), in-depth interviews, and

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documentation [31]. Data collection for the research utilized observation and documentation methods.

The data were obtained using observation method from campaign billboard advertisements placed along main roads in Kupang City, Indonesia. The selected data sources were the billboard of the contestants of the general election, containing written language, not including names, and readable written text language. Data collection occurred from December 27, 2023, to January 9, 2024. Photos of billboard advertisements were taken using digital and mobile phone cameras for further analysis. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively, focusing on linguistic elements in legislative campaign billboard advertisements.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The candidates' billboards are displayed on the main streets of Kota Kupang, adorning public spaces and the daily lives of people of various sizes. According to observations, all candidate billboards, including their materials, design, and size, comply with the regulations of the Indonesian General Election Commission No. 33 of 2018. These regulations stipulate that billboard sizes should not exceed 4x7 meters and should be made from recyclable materials containing at least the candidates' vision, mission, and programs. The billboards displayed at intersections of main roads serve as the battleground for the candidates through these displayed billboards. This battle often cluttered the cityscape as some billboards were torn, tilted, or fallen.



Figure 1. Sample view at one of the intersections of main roads in Kupang City

Figure 1 depicts a view of one of the intersections of main roads in Kota Kupang. The billboards featured candidates, including presidential, senators, and legislative candidates. Placing campaign paraphernalia in public places like this does not violate regulations. However, it is essential also to consider the provisions mandated by the Indonesian General Election Commission (KPU RI) that the placement of campaign paraphernalia must consider ethics, aesthetics, cleanliness, and the beauty of the city or local area by the provisions of the legislation.

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The discussion in this article is solely focused on the linguistic landscape, which includes language usage, language style, word selection, sentence structure, and visual depiction of billboards [32]. In line with the research objectives stated in the introduction section, this analysis does not involve semiotic and multimodal analysis of billboards. Therefore, the visual depiction only provides descriptive representations of images, photographs, and writings used in the campaign billboards of the election contestants. By the predetermined criteria stated in the research method, the number of data used is 18. After conducting an in-depth analysis of the linguistic landscape in the campaign billboards of the general election contestants in Kota Kupang, the following findings are presented along with their discussion.

Most campaign billboards for the election contestants use the standard Indonesian language as the primary medium. However, there is variation in language usage, where some billboards also incorporate local and foreign languages to strengthen emotional ties with voters more connected to their local identities. The local language used is Kupang Malay, with three billboard data written as Kemajuan su dekat (the progress is near), Katong beradab karena beradat (We are civilized because of our customs) and Perahu mau oleng pi mana, katong tetap Ganjar (Wherever the boat may sway, we remain Ganjar). Meanwhile, the foreign language used is English, with two data written as "The Best" and "It's time." Kupang Malay and English languages only appear as slogans on four billboards. Kupang Malay and English languages always appear in bilingual form, as shown in Figure 2. Figure 2(a) is a monolingual billboard, Figure 2(b) is bilingual in Indonesian and Kupang Malay languages, and Figure 2(c) is monolingual in Indonesian and English. Thus, the Indonesian language dominates the language usage on the billboards of the general election contestants in Kupang City.



(a) (b) (c)

Figure 2. Samples of monolingual and bilingual billboards

The use of the Indonesian language as the standard language in the campaign advertisements of the election contestants in Kota Kupang can be examined from the aspects of national language policy and the sociolinguistic aspects of the Kota Kupang community. The use of the Indonesian language in the election contestant billboards refers to the Law of the Republic of

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Indonesia No. 24 of 2009 concerning the National Flag, Language, State Emblem, and National Anthem. Article 38, paragraph 1 of the law states, "Indonesian language must be used in public signs, road signs, public facilities, banners, and other information tools that are public services." Thus, using the Indonesian language is a duty of every citizen. In this context, the language used complies with the applicable regulations. The data shows that the Indonesian language guides voting procedures, provides information on electoral districts, and promotes slogans. Using Kupang Malay and English on billboards also does not violate the law because Article 38, paragraph 2 states, "The use of the Indonesian language as referred to in paragraph 1 may be accompanied by regional languages and/or foreign languages."

Based on sociolinguistic aspects, the Kota Kupang community is a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multilingual society formed since the colonial era. In daily communication, the people of Kota Kupang use Kupang Malay as a lingua franca in communicating among themselves [33]. The diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and languages can be a reason for the absence of other local languages, such as Dawan, Rote, Sabu, Helong, Sumba, and others, in campaign advertisements. This is to avoid ethnic politics in Kota Kupang because the contestants do not only represent a specific ethnicity. In other words, voters in Kota Kupang come from various ethnicities, cultures, and languages. Kupang Malay is acceptable because it is a lingua franca, and even children born and raised in Kota Kupang have made this language their mother tongue. Meanwhile, English is an international language that often measures prestige and modernity [34]; [35].

When examined from the aspect of language preservation, it is concluded that local languages do not play a significant role in public spaces. This aligns with linguistic landscape research conducted by previous researchers in Kota Kupang. The results of these studies all reveal that the presence of local languages is marginalized in the public spaces of Kupang City [36]; [34]; [23]. In the context of campaigns, ethnic languages significantly influence voter opinions. Many countries show the existence of ethnic groups whose languages are in a hierarchical space below the official language. Nevertheless, studies conducted by Ricks [7] show that ethnic languages or local languages can be utilized for political appeal. Expressions in the local languages of Kota Kupang's ethnic communities can be used as attractive slogans because they have appeal and positive educational values. At the same time, this is an effort to preserve local languages.

Language Style and Political Campaign Strategy

Language styles in legislative campaign billboard advertisements show significant variation. Some advertisements use emotional and persuasive language styles, emphasizing the urgency or importance of choosing a particular candidate. Meanwhile, other advertisements tend to use a more formal and informative language style, focusing on delivering information about the achievements or programs of the candidates. In theory, persuasive language strategies are divided into three features necessary for every communicative situation, namely the speaker or source (ethos), the audience or receiver (pathos), and the purposeful content (logos) [37].

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It can be observed from the collected data that the advertisements of the election contestants vary but are generally positive. The data shows that none of the billboards use scare tactics, using words and/or images to create immediate or sustained fear in voters. Similarly, no election contestant advertisements on billboards were found to use derogatory labeling of opponents, hoping that such labels would stick in voters' minds [20]. Generally, election contestant advertisements vary, using emotionally appealing words and phrases (glittering generalities), positioning themselves as ordinary people (plain (everyday) folks), using endorsements from famous people (testimonials), referring to an event, or using images with symbolic value (transfer) [20]. The use of glittering generalities strategy can be observed in slogans, for example, Pilih saya BPJS gratis (Choose me for free BPJS), NTT adil setara dan inklusi (NTT fair prosperous and inclusive), Kemajuan su dekat (progress is near), Berjuang membangun Nusa Tenggara Timur Sejahtera (Striving to build prosperous East Nusa Tenggara), and others. The use of this strategy can be observed in the following two figures. The use of phrases and sentences, as shown by the data in Figure 2, which are emotionally appealing, is expected to arouse the emotions of voters.



Figure 3: Sample use of glittering generalities strategy in candidate advertisements

Another strategy observed in the data is positioning oneself as part of the electorate (plain (everyday) folks). This strategy implies that the candidate is one of the voters or just like the voters, which means that voters can feel very comfortable with the candidate and the candidate's ideas. It also means that voters can easily connect with the candidate. Figure 4 shows the data. As shown in Figure 4, the data indicates that the candidates position themselves as part of the people of East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). Positioning themselves as an inseparable part of the NTT community aims to evoke regional emotions.

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Figure 4. Sample use of the plain (everyday) folks strategy

Everyone can interpret the language used and have different perceptions. Referring to representation theory (Hall, 1997), one can argue that the use of phrases and sentences, as shown in Figure 4, can also be classified as a name-calling strategy, where the candidate labels themselves as if native NTT people are better than non-NTT people with the hope that this label will stick in the minds of voters. It can also be interpreted as a scare tactics strategy, where positioning oneself as a native is more trustworthy than non-native NTT people.

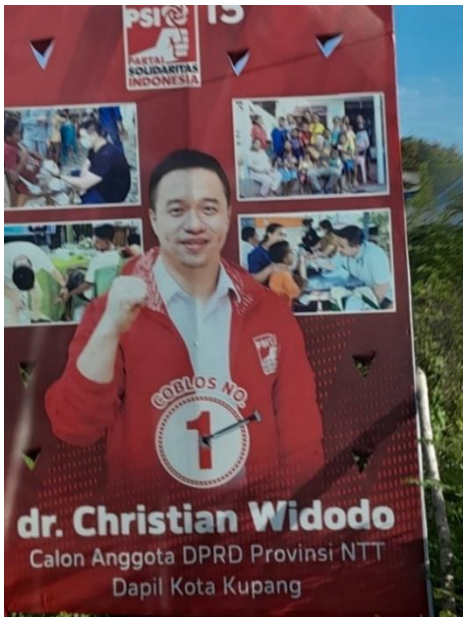


Figure 5. Sample use of the transfer strategy in political advertisements

The data in Figure 5 shows that the election contestant showcases activities carried out as a doctor serving the community. The candidate is an incumbent, thus wanting to demonstrate the dedication shown as a council member who cares for the underprivileged community.

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Therefore, using these photos on the billboard is intended to transfer emotions or loyalty from voters to the contestant. Data from the study revealed that the transfer strategy is one of the strategies used in the advertisements of election contestants on billboards. Candidates employ this strategy to show voters that they have worked concretely. Thus, it can build trust among voters. This strategy refers to an event or uses images with symbolic value, as shown by the data in Figure 5.

The most common strategy found in the political advertisements of the general election contestants in Kota Kupang is the testimonial strategy. Using photos of presidential candidates is expected to be intended for the candidate to be easily recognized by potential voters. This also reaffirms the position of the legislative candidate who will compete in the elections.



Figure 6. Sample use of the testimonial strategy in political advertisements

Word Choice

Word choice in legislative campaign billboard advertising is one of the crucial strategies candidates utilize to craft the desired image in the eyes of voters. To capture attention and garner voter support, using words with positive connotations becomes a primary key in composing effective political messages. Keywords frequently appearing in legislative campaign billboard ads include "berjuang" (fighting) or "pejuang" (fighter) "kesejahteraan" (welfare), "kemajuan" (development), "perubahan" (change), "pemimpin" (leader), "berani" (brave), "pelayan" (servant) or "melayani (serving), and "kerja keras" (hard work).

The use of these words is not arbitrary but rather carefully selected to create the desired impression by the candidates. Words such as "berjuang/pejuang" and "berani" highlight the candidate's courage and steadfastness in advocating for the people's interests. Meanwhile, words like "kesejahteraan," "kemajuan," and "perubahan" reflect the candidate's vision to bring about positive change and progress for society. Furthermore, the word "pemimpin" also carries profound meaning in the context of political campaigns. This word often portrays the candidate as a figure with strong leadership abilities and reliability to lead their area or region. Candidates who can present themselves as visionary and integrity-driven leaders have a greater chance of garnering voter support. "melayani/pelayan" and "kerja keras" are commonly used in campaign billboard advertising. Using the word "pelayan/melayani" emphasizes the candidate's commitment to serving the people's interests and working for the community's welfare. On the

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other hand, the word "hard work" reflects the candidate's dedication to fulfilling their duties and responsibilities as legislative candidates.

The selection of words with positive connotations aims to portray the candidate as competent to meet the voters' expectations. By paying attention to the language used in billboard ads, candidates strive to build a positive image in the eyes of voters and strengthen their belief in their abilities and integrity as legislative candidates. In the context of political campaigns, the use of words with positive connotations has a significant impact on shaping the perceptions and opinions of voters towards the candidates. Therefore, the careful and strategic selection of words is an integral part of an influential political communication strategy. Using words that create the desired impression, candidates can reinforce their political messages and increase their chances of gaining voter support in legislative elections.

Sentence Structure

Effective and engaging sentence construction can influence how voters understand the message intended by the candidate. In this context, simple and easily understandable sentence structures are commonly chosen by candidates. The use of short and direct-to-the-point sentences is a strategy often employed in billboard advertising. By presenting the message straightforwardly and without ambiguity, candidates can quickly capture voters' attention and convey the main messages.

Moreover, concise and impactful sentence structures also have additional benefits in enhancing the memorability of billboard ads. Short sentences tend to be easier to remember for voters compared to long and complicated sentences. By simplifying the sentence structure, billboard ads can ensure that the political message intended to be conveyed can be easily remembered by voters, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of political communication. This allows voters to understand the candidate's position or vision directly, thus helping them make more informed decisions in the voting process.

In competitive political campaigns, conveying political messages through simple, direct-to-the-point sentence structures is critical to winning voter support. Therefore, candidates and their campaign teams need to carefully consider the sentence structures used in their billboard ads to ensure that the political message intended to be conveyed can be clearly understood by voters and increase the chances of winning votes in legislative elections.

Visual Representation

Although the research mainly focuses on linguistic aspects, visual elements in billboard advertisements also play an essential role in political communication. The images used in legislative campaign billboard advertisements depict candidates with backgrounds reflecting their aspirations and political values. The use of symbols related to local or national interests is also not uncommon in these billboard advertisements.

Thus, these findings provide a comprehensive overview of the linguistic landscape in legislative campaign billboard advertisements in Kota Kupang. Language, language style, word choice, sentence structure, and visual representation are integral to candidates' communication strategies to influence voters in the local political context.

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5. CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth understanding of the linguistic landscape in legislative campaign billboard advertisements in Kota Kupang. Based on the analysis conducted, several significant findings can be identified. First, there is significant variation in the use of language in legislative campaign billboard advertisements, with standard Indonesian being dominant but also the presence of mixed-use local languages. This reflects candidates' efforts to strengthen emotional bonds with voters more attached to local identities. Second, language styles in billboard advertisements vary from persuasive to informative to influence voter opinions and attitudes. Using words with positive connotations is also a commonly used strategy to create the desired image by the candidates. Third, sentence structures in billboard advertisements tend to be simple and direct, facilitating the understanding of political messages intended for voters. Lastly, visual representations in billboard advertisements emphasize candidates and symbols reflecting political aspirations. Thus, an in-depth understanding of this linguistic landscape is essential for political observers and candidates to design effective communication strategies in local political campaigns. By utilizing various linguistic elements wisely, candidates can strengthen their political messages and influence voter opinions and attitudes more effectively.

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