

Representation And Negotiation Of Power In Prabowo Subianto's Political Speeches: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menyelidiki bagaimana kekuasaan direpresentasikan dan dinegosiasikan dalam pidato-pidato politik Prabowo Subianto dengan menggunakan kerangka Analisis Wacana Kritis (CDA) Fairclough. Dengan mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif, studi ini menganalisis pidato-pidato resmi Prabowo Subianto yang dipilih, yang disampaikan di forum-forum nasional dan internasional. Analisis ini mengikuti model tiga dimensi Fairclough, yang meneliti fitur tekstual, praktik diskursif, dan konteks sosial-politik yang lebih luas. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa kekuasaan dalam pidato Prabowo secara diskursif dibangun melalui interaksi dinamis antara otoritas institusional, akses istimewa terhadap produksi dan sirkulasi wacana, pembentukan identitas kolektif, dan legitimasi moral-historis. Secara linguistik, otoritas diwujudkan melalui agensi personal, tindakan ucapan direktif, dan modalitas deontik, sementara secara diskursif diperkuat melalui akses eksklusif ke arena yang sangat terinstitusionalisasi. Pada saat yang sama, kekuasaan dinegosiasikan melalui bahasa inklusif, solidaritas afektif, dan narasi historis yang membingkai kepemimpinan dan kebijakan sebagai sesuatu yang berlandaskan moral dan diamanatkan secara nasional. Mekanisme-mekanisme ini beroperasi secara simultan untuk mereproduksi dominasi politik sekaligus mendorong persetujuan publik. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa pidato-pidato politik berfungsi sebagai praktik sosial yang tidak hanya mencerminkan tetapi juga menormalisasi dan melegitimasi hubungan kekuasaan. Akibatnya, pidato-pidato Prabowo Subianto harus dipahami bukan hanya sebagai instrumen komunikasi kebijakan, tetapi sebagai praktik ideologis yang mempertahankan hegemoni politik dalam politik Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata Kunci : Analisis Wacana Kritis, Kekuasaan, Pidato Politik, Presiden Indonesia

ABSTRACT

This article investigates how power is represented and negotiated in the political speeches of Prabowo Subianto by employing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. Adopting a qualitative approach, the study analyzes Prabowo Subianto's selected official speeches delivered in both national and international forums. The analysis follows Fairclough's three-dimensional model, examining textual features, discursive practices, and broader socio-political contexts. The findings reveal that power in Prabowo's speeches is discursively constructed through a dynamic interplay of institutional authority, privileged access to the production and circulation of discourse, collective identity formation, and moral-historical legitimation. Linguistically, authority is enacted through personalized agency, directive speech acts, and deontic modality, while discursively it is reinforced through exclusive access to highly institutionalized arenas. At the same time, power is negotiated through inclusive language, affective solidarity, and historical narratives that frame leadership and policy as morally grounded and nationally mandated. These mechanisms operate simultaneously to reproduce political dominance while fostering public consent. The study confirms that political speeches function as social practices that not only reflect but also normalize and legitimize power relations. Consequently, Prabowo Subianto's speeches should be understood not merely as instruments of policy communication, but as ideological practices that sustain political hegemony in contemporary Indonesian politics.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Power, Political Speech, Indonesia's President

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1. INTRODUCTION

In political discourse studies, language is no longer viewed only as a neutral medium of communication, but also as a central instrument through which power, ideology, and social relations are constructed, negotiated, and maintained. Fairclough (1995, 2001) conceptualizes discourse as a form of social practice intrinsically linked to power and domination, emphasizing that linguistic choices both reflect and actively shape social structures. From this perspective, political discourse—particularly political speech—is a strategic site where meanings are produced, authority is legitimized, identities are constructed, and public consent is actively negotiated rather than passively assumed.

A large body of previous research has applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to political speeches to uncover how leaders reproduce, justify, and normalize power relations through language. Broadly speaking, studies such as van Dijk (1997, 2006), Reisigl and Wodak (2016), and Wodak (2001) demonstrate that political actors frequently employ discursive strategies of inclusion and exclusion, moral evaluation, and historical references to construct ideological boundaries between “us” and “them.” These strategies enable leaders to position themselves as legitimate representatives of the people while marginalizing opposing groups. Similarly, research grounded in Fairclough’s framework consistently demonstrates that power in political discourse operates not only through explicit commands or institutional authority, but also through subtle processes of persuasion, naturalization, and hegemonic acquiescence.

Recent empirical studies further strengthen these theoretical insights. Ato (2025), for example, argues that English-language political speeches systematically use evaluative language, modality, and pronoun choice to project ideological authority and dominance, while framing leadership as morally justified. Similarly, Khan and ur Rehman (2025), in their analysis of Nelson Mandela’s speeches, reveal how inclusive pronouns, moral narratives, and appeals to shared suffering serve to negotiate power through solidarity and reconciliation rather than coercion. These findings align with previous observations that hegemonic power often relies on moral persuasion and collective identification rather than overt domination.

Contemporary analyses of populist political discourse increasingly highlight the role of dichotomous narratives in constructing power. Studies of Donald Trump’s rhetoric (e.g., Zeb et al., 2024; Majeed, 2025) demonstrate how binary oppositions such as “people vs. elites” and “nation vs. outsiders” are discursively mobilized to legitimize strongman leadership and normalize confrontational political practices. These studies illustrate how political leaders strategically construct crises, threats, and moral hierarchies to consolidate authority and mobilize public support. Overall, these global studies confirm that political discourse operates simultaneously at the linguistic, discursive, and socio-ideological levels to maintain hegemonic power.

Within the Indonesian context, CDA has also been increasingly applied to presidential discourse. Research by Sitorus et al. (2025) on Megawati Soekarnoputri’s speeches demonstrates that political rhetoric functions as a site for reproducing ideological dominance through pronoun use, repetition, and symbolic references to nationalism and historical struggle. Likewise, Hajrah et al. (2024), in their CDA study of President Joko Widodo’s speeches, reveal how modality, relational values, and expressions of collectivity are employed to construct a leadership image that emphasizes humility while maintaining institutional authority. These studies collectively support Fairclough’s claim that political discourse plays a crucial role in legitimizing power by embedding it within culturally shared values and historical narratives.

However, despite the growing body of CDA research on Indonesian political leaders, a noticeable research gap remains. Existing studies tend to focus either on specific linguistic features—such as pronouns, modality, or evaluative language—or on leadership image construction in isolation. Few studies have examined how power is simultaneously asserted, negotiated, and normalized through the interaction of institutional authority, collective identity formation, and moral-historical legitimation within a single analytical framework. Moreover, scholarly attention to the political discourse of Prabowo Subianto—particularly in the context of his presidency—remains relatively limited and fragmented, even though his speeches are marked by strong themes of nationalism, discipline, moral obligation, historical continuity, and binary ideological positioning.

Most importantly, previous research has not sufficiently explored how Prabowo’s discourse combines hierarchical authority with inclusive narratives to construct hegemonic power through consent rather than mere coercion. While studies on other Indonesian presidents have highlighted

either technocratic authority or populist inclusivity, there is still a lack of integrated analysis that explains how these elements coexist and reinforce one another in Prabowo's political rhetoric.

In response to this gap, the present study aims to investigate how power is represented and negotiated in Prabowo Subianto's political speeches by employing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. Specifically, this study seeks to (1) identify the linguistic and discursive strategies through which institutional authority is asserted, (2) examine how collective identity and solidarity are constructed to negotiate power relations between the state and the people, and (3) analyze how moral and historical narratives are mobilized to legitimize political dominance. By offering a more integrated and nuanced account of power in presidential discourse, this research contributes to the broader field of political discourse studies and enriches CDA scholarship in the Indonesian context.

2. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), particularly based on the theoretical and analytical framework proposed by Fairclough (1995, 2001). A qualitative design is particularly appropriate for this research because it aims to explore how power is represented, negotiated, and legitimized through language, rather than quantitatively measuring linguistic phenomena. CDA allows the researchers to uncover implicit meanings, ideological assumptions, and power relations embedded in political discourse, which are often inaccessible through quantitative methods alone.

The data consisted of 15 selected official speeches delivered by Prabowo Subianto in both national and international settings, including the Annual Session of the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), national commemorations of state institutions such as the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI) and the National Police (Polri), and the United Nations General Assembly. These speeches were selected purposively based on their institutional significance, public visibility, and relevance to the exercise of political authority. By focusing on speeches delivered in high-profile and formal contexts, the study confirmed that the data represented authoritative instances of political discourse in which power relations were most explicitly articulated and symbolically enacted.

This analysis followed Fairclough's three-dimensional model, which conceptualized discourse as a form of social practice and emphasized the interrelationships between language, power, and ideology. The first dimension, textual analysis, examined the linguistic features of the speeches, including pronoun usage, modality, transitivity, evaluative language, and speech acts. Particular attention was paid to how grammatical choices—such as the use of first-person pronouns, deontic and epistemic modalities, and directive speech acts—served to assert authority, construct leadership identities, and positioned social actors within hierarchical power relations.

The second dimension, discursive practice, focused on the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of the speeches. This involved analyzing how the speeches were produced within specific institutional frameworks, how they circulated through official channels and mass media, and how they were designed to address particular audiences, such as state institutions, security forces, or the general public. At this level, the study also considered intertextuality and interdiscursivity, examining how Prabowo's speeches drew on prior political texts, historical narratives, constitutional values, and nationalist discourses to reinforce legitimacy and authority.

The third dimension, socio-political practice, situated the speeches within their broader social, historical, and political contexts. This level of analysis examined how the discourse reflected and contributed to existing power structures, ideological formations, and political dynamics in Indonesia, including issues of nationalism, sovereignty, state authority, and collective identity. By linking linguistic choices to wider socio-political conditions, this dimension enabled the study to explain not only how power was expressed in discourse, but also why particular discursive strategies were employed and how they functioned to sustain hegemonic relations.

The integration of these three analytical dimensions allowed for a comprehensive and systematic examination of political discourse as both text and social practice. Through this multi-layered approach, the study provided an in-depth understanding of how language operated as an instrument of power in Prabowo Subianto's speeches, demonstrating how institutional authority,

collective identity, and moral-ideological legitimation were discursively constructed and normalized. This methodological framework ensures analytical rigor while maintaining sensitivity to the complex interplay between language, power, and socio-political context.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Institutional Authority and Power in Discourse

The analysis demonstrates that institutional authority constitutes a central mechanism through which power is articulated and enacted in Prabowo Subianto's political speeches. At the textual level, this authority is linguistically realized through the systematic use of the first-person singular pronoun "I" in combination with performative, material, and directive verbs. This pattern functions to personalize state authority and centralize political decision-making in the figure of the president, thereby constructing leadership as both individualized and authoritative. Rather than presenting policies as collective or institutional outcomes, the discourse foregrounds the president as the principal agent through whom the state acts.

One illustrative example can be found in Prabowo's address at the Annual Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), as shown in Excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

"Karena itu saya berkewajiban untuk mengambil langkah-langkah yang perlu walaupun itu sulit dan juga tidak populer bagi pihak-pihak tertentu."

["I am obliged to take the necessary steps, even if they are difficult and unpopular for particular parties."]

The clause "I am obliged" employs deontic modality that frames presidential action as a moral and constitutional necessity rather than as a negotiable political choice. By invoking obligation, the speaker constructs authority as duty-bound and unavoidable, effectively closing off alternative interpretations or policy debates. This formulation positions the president as a responsible guardian of national interests who acts not out of personal preference, but out of necessity. In Fairclough's terms, this reflects power in discourse, whereby a dominant actor controls meaning by defining the terms under which political actions are understood and evaluated.

The phrase "even if they are difficult and unpopular" further strengthens this authority by invoking a rhetoric of sacrifice and courage. Discursively, this strategy casts potential opposition as lacking moral commitment to national welfare, thereby delegitimizing dissent. Authority is thus reinforced not only through institutional position but also through moral framing, which presents decisive leadership as both necessary and ethically superior.

A more explicit enactment of institutional authority appears in Prabowo's speech delivered to the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), as shown in Excerpt 2.

Excerpt 2

"Saya perintahkan Panglima TNI, Kepala Staf, kaji terus perkembangan teknologi dan sains, kaji terus organisasi."

["I order the Commander of the Armed Forces and the Chiefs of Staff to continuously assess technological and organizational developments."]

In this excerpt, the performative verb "I order" functions as a direct directive speech act that enacts power through language itself. Unlike mitigated requests or recommendations, the imperative structure leaves no room for negotiation or refusal, reflecting the hierarchical nature of civil-military relations. The repetition of the phrase "kaji terus" ("continuously assess") further intensifies the sense of sustained control, indicating that authority is not episodic but ongoing.

According to Fairclough's concept of power in discourse, such utterances exemplify how actors in dominant institutional positions are able to direct the actions of others through linguistically sanctioned authority. The absence of politeness markers or modal softening (such as please or should) normalizes command as an expected and legitimate mode of interaction within the state apparatus. Consequently, the president is discursively positioned as the unquestioned center of command, while subordinate institutions are positioned as executors of presidential will.

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that institutional authority in Prabowo's speeches is constructed through a combination of personalized agency, deontic modality, and

unmitigated directives. Through these linguistic strategies, power is not only exercised but also normalized, reinforcing a centralized and hierarchical model of governance in which presidential authority is presented as legitimate, necessary, and morally grounded.

Power over Discourse and Institutional Access

Beyond linguistic dominance at the textual level, Prabowo Subianto's power is also manifested through his privileged and exclusive access to strategic discursive arenas. The data reveal that his political speeches are consistently delivered in highly institutionalized and symbolically charged forums, such as the United Nations General Assembly, the Annual Session of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), and national ceremonies involving state institutions like the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI). These forums do not merely function as neutral settings for speech delivery; rather, they operate as authoritative sites in which political discourse gains institutional legitimacy, symbolic weight, and extensive public circulation.

One salient example can be observed in Prabowo's speech at the 80th United Nations General Assembly, as shown in Excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3

"We, the people of Indonesia, know what it means to live without justice, to experience poverty, and to be denied equal opportunities."

Through the inclusive pronoun "we" and the representational phrase "the people of Indonesia," the president positions himself as the legitimate spokesperson of the entire nation in the global arena. This discursive move effectively monopolizes national representation, as the authority to speak for the collective is institutionally granted to the president alone. In Fairclough's terms, this exemplifies power over discourse, whereby access to the production and global dissemination of discourse is unevenly distributed across social actors. Ordinary citizens, civil society groups, or marginalized communities do not possess comparable access to international platforms such as the United Nations, rendering the president's voice dominant, authoritative, and largely uncontested.

Moreover, by framing Indonesia's national experience in moral and experiential terms—such as injustice, poverty, and inequality—Prabowo aligns national identity with a shared narrative of suffering and resilience. This further strengthens the legitimacy of his representational authority, as the discourse presents the president not only as a political leader, but also as a moral representative of collective national experience.

A similar pattern of discursive dominance is evident in national contexts, particularly in state ceremonies that reinforce institutional hierarchies. In his address during the commemoration of the TNI's 80th anniversary, Prabowo states the following:

Excerpt 4

"TNI adalah tulang punggung pertahanan Indonesia yang menjadi penjamin kedaulatan kita."

["The Indonesian Armed Forces are the backbone of our national defense and the guarantor of our sovereignty."]

The utterance in Excerpt 4 functions to reaffirm the symbolic authority and legitimacy of the military as a central pillar of the state. Delivered within a formal state ceremony, the statement illustrates how presidential discourse actively shapes institutional identities by defining roles, values, and national significance. The president's privileged access to such ceremonial platforms enables him to produce authoritative meanings about state institutions that are widely disseminated and normalized through mass media.

As a consequence, the discourse produced in these settings becomes difficult to challenge or reinterpret, as it is embedded within official rituals and supported by institutional power structures. From a CDA perspective, this demonstrates how power over discourse operates not only through linguistic form, but also through control over who speaks, in which contexts, and with what degree of symbolic legitimacy. In Prabowo's speeches, institutional access functions as a crucial mechanism through which political authority is consolidated, reproduced, and rendered socially acceptable.

Negotiating Power through Collective Identity and Solidarity

Despite the strong projection of institutional authority in Prabowo Subianto's speeches, power is not articulated solely through coercive or hierarchical means. The analysis reveals that power is also actively negotiated through the construction of an inclusive collective identity, most prominently

realized through the repeated use of the pronoun “we.” This discursive strategy enables the president to symbolically align himself with the people, state institutions, and security forces, thereby transforming relations of power into relations of solidarity and shared responsibility.

A clear example of this strategy can be observed in Prabowo’s address at the anniversary of the Indonesian National Police (Bhayangkara), as shown in Excerpt 5:

Excerpt 5

“Polisi Indonesia harus di tengah-tengah rakyat. Harus merasakan penderitaan rakyat. Harus merasakan kesulitan rakyat. Harus mendengar jeritan hati rakyat.”

[“The Indonesian police must be among the people, feel the suffering of the people, feel their difficulties, and listen to the cries of their hearts.”]

Linguistically, this excerpt is characterized by the repetitive use of the deontic modal “*harus*” (“must”), which signals obligation and normative expectation. However, unlike bureaucratic or technocratic directives, the obligation here is framed in affective and moral terms. The verbs “*merasakan*” (“to feel”) and “*mendengar*” (“to listen”) foreground emotional engagement and empathy, redefining police authority as moral service rather than coercive control. In this way, power is discursively softened and reframed as ethical responsibility.

Discursively, the insistence that the police remain “*di tengah-tengah rakyat*” (“among the people”) reduces the symbolic distance between state apparatus and citizens. The police are no longer positioned as an external force imposing order, but as an integral part of the social body. This framing reconstitutes the legitimacy of authority by grounding it in closeness, care, and shared experience, rather than in formal power alone.

Through inclusive language and emotionally charged expressions, Prabowo constructs a collective “we” that encompasses the president, security institutions, and the people within a single moral community. In Fairclough’s terms, this reflects the operation of hegemonic power, whereby dominance is secured not through overt force, but through consent, identification, and the internalization of shared values. Authority is thus negotiated and accepted as part of a collective national project, making obedience appear voluntary and morally justified rather than imposed.

Moral-Historical Legitimization and Ideological Normalization

Another key finding of this study concerns the strategic use of historical narratives as a powerful mechanism for legitimizing authority and normalizing political dominance in Prabowo Subianto’s speeches. Rather than presenting policies as contingent political choices, Prabowo frequently anchors contemporary governance in Indonesia’s collective historical experience, particularly the nation’s colonial past and the moral legacy of the founding fathers. In Fairclough’s terms, this strategy operates at the socio-cultural level of discourse by linking present political practices to broader historical and ideological formations, thereby rendering power relations natural and unquestionable.

This pattern is evident in Prabowo’s opening speech at Indo Defence 2025, as illustrated in Excerpt 6.

Excerpt 6

“Sejarah kita sendiri telah mengajarkan kepada kita bahwa ratusan tahun negara kita diduduki oleh bangsa-bangsa lain, ... Itulah sebabnya kita ingin berkonsentrasi pada upaya mengangkat rakyat kita dari kemiskinan, memberantas kelaparan, dan memberikan pendidikan kepada semua anak-anak kita.”

[“Our history teaches us that for hundreds of years our nation was occupied by other nations, ... That is why we must focus on lifting our people out of poverty and hunger and providing education to our children.”]

The clause “our history teaches us” functions as an epistemic legitimizer, positioning history as an authoritative source of knowledge that dictates present action. This construction transforms political priorities – such as poverty eradication, food security, and education – into moral imperatives derived from historical lessons rather than debatable policy options. Discursively, this strategy limits alternative interpretations by framing governance as a rational and ethical response to historical injustice. In this way, authority is grounded not merely in institutional power, but in collective memory and shared moral reasoning.

A similar pattern emerges in Prabowo’s address to the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR), as shown in Excerpt 7.

Excerpt 7

“Generasi 45, generasinya Bung Karno, Bung Hatta, Syahrir. Semua tokoh-tokoh itu adalah generasi yang mengalami penjajahan. Mereka mengalami imperialisme. Mereka sadar dan mereka merasakan melihat bahwa kekayaan Indonesia diangkut ratusan tahun keluar dari Nusantara ini. Karena itu mereka menyusun rancang bangun.”

[“The Generation of ’45 – the generation of Bung Karno, Bung Hatta, and Sjahrir. All of those figures were part of a generation that experienced colonial rule. They lived through imperialism. They were aware, and they felt it deeply, seeing how Indonesia’s wealth was extracted from the archipelago for hundreds of years. That is why they designed the foundations of this nation.”]

Through explicit intertextual references to iconic national figures, Prabowo symbolically aligns his leadership with the moral authority and historical legitimacy of Indonesia’s founding generation. The repetition of experiential verbs such as “experienced,” “felt,” and “were aware” emphasizes suffering and moral awakening, thereby constructing the founding fathers as ethical exemplars. By presenting current leadership as the continuation of their unfinished historical project, Prabowo positions himself not as an autonomous political actor, but as the inheritor and executor of a national mandate.

Within Fairclough’s framework, this discursive strategy contributes to ideological normalization, whereby power relations are embedded within taken-for-granted historical narratives that appear natural, inevitable, and morally justified. Political dominance is thus normalized through historical continuity, and state authority is framed as the legitimate guardian of national destiny. As a result, contemporary power is shielded from critique, since opposing policies can be discursively reinterpreted as contradicting historical lessons, national sacrifice, or the moral legacy of the founding fathers.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that power in Prabowo Subianto’s political speeches is represented and negotiated through three interrelated mechanisms: institutional authority, the construction of collective identity, and moral-ideological legitimation. These mechanisms operate simultaneously and reinforce one another in shaping a political discourse that not only reflects structural dominance but also functions to generate social consent among diverse audiences. Within Fairclough’s (1995, 2001) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, such discursive practices illustrate that power is exercised not merely through coercion or explicit commands, but also through the internalization of values, the normalization of ideology, and the production of meanings that come to be accepted as social common sense.

At the level of institutional authority, Prabowo’s language consistently reinforces the formal power attached to the presidential office. This is evident in the recurrent use of the first-person singular pronoun “I”, directive speech acts such as “I order,” and evaluative sentence structures that position the president as the central decision-maker. These linguistic strategies construct the president as a dominant actor endowed with full legitimacy to direct the state bureaucracy, the military, and the police. Power is thus represented as centralized, lawful, and inseparable from the figure of the leader. This finding aligns with previous CDA-based studies (e.g., Sitorus et al., 2025; Utami et al., 2023) on Megawati Soekarnoputri’s speeches, which demonstrate that political discourse reproduces ideology and legitimizes power through pronoun use, ideological diction, repetition, and historical symbolism to construct the leader as a national and moral authority.

However, the findings also reveal that this structural dominance does not operate in isolation. Prabowo strategically balances institutional authority with the construction of a collective identity articulated through the pronoun “we,” which symbolically unites the president, state apparatus, and the people within a shared imaginary community. Through this strategy, power is negotiated in terms of solidarity and togetherness, allowing the president to appear not merely as a ruler, but as part of the people who share common experiences, struggles, and goals. From the perspective of hegemonic power, as conceptualized by Fairclough, this strategy enables power to be accepted voluntarily because it is framed as serving collective interests rather than elite agendas. This finding is consistent with studies of global political figures such as Nelson Mandela (Arafat & Bin Abdullah, 2025; Khan & Rahman, 2025; Khan & ur Rehman, 2025), which show that inclusive language and moral narratives

are employed to build social consensus and reconstruct power relations toward collective aims such as reconciliation and national unity.

In addition, this study reveals that Prabowo's legitimacy is strongly constructed through moral-ideological strategies, particularly by mobilizing historical narratives of colonialism, national suffering, and the collective struggle of the founding generation. These historical references function as epistemic and moral legitimizers that link contemporary policies to the perceived mandate of national history. As a result, state policies are not presented as political choices open to contestation, but as logical continuations of the nation's historical experience. This finding extends previous research on President Joko Widodo's speeches, which highlights how linguistic modality and relational values are used to establish closeness with audiences and to reflect the relationship between linguistic structure and social power (Hajrah et al., 2024). In contrast, the present study demonstrates that in Prabowo's discourse, historical narratives play a more explicit and central role as ideological foundations for legitimizing the exercise of state power.

When compared with earlier studies, both similarities and distinctive features emerge. The primary similarity lies in the shared conclusion that language in political speeches functions as an instrument of power and a site of ideological reproduction. In line with CDA studies on Megawati and Jokowi (Hajrah et al., 2024; Sitorus et al., 2025), this research confirms that linguistic structures such as pronouns, modality, and historical symbolism reflect and reinforce power relations in society. However, this study is distinctive in its strong emphasis on moral-historical narratives and the construction of ideological dichotomies, such as "the people versus greedy elites," "an oppressed nation versus foreign powers," and "a decisive leader versus those who threaten the state." These dichotomous constructions demonstrate how discourse is used to establish symbolic boundaries between in-groups and out-groups. In global political discourse studies – such as analyses of Donald Trump's speeches – similar strategies have been shown to mobilize support and strengthen leadership legitimacy through the construction of perceived threats and moral polarization (Ato, 2025; Majeed, 2025; Parveen et al., 2025; Zeb et al., 2024).

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the argument that political discourse is never neutral. As Fairclough (1995) asserts, language is a form of social practice that plays a crucial role in reproducing power relations and ideology. Prabowo Subianto's political speeches function as strategic arenas in which power is articulated, negotiated, and normalized through a combination of structural dominance, collective solidarity, and moral-historical legitimation. Consequently, this study offers a significant empirical contribution to the development of Critical Discourse Analysis in the Indonesian context, particularly in demonstrating how presidential speeches not only reflect formal state power but also produce social legitimacy that renders power relations acceptable, legitimate, and necessary within the national political order.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that power in Prabowo Subianto's political speeches is discursively constructed through a complex and dynamic interplay of institutional authority, privileged access to discourse, collective identity formation, and moral-historical legitimation. Power is not exercised solely through explicit commands, hierarchical structures, or formal state authority, but is also actively negotiated and stabilized through inclusive language, affective appeals to solidarity, and national-historical narratives that cultivate public consent. These strategies enable political dominance to appear not only legitimate but also necessary and morally justified.

From the perspective of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis, the findings demonstrate that political speeches operate as social practices in which linguistic choices are inseparable from broader socio-political structures. Through the strategic use of pronouns, modality, directive speech acts, and historical references, Prabowo's discourse reproduces and normalizes asymmetrical power relations while simultaneously masking them through narratives of unity, shared struggle, and collective purpose. In this sense, power is embedded in what appears to be common-sense language, making domination less visible and more readily accepted.

Consequently, Prabowo's political speeches should be understood not merely as instruments of policy communication or leadership performance, but as ideological practices that actively sustain political hegemony in contemporary Indonesian politics. By transforming institutional authority into

moral leadership and collective responsibility, these speeches contribute to the maintenance of consent-based governance in which power is internalized rather than overtly imposed. This study thus underscores the critical importance of discourse in shaping political reality and highlights the value of Critical Discourse Analysis for uncovering the subtle yet powerful ways in which language structures, legitimizes, and perpetuates political power.

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