PRABOWO SUBIANTO'S EUPHEMISM USED IN THE 2024 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DEBATE

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Abstract

Prabowo Subianto is one of the 2024 presidential candidates participating in the Indonesian presidential election debate organized by the General Elections Commission (KPU). This debate features polite and non-offensive language, reflecting the use of euphemisms. This study aims to uncover the hidden practices in the use of euphemisms that Prabowo Subianto applied during the debate. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, with the data consisting of orthographic transcriptions of his utterances. The data were collected through the observation method, advanced note-taking techniques, and documentation. The analysis was conducted using Content Analysis with Krippendorff's framework, which includes sampling, recording, and context units. The findings reveal ten types of euphemisms used by Prabowo Subianto, with loanwords being the most dominant, followed by hedges, overstatements, litotes, periphrasis, metaphors, downtoners, underspecification, apologetic expressions, and understatements. The study also identified eight main functions of euphemisms, and the most dominant function is being self-promotion, followed by protecting uncertain statements, as well as reducing hostility. This article enriches linguistic studies, particularly in the field of pragmatics, by demonstrating how various types of euphemisms are used in political communication.

Prabowo Subianto adalah salah satu calon presiden 2024 yang mengikuti debat pemilihan presiden Indonesia 2024 yang diselenggarakan oleh KPU. Debat ini menampilkan bahasa yang sopan dan tidak menyinggung,

mencerminkan penggunaan eufemisme. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap praktik tersembunyi dalam penggunaan eufemisme oleh Prabowo Subianto dalam debat tersebut. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif dengan data berupa transkripsi ortografis dari tuturannya. Data dikumpulkan melalui metode simak dan teknik pencatatan lanjutan serta dokumentasi. Analisis dilakukan dengan Analisis Isi menggunakan kerangka Krippendorff yang mencakup unit sampel, unit pencatatan, dan unit konteks. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan ada sepuluh jenis eufemisme yang digunakan oleh Prabowo Subianto, dengan kata serapan/pinjaman sebagai yang paling dominan, diikuti oleh hedges, overstatement, litotes, perifrasis, metafora, downtoner, underspecification, apologetic expressions, dan understatement. Penelitian ini juga menemukan delapan fungsi utama eufemisme, dengan fungsi paling dominan adalah mempromosikan diri sendiri, diikuti oleh melindungi pernyataan yang belum pasti, dan mengurangi perseteruan. Penelitian ini memperkaya studi linguistik, khususnya dalam bidang pragmatik, dengan menunjukkan bagaimana berbagai jenis eufemisme digunakan dalam komunikasi politik.

Introduction

Through holding general elections, Indonesia seeks to realize the concept of popular sovereignty as a democratic country. This process allows active participation of the community in determining the direction of the government leadership by channeling the aspirations of citizens through elected representatives. A new chapter in Indonesian politics began in 2004 with direct presidential elections, replacing the previous system, which only elected people's representatives (Antari 2018, 88). Prabowo Subianto is one of the presidential candidates in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election. He is paired with vice presidential candidate, Gibran Rakabuming Raka. Prabowo Subianto officially registered with the General Election Commission (KPU) as a presidential candidate on October 25, 2024. This pair is supported by seven political parties, the members of the Advanced Indonesia Coalition, namely Gerindra, Golkar Party, Amanat Nasional Party, Demokrat Party, Garuda Party, Bulan Bintang Party, and Solidaritas Indonesia Party.

As the institution organizing elections, the General Election Commission is responsible for carrying out various stages of elections, including facilitating campaigns to encourage democratic participation and educating the public regarding the country's vision, mission, programs, and development plans for the next five years. In 2024, KPU held five debate sessions between presidential and vice presidential candidates, which will take place from December 12, 2023, to February 4, 2024. This debate is a forum where the candidates discuss and exchange views by providing reasons that support their respective opinions. This presidential election debate is a platform for the candidates to directly present their ideas, plans, and visions to the voters via television broadcasts. Political debate between presidential candidates is an essential aspect of the democratic process. As an inseparable part of Indonesia's discourse of 'democracy,' modernity is often correlated with discourses such as 'connectivity' and 'development,' as mentioned by Robby (2024, 162), as well as social principles in political activities. They involve all matters related to leaders and representatives, both locally and nationally. Social principles in political activities are associated with the presidential election and representatives of the people (Harahap & Utomo 2024, 138). In the debate, the candidates presented their vision and mission in a domestic context and discussed geopolitical issues involving the country's position on the international stage. Geopolitics fundamentally focuses on the political balance between regions or territories, both in international (inter-state) and regional (inter-regional) contexts (Fauzan et al. 2024, 27).

In this case, the opinions of Ray Rangkuti and Idil Akbar regarding the influence of debates between presidential candidates in the campaign show different perspectives. Ray Rangkuti stated that debates can significantly impact electability levels because they can influence public perceptions of presidential candidates, as CNN Indonesia (2023) mentioned. On the other hand, Idil Akbar highlighted that the influence of the debate may not be so great for supporters who already have a choice in mind. However, the debate is considered very influential for undecided voters, whose number is significant at around 25 to 35% (Amiruddin 2023). In the study conducted by Painter and Fernandes, it is mentioned that televised U.S. presidential debates are the most-watched, if not the most-researched, political events in history. While prior studies have primarily focused on general election contests, this longitudinal content analysis used diction software to parse the effects of election level, partisanship, and time on the candidates' word choices or verbal styles in 35 general and 121 primary election debates. The results indicate that general election debate

rhetoric contained significantly more optimism and certainty than primary debate rhetoric (Painter & Fernandes 2021, 899).

Political elections provide the general populace with a choice between two (or more) candidates who have contrasting viewpoints on how to serve the people and their needs the best (Feinberg & Voelkel 2017, 917). Language is a crucial strategy to achieve various goals in the political realm. Politicians make optimal use of language along with all its tools to achieve certain goals and create the desired impact. Their awareness of the power of language is excellent because they understand that language has a significant influence in forming or changing individual opinions and can even create particular views through speaking skills. Language is used to achieve various political goals, such as imaging, conveying explanations, making demands, forming political commitments, building arguments, and offering political promises, all done by utilizing the power of language.

By using language in certain ways, we can influence political action. Pabottingi, a well-known writer, scholar, and political observer, explains that choosing certain words or language can emphasize certain interpretations of those words, and even selecting particular dialects is essentially part of politics in a fundamental and broad sense (Heryanto et al. 1996, 200). Understanding language and etymological practices is no longer limited to the conventional view that sees them as neutral and non-partisan tools for understanding fundamental socio-political factors. Today, attention is growing; it concerns a discussion that language is not just a tool of representation but is also a field in which various types of power are demonstrated. As a result, language is considered a battleground today for competing interests, powers, hegemonic processes, and hegemonies (Heryanto et al. 1996, 77).

In a debate, candidates try to gain face and avoid losing face because a speech can potentially threaten the face of both the speaker and the listener. To minimize facial threats, candidates tend to use polite or non-offensive language. Language that seems polite and not offensive is a characteristic of euphemism.

Keraf (2008, 132) explained that euphemism is the practice of replacing an expression with a more subtle form to avoid giving the impression of being derogatory, hurting feelings, or implying something unpleasant. Meanwhile, Pranowo (2012) stated that euphemism is a language style that treats two things with a more subtle correlation. Using euphemisms, the speaker can convey the message without offending the listener's feelings or using too critical words, which can affect the mood or suggest something that disturbs the listener (Pranowo 2012, 22).

In this study, Allan and Burridge (1991) explained that apart from functioning as a form of positive politeness, euphemisms can also play a negative role as a tool of hegemony, as a persuasion, and even to target opponents subtly. This description depicts a type of euphemism with a political function used to convey attacks through more subtle language (Allan & Burridge 1991, 11).

Euphemism can be done using semantics, syntax, and pragmatics innovations. This article focuses on euphemisms, which are analyzed from a pragmatic perspective. In pragmatics, euphemism and politeness are mutually related, where the subtler meaning conveyed through euphemism is supported by the context to achieve politeness goals. The euphemism strategy functions as a linguistic tool that allows communicators to express meaning indirectly provides listeners with wider choices and reduces the use of harsh language without changing the substance of the message (Leech 1993, 53). Euphemism is used as a strategy to communicate meaning that is always tied to context so that it can be expressed as utterances in sentences or clauses.

This article aims to identify and reveal hidden practices in using euphemisms used by Prabowo Subianto in the 2024 presidential election political debate. This is relevant, considering that the ideology of his political party greatly influences an orator's use of language. Therefore, study on the use of language in the context of a party's ideology during political debates is considered vital because it significantly impacts the sustainability of national and state life.

Based on this background, the study aims to identify and categorize various types of euphemisms used by Prabowo Subianto during the 2024 presidential election debates. Additionally, it seeks to map the specific functions of the euphemisms used by Prabowo Subianto during these debates and analyze how frequently or dominantly these functions appear.

In this context, previous studies have reviewed various aspects of linguistic analysis in presidential debates, including speech acts, semantic power, and language styles presidential candidates use. Ziraluo (2020) explores speech act analysis on the 2019 presidential and vice presidential debates, while Kurniawati et al. (2022) discusses semantic power in the debate discourse between Jokowi-Amin and Prabowo-Sandiaga. Apart from that, Wilda Fizriyani et al. (2023) focused on using language styles in Anis Baswedan's political speeches ahead of the 2024 presidential election. However, the previous studies have not specifically reviewed the euphemism strategy used by Prabowo Subianto in the political debate for the 2024 presidential election. Future studies that will focus on this aspect

is expected to provide new insights into how the two candidates use euphemisms to achieve their communicative and political goals in the context of the debate.

Research Method

In this article, the approach used is descriptive qualitative. The researchers analyzed the content of conversations in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election debate. The data analyzed consisted of words, clauses, and sentences the two candidates spoke, which were organized based on the context. The analysis process begins by identifying utterances that can be classified as euphemisms and explaining their function and purpose of use based on the data collected. The data used here is an orthographic transcription of Prabowo Subianto's verbal utterances uttered in the 2024 presidential candidate debate, supported by visual recordings of the debate. The data source consists of three debate rounds: the first debate, the second debate, and the final debate.

The data collection method used was a listening approach with the application of advanced recording techniques. Apart from that, the researchers also use documentation techniques to collect relevant data. The steps taken to collect the data are: (1) involving an intensive observation of the 2024 presidential election debate videos through the official KPU YouTube account, focusing on the first session on December 12, 2023, the third session on January 7, 2024, and the fifth session on February 4, 2024; a thorough analysis of how candidate Prabowo Subianto utilizes euphemisms is also included, (2) transcribing all speech in the debate into written language, (3) collecting data found in the transcripts so that the results of the data that have been collected can be arranged systematically and in accordance with the problems contained in this study, (4) examining Prabowo Subianto's euphemism strategy in the 2024 presidential election political debate, then grouping it according to the theory used, and (5) carrying out recording activities based on the order of duration in the debate. The analytical method applied is Content Analysis, referring to Krippendorff's framework, which identifies sampling, recording, and context units (Eriyanto 2011, 14). The reason for using Krippendorff's content analysis method is that it provides a systematic approach for analyzing texts and communicative data. Krippendorff's framework offers a clear structure for analysis, including methods for identifying relevant units. The sample units in this article are utterances that are the focus of analysis according to the topic and study objectives. Recording units include

portions of conversational content that are recorded and analyzed. All recorded aspects are then assessed in the context relevant to the analysis.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of a comprehensive analysis of Prabowo Subianto's use of euphemisms during the 2024 presidential debates, along with identifying the specific functions of euphemisms employed by Prabowo Subianto.

Euphemism Patterns in Prabowo Subianto's Presidential Debate

The types and intensity of euphemisms used by Prabowo Subianto, as identified in the 2024 presidential election debate data analysis, are depicted in Figure 1. The figure illustrates the percentage distribution of euphemism types spoken by the presidential candidate, Prabowo Subianto. It reveals that the most dominant types of euphemisms he employed include loanwords, hedges, overstatement, litotes, periphrasis, metaphor, downtoners, underspecification, apologetic expressions, and understatement. For the purposes of this study, "Prabowo Subianto" is abbreviated as "PS."

Figure 1
Prabowo Subianto's Euphemism Patterns
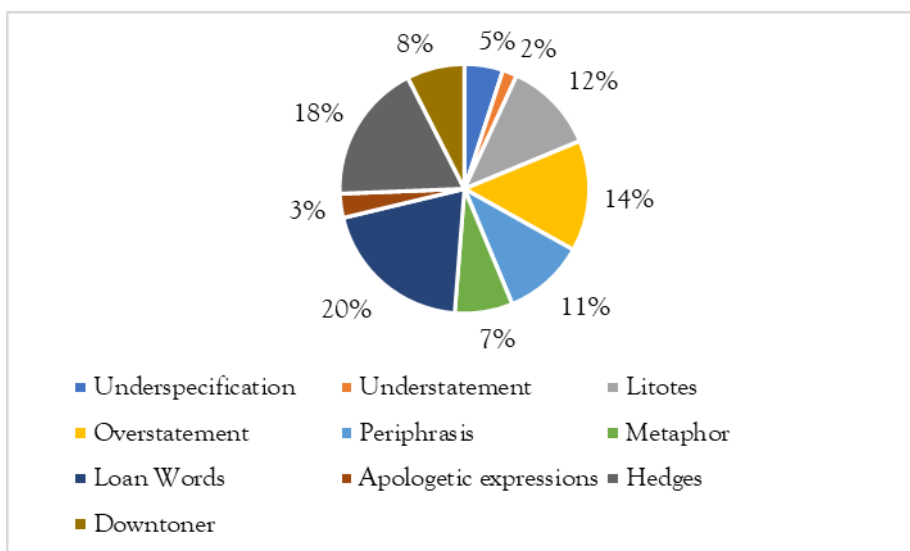
Borrowed/Loan Words

Euphemisms, in the form of foreign terms, refer to using words, phrases, or clauses in foreign languages in the context of sentences or discourse using Indonesian, both spoken and written. This indicates an attempt to convey a concept or meaning using words that may be more subtle, polite, or more technical using a foreign language (Sutarman 2013, 78).

Data-1 (December 12, 2023)
PS: And move separatism. We have been following this for quite a long time, we see that there is foreign interference there, and we see that certain forces always want Indonesia to disintegrate.

Data-2 (January 7, 2024)
PS: I think your posturing is misleading. That's all. I can have an opinion, right? I don't think you have the right to talk about ethics because you set a bad example regarding ethics.

Data (1-2) can be categorized as euphemistic expressions absorbed from English to replace meanings that are less appropriate to be expressed in a debate. The term stated by PS in Data (1) is "separatism". It is a word derived from English language, which means separating oneself. In this context, "separatism" refers to a movement to gain sovereignty and separate a region. Regarding this, the discussion of the separatist movement in Papua is sensitive because it is related to geopolitics in Papua, which have not yet found common ground. Therefore, the word "separatism," which refers to a political or ideological movement to separate itself from the Republic of Indonesia, can be disguised by the loan word "separatism." It is not clearly visible, and not all people understand the meaning of that word. In Data (2), the word "posturing" found in the statement spoken by PS is an English word borrowed or used in Indonesia, which means posture/attitude. When it is said in Indonesian, this expression clearly has a meaning that is not good for the public to hear because it relates to an individual's attitude. By using the borrowed English word "posturing," the meaning does not immediately and clearly show a negative impression in front of the public.

Hedges

Hedges are linguistic strategies speakers use to indicate uncertainty or lack of confidence in the information they convey (Fraser 2009, 201). Using hedges, speakers defuse the illocutionary certainty of their

statements, making them more malleable or uncertain. Common examples of hedges include words like "may," "seems," and so on. This strategy helps to adjust the illocutionary force of the statement to suit the communicative situation and the speaker's confidence level.

Data-3 (January 7, 2024)
PS: Maybe some people just talk without data, right? Maybe they are driven by passionate ambition, so they are not objective.

Data-4 (February 4, 2024)
PS: I think what Mr Anis said makes sense. Yes, even though it's, uh, it's normative, right?

The statements contained in Data (3-4) can be classified as the use of hedges. PS's statement, which states, "Maybe some people just talk without data, right," shows uncertainty where the truth of the statement cannot yet be proven. The word "maybe" plays a role in protecting the speaker from unfounded accusations because his statement gives a negative impression of certain individuals or parties who "talk without data". Meanwhile, the expression "I think" shows the speaker's personal view, which is not considered the absolute truth. Using these phrases can help to reduce potential discomfort for the person speaking as the speaker attempts to convey a different or conflicting opinion.

Metaphor
Metaphor is the use of words or expressions that refer to other objects or concepts by comparing them based on analogies or similarities, not literally (Kridalaksana 1984, 152). This allows speakers to convey ideas or experiences more colorfully and figuratively, often connecting two different domains to convey deeper or complex meaning.

Data-5 (December 12, 2023)
PS: The Papua problem is complicated because there is a separatist movement and we have been following this movement for quite a long time. We see that there is foreign interference and that certain powers always want Indonesia to disintegrate and break up.

Data-6 (December 12, 2023)
PS: If our democracy doesn't work, it is impossible for you to become a governor. If Jokowi is a dictator, you cannot possibly become a governor. At

that time, I was in opposition, Mas Anis, you came to my house. We are your elected opposition.

The statements presented in Data (5-6) show expressions that can be categorized as a type of metaphor, which contain figurative meaning and are conceptualized in such a way that they look beautiful. Meanwhile, the denotational meaning is disguised. In PS's statement, the phrase "foreign interference" is found. This phrase shows the concept of the involvement of external parties in the conflict that happened in Papua, which wants Indonesia to be divided. This metaphorical expression is lighter and does not seem bad in replacing the actual meaning, namely "external influence." Likewise, the expression "our democracy is not working" shows a figurative meaning, which is analogous to democracy as a living creature that can function, namely, a people's government that is free from "elite power". This analogy illustrates that the power of states governed by the ruling elite makes democracy not function well. With these metaphorical expressions, literal meanings less worthy of being heard can be disguised.

Litotes

Litotes is a form of language style that uses negative statements to convey something that is actually positive or to soften the delivery of the message. The expression 'not arrogant' to convey 'friendly' is a good example of the use of litotes. According to Burridge (2012, 74), the litotes strategy is a rhetorical technique that uses negative words such as 'no,' 'not,' 'less,' and the like to convey a message indirectly or soften it.

Data-7 (December 12, 2023)
PS: But I want to say that it's not that simple, Mr. Anis. There are other factors, Mr. Anis. There are geopolitical factors; there are ideological factors; this is a problem that is not easy to solve.

Data-8 (January 7, 2024)
PS: So it's not just talking; it's impossible to just talk.

The statements in Data (7-8) show the use of the euphemism strategy, litotes. The PS's statement "it's not that simple" disguises the taboo meaning of "it's complicated." The statement "it's not that simple" does not seem directly negative. Meanwhile, the phrase "not just talk" disguises the taboo meaning of "big mouth." By using literary statements, the true meaning of taboos is not clear, and the rough meaning can be disguised.

Periphrasis

Periphrasis is a technique for detailing a statement aiming to avoid direct reference, which could lead to an undesired topic (Fernández 2014, 17). In a political context, periphrasis is used as an alternative to convey essential ideas more subtly or indirectly because the details presented prevent the true meaning from being revealed clearly and directly.

Data-9 (January 7, 2024)
PS: Until we are independent, we also have to face our wealth being taken cheaply

Data-10 (February 4, 2024)
PS: We have to audit and review whether our current system [of education] is good or not because there are so many leaks in the allocation of funds down to the district level and so on.

Statements in Data (9-10) show that the use of the periphrastic euphemism strategy seen in PS's utterance, "our wealth being taken cheaply," is a more subtle and worthy alternative to replace the term "exploitation," which, if expressed directly, has the potential to offend the elites and government. Meanwhile, the phrase "leaks in fund allocation" is used to disguise the taboo meaning of "misuse of fund allocation". Applying periphrastic euphemisms conveys this meaning indirectly, thus reducing the negative impression in front of the public.

Overstatement

Overstatement is a communication technique used to expose information by magnifying or placing excessive emphasis on the importance of a situation compared to what actually happened. The use of overstatement is often intended to highlight dramatic or controversial aspects that may not be discussed openly. In a debate, the overstatement strategy is often used as an example that can strengthen an argument in a way that highlights relevant issues.

Data-11 (December 12, 2023)
PS: That's been my struggle all this time. I risked my life, my soul, to defend legal democracy and human rights.

Data-12 (February 4, 2024)
PS: Prabowo-Gibran has a big plan which we call the national transformation strategy.

In the Data (11-12), there is a statement that can be classified as a euphemism overstatement, where the statement expresses something with an exaggeration that is not necessarily true or cannot be proven. The statement in question is PS's statement, "I risked my life," is a hyperbolic expression whose truth is still in doubt or cannot be concretely proven regarding the speaker's struggle to defend democracy, law, and human rights by risking his life. PS's statement regarding "big plans" shows an overuse of the word, where "big" has a significant positive connotation and indicates something great. However, this expression begins with the word "plan," indicating that it is still in the planning stage and has not yet been realized.

Underspecification

Statements that constitute underspecification use general words without specifically or clearly mentioning specific references, especially when the content is harmful or sensitive. In a context like this, it is advisable to use general terms because statements that are too specific can offend or fall into a taboo area (Burridge 2012, 12).

Data-13 (February 4, 2024)
PS: Because there are a lot of leaks in the allocation of funds, which are down to the district level and so on, this really concerns the mental and cultural problems of many of our officials. So, we have to audit and correct ourselves; if systemic problems occur, we have to fix them.

Data-14 (January 7, 2024)
PS: Maybe some people just talk without data; maybe they are driven by passionate ambition, so they are not objective.

The statements in Data (13-14) show the use of an underspecification type of euphemism strategy, where these statements are general statements that refer to specific things that are taboo. PS's statement, the phrase "*many of our officials*" and "some people just talk without data" indicate the speaker's intention to avoid mentioning a particular party specifically and clearly, perhaps to avoid offending the officials or individuals in question. By generalizing these references, the speaker can also avoid the impression that he provides direct justification to someone.

Downtoner

Downtoning is a rhetorical strategy used to reduce the severity of a statement that has the potential to have a negative impact while reducing

the value or significance of what is expressed. Politicians often use downtoning to reduce the weight of potentially damaging statements, with the aim of reducing the risk to their reputation. In the 2024 presidential election debate, there is a common use of downtoning expressions by each candidate, as seen in the examples provided.

Data-15 (December 12, 2023)
PS: We are grateful; we have built a country that has a democracy with all its shortcomings.

Data-16 (January 7, 2024)
PS: Indonesia's current foreign debt, as compared to GDP, is one of the lowest in the world. So, it's still around 40 percent when other countries are far above.

Expressions on Data (15-16) display the use of euphemisms to reduce the meaning of speech. The statement of Anies Baswedan (AB) shows an example of euphemism by lowering the utterance's meaning level. The phrase "democracy with all its shortcomings" also has a pejorative meaning, indicating that there are still shortcomings in the implementation of democracy in Indonesia. Meanwhile, the phrase "one of the lowest in the world" also expresses a reduction in speech meaning, implying that the country's debt level is not a significant problem.

Understatement

Understatement is a technique in which a topic is presented in such a way that it appears less important or serious than it actually is. Furthermore, understatement is a form of simplifying meaning in communication that is included in the category of underspecification. Based on the available data, it can be seen that both candidates implemented an understatement strategy, as reflected in the quote presented here.

Data-17 (January 7, 2024)
Ps: But we can (foreign debt) reach 50 percent, no problem.

The statement in Data (17) simplifies the essence of the discussion. PS's statement, saying "there is no problem" regarding Indonesia's foreign debt of up to 50 percent of gross domestic income (GDP), could be seen as underestimating the importance of the problem. This can give the impression that the state debt level, which reaches 50 percent of GDP, can still be considered a minor problem.

Apologetic Expressions
Brown and Levinson's (1987) book "Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage" states that apologetic expressions refer to apologies concerning statements considered offensive either beforehand or afterward. These apologies generally help speakers maintain their reputation (Brown et al. 1987, 162). In the context of the 2024 presidential election debate, candidates often use apologies as a polite communication strategy when they have to express things that can potentially give a negative impression, as seen in the next situation.

Data-18 (January 7, 2024)
PS: I'm sorry, because you insisted, I'll be honest, you don't deserve to talk about ethics.

Data-19 (February 4, 2024)
PS: On behalf of Prabowo-Gibran and on behalf of the Advanced Indonesia Coalition, I apologize to the candidates, pair number 1, Mr. Anies and Mr. Muhaimin, and pair number 3, Mr. Ganjar and Mr. Mahfud. If there are any words or actions you don't like in the campaign, we apologize profusely.

In Data (18-19) there are expressions that can be categorized as euphemisms in expressions of apology. The statement "I'm sorry, because you insisted" conveyed by PS was an expression of excuse to protect AB's feelings and convey objections to AB's attitude. On the other hand, the phrase "I want to apologize" conveyed by PS to pair number 1, Anies-Muhaimin, and pair number 3, Ganjar-Mahfud, was an apology during the debate if things were deemed unpleasant. Thus, this statement of apology is used as a euphemism strategy rather than unsaid.

Euphemism Function in Prabowo Subianto's 2024 Presidential Debate
Presidential candidates strategically employ euphemisms during election debates, recognizing their significant role in effective communication. In general, euphemisms are used as a form of polite language to avoid harsh or taboo expressions. Their use is influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Different types of euphemisms serve various purposes, and their functions can change depending on the situation. In the 2024 presidential election debates, candidates used euphemisms to deliver criticism more subtly and to mitigate the negative impact of their statements directed at opponents. These euphemisms functioned as rhetorical tools, enabling candidates to create a more

diplomatic or less offensive impression while still conveying critical messages or strengthening their stance in the debate. As a result, euphemisms performed multiple roles throughout the debates. Figure 2 presents the data analysis of the functions of euphemisms used by Prabowo Subianto during the 2024 presidential election debates.

Figure 2
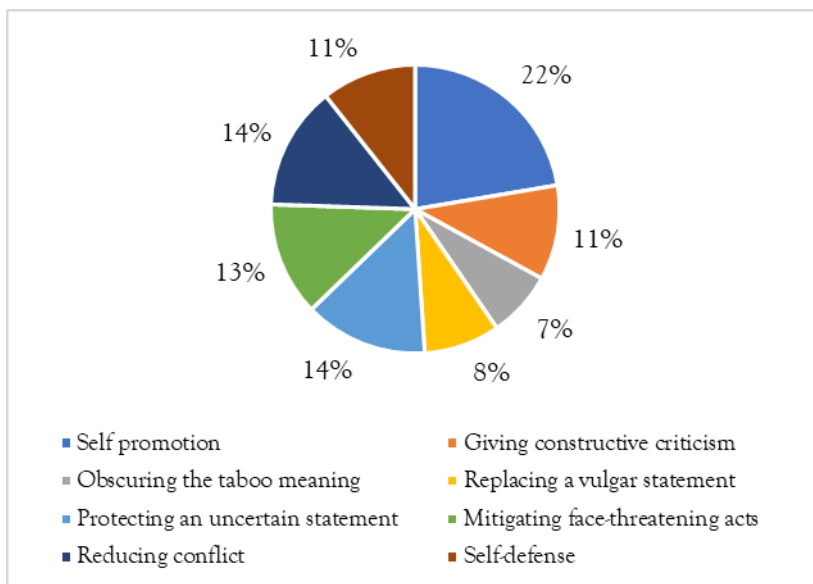Prabowo Subianto's Euphemism Function

Figure 2 demonstrates that during the 2024 presidential election debate, Prabowo Subianto employed euphemisms for various purposes. The most prominent function was self-promotion, followed by protecting uncertain statements and reducing conflict. The figure provides a detail illustration of the different euphemism functions utilized by Prabowo Subianto in the context of the debates. His use of euphemisms aligns with the theories proposed by Allan and Burridge (1991) and Levinson and Brown (1987), reflecting a strategic approach to communication. The specific euphemism functions employed by Subianto in the 2024 presidential election debates are discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

Self-Promotion
By using euphemisms, political actors can direct their messages to shape more favorable perceptions of themselves and the political groups they represent. This strategy is an essential part of their efforts to build support and trust from the community. Types of euphemisms that create a positive impression about oneself, such as overstatements, periphrases, metaphors, and loan words, can be found in the 2024 Presidential Election debate data. The examples are presented here.

Data-1 (December 12, 2023)
PS: We are gaining technology and becoming an industrial country that will make us lead the global South.

Data-2 (January 7, 2024)
PS: The government must have the courage to intervene by maintaining sites, helping museums, and helping the palaces of our sultans, many of which are about to collapse.

PS's statement in Data (1) contains a periphrasis expression indicated by the phrase "*leading the global South*." This phrase means being the leader of developing countries geographically located in the Southern part of the earth, such as South America, Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. This periphrastic expression plays a role in highlighting the speaker's positive image, which expresses his desire to make Indonesia the leader of the global South.

Criticize Gently
This concept can include criticism, rebuttal, or rejection. Euphemisms are used to maintain smooth and polite communication between speakers. Types of euphemisms that serve to subtly convey criticism include metaphor, underspecification, litotes, and periphrasis. The use of this euphemism is often observed in presidential election debates, as shown in the examples presented.

Data-3 (February 4, 2024)
PS: Yes, it's difficult if we blame where the wind comes from.

Data-4 (January 7, 2024)
PS: Earlier, Mr. Anis was less firm in discussing the issue of violence against women and protection.

The litotes strategy in the phrase 'less firm' shows the function of criticism, referring to the meaning of AB's question, which says women were considered vague or unclear. PS indirectly criticized that AB was less assertive when discussing issues of violence against women and protection. So, this euphemism indirectly criticizes AB.

Disguise the Meaning of Taboo

Various euphemisms support this function because it is the essence of the euphemism itself, so in the context of the debate, this function often dominates. Types of euphemisms that disguise the meaning of taboo include metaphors, litotes, underspecification, and periphrasis. The use of euphemisms to disguise the meaning of taboo words is often encountered in debates, as found in the next example.

Data-5 (December 12, 2023)
PS: There are other factors, Mr Anis. There are geopolitical factors; there are ideological factors; this is a problem that is not easy to solve.

Data-6 (January 7, 2024)
PS: Maybe some people just talk without data, right? Maybe they are driven by passionate ambition, so they are not objective.

In PS's statements that contain underspecification, the statement "Some people just talk without data" avoids mentioning the referent specifically and clearly because this has the potential to offend specific individuals. This phrase refers to someone considered to be speaking without valid data. However, it is not stated specifically so that the true identity of the referent is hidden and taboo statements are disguised. In fact, research on the concept of "taboo trade-offs" (Tetlock, 2003) finds that even entertaining the possibility of compromising one's moral convictions to achieve strategic ends—such as buying body parts for transplants or hiring another person to serve one's prison sentence—can feel immoral and unacceptable (Feinberg et al., 2019).

Replacing Vulgar Statements

Politicians often try to avoid using words or expressions considered objectionable to avoid negative impacts in the eyes of the public or particular groups, especially in a political context. Types of euphemisms that are often used to replace harsh statements include periphrases and borrowings. This usage can often be found in presidential election debates, as seen in the provided example.

Data-7 (January 7, 2024)
PS: We have to protect all our people, especially women, from all forms of oppression, violence, exploitation, and human trafficking.

Data-8 (January 7, 2024)
PS: There are minority groups who want to create places of worship, but it is challenging due to bureaucracy, which makes it more complicated.

The periphrasis of the phrase 'minority group' is used to replace the less pleasant expression, namely "weak/marginalized social entities". The phrase "weak/marginalized social entities" contains a discriminatory meaning against certain groups, so it is not expressed directly because it is considered taboo. Therefore, these euphemistic periphrases function as more agreeable or more subtle expressions to replace less polite expressions.

Protecting Uncertain Statements
One way to manage situations in communication is to avoid overly certain or definite statements by using terms such as "approximately" or "probably." These kinds of statements refer to things whose truth cannot be fully ascertained, making euphemisms become very prominent in this context. One form of euphemism used to protect uncertain statements is hedging. This strategy is commonly found in conversations, including debates, as illustrated in the following example.

Data-9 (January 7, 2024)
AB: That's roughly the answer.

Data-10 (February 4, 2024)
PS: The highest judge is the people. On February 14, the people will make the decision. If we are not right, we are wrong; we are betraying the people. They will punish us.

In Data (9), the phrase "that's roughly the answer" demonstrates AB's use of hedging to protect his ideas. This suggests that AB is cautious about presenting his statement as absolute, particularly when discussing the urgency and importance of developing competencies that can yield immediate results. The hedge "roughly" softens the statement, allowing AB to maintain flexibility and mitigate the risk of criticism if his idea is later challenged or proven incorrect.
Meanwhile, in Data (10), PS uses the word "if" to hedge his statement. This occurs in the context of PS addressing AB's critique of perceived

for presidential and vice-presidential candidates. PS emphasizes that the issue has been legally resolved, with certain notes regarding the new age limit. However, by using "if," PS leaves room for the possibility that his position might be incorrect or unacceptable to the people. The phrase "if we are not right, we are wrong" highlights PS's readiness to accept potential consequences, including loss of voter support in the 2024 presidential election, should his views be rejected. The use of "if" thus functions as a protective measure, allowing PS to navigate uncertainty and potential disagreement.

The use of hedges, such as "roughly" and "if," serves as a strategy to protect uncertain statements and mitigate risk in communication. By employing these euphemistic expressions, speakers can soften the impact of their words, maintain flexibility in their arguments, and reduce the likelihood of backlash or conflict when addressing sensitive or debatable topics.

Mitigating Face Threats

In the context of communication, euphemisms function to maintain the feelings of both the speaker and the listener so that neither party feels offended, insulted, or uncomfortable due to the mention of certain words or expressions. Euphemisms aimed at reducing threats to face, comprising downtoners, apologetic expressions, litotes, and hedges. These functions are often seen in presidential debates, as illustrated below:

Data-11 (February 4, 2024)
PS: We are grateful to have built a country with democracy and all its shortcomings.

The downtoning expression in the phrase "all its shortcomings" conveyed by PS aims to lower the force of the words used in the speech by admitting that democracy in Indonesia still has shortcomings and is not yet perfect. This strategy minimizes PS's loss of face and reduces the risk of criticism from the opponents because PS has acknowledged the existing problem.

Reduce Feuds

Euphemisms are often used in sensitive contexts to maintain harmony in communication and avoid potential conflict. By choosing softer words, the speaker can maintain a calm atmosphere and reduce the possibility of disputes. Types of euphemisms that play a role in calming conflict include downtoning, litotes, periphrases, and hedges. These

functions are frequently observed in presidential election debates, as illustrated below:

Data-12 (February 4, 2024)
PS: We are a pluralistic country; we are a country of hundreds of ethnic groups and various major religions; leaders must be cool, and leaders must be mature.

Data-13 (January 7, 2024)
PS: I think all three pairs of candidates want the best for the Indonesian people.

In Data (13), PS's statements begins with the hedge "I think," followed by the overstatement, "want the best for the Indonesian people," indicates an effort to build harmonious communication and defuse potential conflict. Hedging is the use of expressions that allow for uncertainty or subjective judgment. In this case, "I think" softens the statement, making it less absolute and more open to interpretation. Overstatement emphasizes the shared goal of all candidates to achieve the best for the people, presenting a unifying rather than divisive perspective. This combination of hedging and overstatement creates a balance between assertiveness and openness to other viewpoints. By framing the debate in this way, PS's statements suggest that there are no fundamental differences of opinion between candidates. Instead, they highlight shared goals that can unite them in working toward the best outcomes for the people. This language style demonstrates how euphemisms can promote harmonious communication, ease tensions in debates, and shift the focus from conflict to collaboration..

Self-Defense
In the world of politics, euphemisms are often used as a tactic to deal with attacks from opponents. Using smooth and polite language can reduce the impact of criticism and maintain a positive image in the eyes of society. Some types of euphemisms that serve to defend oneself include downtoning, litotes, metaphors, and hedges. These functions are often seen in presidential candidate debates, as revealed in the example.

Data-14 (January 7, 2024)
PS: Mr Anis. I don't speak behind closed doors; I speak in the People's Representative Council. Commission 1, where all those who supported

Data-15 (February 4, 2024)
PS: The legal experts who accompanied me said that, from a legal perspective, there was no problem. Problems that are considered ethical violations have already been handled, and decisions have been made by the authorized party at that time. Then, there was action, and the action was still being debated because the person concerned was still processing it, but the point is that the decision is final and cannot be changed, so I carried it out, and we are not children, *Mas* Anies.

PS's statement in Data (15) employs litotes in the phrase "we are not children," which is a defensive effort to protect the speaker's face. The use of litotes refers to the vulgar meaning of "labile", namely the condition of a person who is not yet emotionally and psychologically mature; thus, he cannot act maturely and wisely. The speaker chooses the litotes strategy to avoid offending certain parties because using the term "unstable" directly can harm and damage the offended party's image.

In the context of the debate, PS's statement protects itself from the attacks that opponents of the debate and the public may make regarding AB's questions regarding the ethical violations cases at the Constitutional Court. PS stated that the issue of ethical violations made by Constitutional Judges had been handled firmly, and a decision had been made by the Honorary Court of the Constitutional Court. PS emphasized that the decision was final and could not be changed. By stating "we are not children", PS pointed out that AB's statement regarding the Constitutional Court's decision which was deemed to violate ethics needed to be responded wisely and did not need to be made into an issue that continued to be exaggerated. This sentence contains the message that the issue has been handled appropriately and does not need to be debated anymore, showing that the speaker is trying to maintain the image and credibility of himself and the institution he represents.

Strategic Use of Euphemism in Prabowo Subianto's Political Debates
This study reveals that Prabowo Subianto employed a wide range of euphemisms during the 2024 presidential debates. The identified euphemisms, ranked by dominance, are as follows: 1) borrowed words, 2) hedges, 3) metaphors, 4) litotes, 5) periphrasis, 6) overstatements, 7) underspecifications, 8) down-toners, 9) understatements, and 10) apologetic expressions. Notably, Subianto demonstrated a preference for using hedges, overstatements, and litotes with greater intensity. His rhetorical style frequently simplifies statements through euphemisms,

which may either dilute their meaning or convey a condescending tone, as seen in his use of apologetic expressions and down-toners. Given Subianto's previous debate experience in 2019, it can be inferred that he may strategically favor direct language to captivate public attention.

The functions of euphemisms employed by Subianto in the 2024 Presidential Debates include (1) obscuring taboo meanings, (2) replacing harsh statements, (3) mitigating face-threatening acts, (4) subtly criticizing, (5) expressing uncertainty, (6) diffusing conflict, (7) presenting a positive self-image, and (8) providing defense. Subianto utilizes self-promotional euphemisms, followed by those aimed at protecting uncertain statements and mitigating conflicts. The use of euphemisms to obscure taboo meanings is minimal, while self-defense strategies stand out prominently in his debate performances. His reliance on euphemisms–particularly hedges, overstatements, and litotes–illustrates a nuanced and strategic communication approach. These rhetorical tools enable him to shape public perception, minimize direct confrontation, and present his statements with greater diplomacy.

These findings are aligned with other existing studies which highlights the role of euphemisms in presidential debates as a blend of linguistic skill, situational context, and cultural sensitivity. The strategic use of euphemisms facilitates effective social interaction through language (Djatmika 2014, 7). Consistent with previous studies, the findings indicate that euphemisms in political contexts are often used to manage messaging, avoid conflicts, and influence public perception by making statements more acceptable and less controversial. Euphemisms allow speakers to convey information to the public in a manner that is both polite and acceptable (Wijana 2011, 86).

However, some critiques argue that euphemisms may compromise clarity and assertiveness in political communication. Euphemistic language can obscure the true meaning of statements, making messages less direct and potentially confusing audiences or diminishing the speaker's credibility. According to Widyamartaya (1990, 54), euphemisms often create a disconnect between words and reality, as they fail to depict reality as accurately and transparently as required. This study underscores the dual nature of euphemisms in political discourse: while they are effective tools for diplomacy and conflict management, they may also limit the directness and transparency of communication, posing challenges to audience comprehension and trust.

Conclusion

This euphemism study reveals that presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto utilized a variety of euphemisms during the 2024 presidential election debates. From the context of his speeches, ten distinct types of euphemisms were identified, ranked by dominance as follows: borrowed words/loanwords, hedges, overstatements, litotes, periphrasis, metaphors, downtoners, underspecifications, apologetic expressions, and understatements. The study also highlights the functions of these euphemisms, identifying eight distinct purposes. The most prominent function was self-promotion, followed by protecting uncertain statements and reducing conflict.

Euphemisms offer a significant advantage in formal communication by enabling the tactful delivery of messages, avoiding offense, insult, or demeaning language–an expression of politeness. However, euphemisms can also serve negative functions when used as a rhetorical or diplomatic tool in political contexts. They can obscure information, manage diplomacy, and deflect criticism. Additionally, euphemisms may conceal dishonesty, deliver subtle criticism to undermine opponents, or maintain power dominance while promoting social unity without alienating minority groups. In some cases, political debate candidates use euphemisms to temper controversial statements that may reinforce elite social standing.

This study focuses primarily on the forms and functions of euphemisms, placing less emphasis on the broader political, cultural, and social contexts influencing language choices in debates. Future research should adopt an interdisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from political science, sociolinguistics, and media studies, to better understand the impact and strategic purposes of euphemisms in political communication.

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