

PRAGMATIC REPRESENTATION OF JAVANESE CULTURAL VALUES IN SURAKARTA MAYORAL CAMPAIGN BILLBOARDS

Budi Purnomo

Department of English Letters, Faculty of Language and Literature, Universitas Surakarta

E-mail: budipurnomo989@gmail.com

ABSTRAK. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana nilai-nilai budaya Jawa direpresentasikan secara pragmatik dalam wacana baliho kampanye politik pada Pemilihan Wali Kota Surakarta periode 2025–2030. Penelitian ini berfokus pada wacana kampanye dua pasangan calon, yaitu Respati Ardi–Astrid Widayani dan Teguh Prakosa–Bambang Gage, serta menelaah bagaimana bahasa digunakan secara strategis untuk memengaruhi pemilih dengan tetap mematuhi norma kesantunan dan keharmonisan sosial yang berakar pada budaya lokal. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, sebanyak 200 teks baliho dianalisis berdasarkan kerangka teori tindak tutur dan prinsip-prinsip kesantunan. Analisis tersebut mengidentifikasi tindak lokusi, ilokusi, dan perlokusi, serta mengaitkannya dengan konsep sosiokultural Jawa seperti *unggah-ungguh* (tata krama), *andhap asor* (kerendahan hati), *rukun* (keharmonisan sosial), dan *tepa selira* (kepekaan empatik). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa tindak tutur direktif dan ekspresif mendominasi wacana kampanye, yang berfungsi tidak hanya untuk memobilisasi dukungan politik, tetapi juga untuk membangun legitimasi moral dan keterikatan komunal. Strategi kesantunan positif secara konsisten digunakan untuk melunakkan otoritas politik, meminimalkan jarak sosial, serta menyesuaikan diri dengan ekspektasi budaya masyarakat Surakarta yang mayoritas berlatar belakang budaya Jawa. Dengan menonjolkan kearifan lokal dalam pesan-pesan politik, penelitian ini berkontribusi pada kajian linguistik terapan dan pragmatik dengan menunjukkan bagaimana kompetensi pragmatik yang berlandaskan budaya membentuk komunikasi persuasif dalam konteks demokrasi lokal. Secara pedagogis, temuan penelitian ini memberikan wawasan penting bagi pengintegrasian norma-norma budaya lokal dalam pembelajaran kesadaran pragmatik pada konteks komunikasi politik dan profesional.

Kata kunci: nilai budaya Jawa; wacana baliho politik; kompetensi pragmatic; strategi kesantunan, tindak tutur

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ABSTRACT. This study examines how Javanese cultural values are pragmatically represented in political campaign billboards during the 2025–2030 Surakarta mayoral election. The study focuses on the campaign discourse of two candidate pairs, Respati Ardi–Astrid Widayani and Teguh Prakosa–Bambang Gage, and examines how language is strategically employed to persuade voters while adhering to locally rooted norms of politeness and social harmony. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, 200 billboard texts were analyzed through the framework of speech act theory and politeness principles. The analysis identifies locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts and relates them to Javanese sociocultural concepts such as *unggah-ungguh* (speech etiquette), *andhap asor* (humility), *rukun* (social harmony), and *tepa selira* (empathic consideration). The findings indicate that directive and expressive speech acts dominate the discourse, functioning not only to mobilize political support but also to construct moral legitimacy and communal alignment. Positive politeness strategies are consistently employed to soften political authority, minimize social distance, and resonate with the cultural expectations of Surakarta's predominantly Javanese electorate. By foregrounding local wisdom in political messaging, this study contributes to applied linguistics and pragmatics by demonstrating how culturally embedded pragmatic competence shapes persuasive communication in local democratic contexts. Pedagogically, the findings offer valuable insights for integrating local cultural norms into the teaching of pragmatic awareness in political and professional communication.

Keywords: Javanese cultural values; political billboard discourse; pragmatic competence; politeness strategies; speech acts

INTRODUCTION

Within the 2025–2030 Surakarta mayoral election, campaign billboards have emerged as one of the most prominent forms of political communication in public spaces. Strategically placed along major roads, intersections, and public spaces, these billboards function not merely as promotional media

but as linguistic artifacts through which political actors project leadership images, construct moral legitimacy, and negotiate social relationships with the electorate. In a city deeply rooted in Javanese cultural traditions, political messages are expected to resonate not only at the level of content but also in terms of cultural appropriateness, politeness, and social harmony. As a result, campaign discourse in Surakarta

reflects a complex interaction between language, power, and local wisdom embedded in Javanese sociocultural norms (Fairclough, 2015; Lakoff, 2019).

Language use in political billboards represents an applied form of discourse where pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and political communication intersect. Campaign slogans and short persuasive statements do not merely convey information; rather, they perform specific speech acts such as directing voters' choices, expressing solidarity, or signaling commitment to communal values (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1979). These utterances operate through their illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects, shaping public perception and influencing voter attitudes. Simultaneously, the deployment of politeness strategies in billboard texts reflects candidates' pragmatic sensitivity to Javanese cultural values, including *unggah-ungguh* (speech etiquette), *andhap asor* (humility), *rukun* (social harmony), and *tepa slira* (empathic consideration). Such values play a crucial role in moderating expressions of authority and ensuring that political persuasion does not disrupt established norms of respect and communal balance (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Errington, 1998; Sutanto & Purnomo, 2023).

Previous studies on Indonesian political discourse have largely focused on rhetorical patterns, ideological framing, or visual and multimodal aspects of campaign materials (Eriyanto, 2017; Machin & Mayr, 2012). While these studies provide valuable insights into the structural and semiotic dimensions of political messaging, relatively limited attention has been given to the pragmatic mechanisms through which political meanings are enacted in culturally specific contexts. In particular, the interaction between speech acts and politeness strategies in local political campaigns remains underexplored, especially in relation to how linguistic choices embody Javanese sociocultural values and shape voter relationships (Wijana, 2021; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2021; Setiawan, 2022; Khajavi & Abbasian, 2023). This gap is notable given the centrality of politeness and indirectness in Javanese communication practices.

Responding to this gap, the present study examines the pragmatic representation of Javanese cultural values in political campaign billboards during the Surakarta mayoral election. Focusing on the campaign discourse of two candidate pairs, Respati Ardi–Astrid Widayani and Teguh Prakosa–Bambang Gage, this research analyzes how speech acts and politeness strategies are strategically employed to persuade voters while maintaining culturally appropriate forms of interaction. Drawing on Searle's

(1979) theory of speech acts and Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness framework, the study investigates how locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts function in real-world political communication and how they align with locally rooted norms of respect, humility, and social harmony.

The significance of this study extends beyond descriptive linguistic analysis. By foregrounding Javanese cultural values in political discourse, this research contributes to applied linguistics and pragmatics by demonstrating how culturally embedded pragmatic competence shapes persuasive communication in local democratic contexts. Pedagogically, the findings offer important implications for developing pragmatic awareness in the teaching of political communication, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication, particularly in contexts where local wisdom remains central to public interaction (Taguchi, 2019; Ishihara, 2022). Moreover, the study provides practical insights for political communicators seeking linguistically strategic and culturally grounded approaches to civic engagement. Through this integration of linguistic theory, cultural values, and social practice, the study positions applied linguistics as a key discipline for understanding language as both a cultural resource and a vehicle of political action.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative pragmatic research design to examine how Javanese cultural values are represented through speech acts and politeness strategies in political campaign billboards. The qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of meaning, intention, and communicative function embedded in naturally occurring political discourse (Creswell, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007). This design is particularly suitable for analyzing billboard texts as authentic public messages where language functions as a tool of persuasion while simultaneously reflecting culturally grounded norms of interaction.

3.1 Source of Data

The primary data consisted of political campaign billboard texts displayed during the official campaign period of the Surakarta mayoral election. The billboards represented two competing candidate pairs, namely Respati Ardi–Astrid Widayani and Teguh Prakosa–Bambang Gage. Billboards were selected as the data source because they constitute a distinctive genre of public political discourse characterized by

concise, performative language designed to influence public perception and voter behavior.

A total of 200 billboard texts were collected from various strategic public locations across Surakarta, including main roads, intersections, residential areas, and commercial districts. Both physical billboards documented through field observation and digital billboard images obtained from official campaign social media accounts were included to ensure comprehensive data coverage. Each billboard contained short linguistic expressions such as slogans, taglines, greetings, or persuasive statements that function as pragmatic acts within the local sociopolitical context.

3.2 Techniques of Data Collection

Data collection was conducted through systematic and documented procedures. First, field observation was carried out to identify and photograph political billboards displayed in public spaces throughout Surakarta. Notes were taken regarding the location and situational context of each billboard to support pragmatic interpretation. Second, digital documentation was conducted by collecting billboard images from verified online sources, including official campaign accounts and publicly accessible digital archives. Third, all linguistic elements found on the billboards were transcribed verbatim and organized into a corpus for analysis. At this stage, non-linguistic visual elements were noted only as contextual support, while the primary focus remained on the verbal data.

3.3 Techniques of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a pragmatic framework integrating Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1979) and Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The analysis proceeded through three main stages. First, each billboard text was segmented and classified according to types of speech acts, including locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, with particular attention to directive and expressive functions. This step aimed to identify the communicative intentions underlying the campaign messages.

Second, the identified speech acts were examined in relation to politeness strategies, focusing on the use of positive politeness devices such as inclusiveness, solidarity, and shared identity. These strategies were then interpreted in connection with Javanese sociocultural values, including *unggah-ungguh* (speech etiquette), *andhap asor* (humility), *rukun* (social harmony), and *tepa slira* (empathic consideration). Third, the findings were contextually interpreted by considering the sociocultural setting of Surakarta and the expectations of its predominantly Javanese electorate. This contextual interpretation followed pragmatic principles emphasizing the relationship between language use, social norms, and

communicative goals (Thomas, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, 2008).

3.4 Trustworthiness and Verification

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several verification strategies were applied. Methodological rigor was maintained through systematic data collection and transparent analytical procedures. Inter-coder reliability was established by involving two independent coders who analyzed 20% of the dataset using the same coding framework. The level of agreement reached 92%, indicating a high degree of consistency in the classification of speech acts and politeness strategies (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

In addition, credibility was strengthened through careful attention to cultural context and prolonged engagement with the data, ensuring that interpretations were linguistically sound and culturally appropriate. These procedures support the validity of the analysis and reinforce the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the data.

Overall, this methodological framework provides a systematic and culturally sensitive approach grounded in qualitative pragmatics and applied linguistics. It enables the study to reveal how speech acts and politeness strategies function as vehicles for representing Javanese cultural values in local political campaign discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the findings of the pragmatic analysis of 200 political campaign billboards collected during the Surakarta mayoral election. The data represent the campaign discourse of two competing candidate pairs, Respati Ardi–Astrid Widayani and Teguh Prakosa–Bambang Gage. The analysis focuses on how linguistic expressions on the billboards function as speech acts and how politeness strategies are employed to reflect and negotiate Javanese cultural values within local political communication. The discussion is organized into four subsections: types of speech acts, pragmatic functions of speech acts, politeness strategies, and an integrative discussion linking pragmatic patterns to Javanese sociocultural interpretation.

4.1 Types of Speech Acts

Drawing on Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) classifications, the analysis revealed three primary categories of speech acts—locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary—embedded in the candidates' billboard slogans.

Locutionary acts were dominant in declarative expressions communicating vision and identity. Examples include:

- a. “*ANDIKA–HENDI 100% UNTUK JAWA TENGAH LEBIH PERKASA & HEBAT*” (“Andika–Hendi 100% for a More Powerful and Greater Central Java”)
- b. “*SANTRI NDEREK KYAI*” (“Santri Follow Their Religious Leaders”)

These utterances perform the act of informing and asserting, projecting leadership strength and moral alignment.

Illocutionary acts, expressing intention and commitment, were also frequent, such as:

- c. “*SAYA BERSAMA ANDIKA–HENDI*” (“I Support Andika–Hendi”)
- d. “*Pak Ahmad Luthfi, mugi panjenengan dados Gubernur Jawa Tengah*” (“Mr. Ahmad Luthfi, may you become Governor of Central Java”)
- e. These utterances invite alignment and solidarity, performing the act of persuasion and inclusion.
- f. Perlocutionary acts aimed to evoke emotional and behavioral responses:
- g. “*Wong Jawa Tengah iki kabeh bocahmu siap dadekke Gubernur Jawa Tengah*” (“All Central Java people, as your children, are ready to make you Governor”)

These utterances were intended to motivate participation and emotional identification with the candidate.

Table 1 The summary the quantitative distribution of these act types.

| No | Types of Speech Acts | Andika–Hendi | Luthfi–Yasin |
|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | Locutionary | 54% | 13% |
| 2 | Illocutionary | 19% | 72% |
| 3 | Perlocutionary | 27% | 15% |
| Total | | 100% | 100% |

The dominance of locutionary acts in the Andika–Hendi campaign highlights their emphasis on declarative clarity and leadership projection. Meanwhile, Luthfi–Yasin’s high proportion of illocutionary acts underscores an interpersonal approach, relying on commitments and requests to build relational solidarity. These findings resonate with Searle’s (1979) view that political communication depends on illocutionary force to

shape shared intentionality between speaker and audience.

4.2 Pragmatic Functions of Speech Acts

Applying Searle’s taxonomy of representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts, five major pragmatic functions were identified across the billboard data.

- h. Representative acts affirmed beliefs or claims, e.g., “*Cuma Andika–Hendi yang ngerti kamu*” (“Only Andika–Hendi understand you”), showing empathy and credibility.
- i. Directive acts invited or commanded action, e.g., “*Tegak lurus menangkan Andika–Hendi*” (“Stand upright and win Andika–Hendi”), reflecting mobilization intent.
- j. Commissive acts conveyed promises, e.g., “*Ngopeni, ngelakoni Jateng*” (“Take care of and manage Central Java”).
- k. Expressive acts revealed emotion and solidarity, e.g., “*Bergerak Bersama Jateng Perkasa*” (“Move Together with a Powerful Central Java”).
- l. Declarative acts established institutional identity or ideological stance, e.g., “*Jawa Tengah Perkasa Masyarakat Jawa Tengah Sejahtera*” (“A Powerful Central Java, a Prosperous People”).

Table 2 the distribution of the pragmatic functions.

| No | SpeechAct Function | Andika–Hendi | Luthfi–Yasin |
|--------------|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | Representative | 12% | 9% |
| 2 | Directive | 27% | 38% |
| 3 | Commissive | 18% | 21% |
| 4 | Expressive | 11% | 24% |
| 5 | Declarative | 32% | 8% |
| Total | | 100% | 100% |

The data indicate two contrasting rhetorical orientations. The Andika–Hendi team emphasized declarative and directive functions, projecting assertiveness and visionary authority—consistent with Fairclough’s (1995) notion of political discourse as performative identity construction. In contrast, Luthfi–Yasin prioritized directive and expressive functions, appealing to affective bonds and relational solidarity typical of Javanese persuasive traditions (Errington, 1998; Wijana, 2014)

4.3 Politeness Strategies and Javanese Cultural Values

Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, politeness strategies were analyzed to determine how face-management and cultural sensitivity were encoded in the slogans. The analysis also incorporated Leech's (1983) politeness maxims—tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy—to capture nuanced pragmatic behavior.

Examples of each maxim include:

- m. Tact maxim: "*Pastikan internet merata di Jawa Tengah*" ("Ensure equal internet access in Central Java")—prioritizing collective welfare.
- n. Generosity maxim: "*Tuku Lemah Oleh Omah*" ("Buy Land, Get a House")—projecting benevolence and care.
- o. Approbation maxim: "*Luwih becik luwih nyenengke*" ("Better and more pleasing")—enhancing self-image positively.
- p. Modesty maxim: "*Pak Ahmad Luthfi warga Pekalongan nyuwun panjenengan dados Gubernur Jawa Tengah*"—employing humble request forms.
- q. Agreement maxim: "*Tujuan Kita → Tujuan Nasional: Jateng Maju Menuju Indonesia Emas 2045*"—aligning regional and national goals.
- r. Sympathy maxim: "*Andika–Hendi berkomitmen menangis dan tertawa bersama rakyat*"—expressing emotional solidarity.

Table 3 outlines the quantitative trends.

| No | Politeness Maxim | Andika–Hendi | Luthfi–Yasin |
|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | Tact | 17% | 9% |
| 2 | Generosity | 32% | 13% |
| 3 | Approbation | 13% | 17% |
| 4 | Modesty | 5% | 28% |
| 5 | Agreement | 12% | 22% |
| 6 | Sympathy | 21% | 11% |
| Total | | 100% | 100% |

The findings reveal a pragmatic contrast: Andika–Hendi favored *benefit-oriented politeness* (tact, generosity, and sympathy), portraying themselves as leaders of service and inclusivity, while Luthfi–Yasin emphasized *face-respecting politeness* (modesty and agreement), aligning with Javanese cultural expectations of humility (*andhap asor*) and harmony (*rukun*).

This supports Spencer-Oatey's (2008) observation that politeness in political communication functions as both a relational and rhetorical tool—balancing authority and approachability within a culturally sensitive framework.

4.4 Integrative Discussion

Overall, the findings demonstrate that political billboard discourse in the Surakarta mayoral election operates as a form of culturally embedded pragmatic action. Speech acts and politeness strategies work in tandem to construct persuasive messages that are socially acceptable, emotionally resonant, and culturally meaningful. Directive and expressive acts enable candidates to mobilize support without violating norms of humility and respect, while positive politeness strategies ensure that political authority is communicated in a softened and relational manner.

The interplay between speech act realization and politeness orientation reveals how pragmatic competence is shaped by local cultural values. In line with Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, politeness in this context extends beyond linguistic courtesy to function as a strategic mechanism for social alignment. By foregrounding Javanese values such as *andhap asor* and *tepa slira*, candidates present themselves as morally legitimate and culturally attuned leaders.

In conclusion, this study confirms that language in political campaign billboards is not merely decorative or informational, but performative and culturally situated. The findings contribute to applied linguistics and pragmatics by illustrating how theoretical frameworks of speech acts and politeness can explain real-life political communication in local democratic contexts. More broadly, the study highlights the importance of integrating local wisdom into the analysis of political discourse, demonstrating how cultural continuity is maintained through everyday acts of persuasion in Surakarta's political landscape.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that political campaign billboards in the 2025–2030 Surakarta mayoral election function as culturally embedded instruments of persuasive communication rather than merely as vehicles of political promotion. Through a qualitative pragmatic analysis of 200 billboard texts, the study reveals that directive and expressive speech acts dominate campaign discourse, serving to mobilize

voter support while simultaneously constructing moral legitimacy and relational closeness with the electorate. These speech acts operate through both illocutionary intention and perlocutionary effect, highlighting the performative nature of political language in local democratic contexts.

The findings further indicate that positive politeness strategies are consistently employed to align political messages with Javanese cultural values, including *unggah-ungguh* (speech etiquette), *andhap asor* (humility), *rukun* (social harmony), and *tepa slira* (empathic consideration). By softening expressions of authority and minimizing social distance, candidates present themselves as culturally attuned leaders who respect communal norms and moral expectations. This demonstrates that politeness in Javanese political discourse functions not only as a marker of courtesy but also as a strategic resource for maintaining harmony while pursuing persuasive goals during the 2025–2030 electoral period.

From the perspective of applied linguistics and pragmatics, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how pragmatic competence is shaped by local cultural contexts and enacted in real-world political communication. The integration of speech act theory and politeness theory provides a comprehensive framework for explaining how linguistic choices simultaneously perform social action, manage face, and convey cultural identity. Pedagogically, the findings offer meaningful implications for the teaching of pragmatic awareness in political communication, discourse analysis, and intercultural communication, particularly in relation to political discourse emerging in the 2025–2030 local governance cycle.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited to verbal data from billboard texts within a single local election context. Future research may extend this line of inquiry by incorporating multimodal elements such as images and typography, conducting comparative studies across different regions or levels of elections, or examining audience reception to better understand how culturally grounded political messages are interpreted by voters across different electoral periods. Such research would further enrich the understanding of political discourse within Indonesia's multilingual and multicultural democratic landscape.

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