

Analyzing Political Rhetoric in the 2024 Indonesian Election: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach And Its Implications for Civic and Media Education

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

critical discourse analysis;
political rhetoric;
Fairclough;
civic education;
media literacy

Article history:

Received 2025-05-06

Revised 2025-05-07

Accepted 2025-09-06

ABSTRACT

Political campaign rhetoric offers a rich context for fostering critical media literacy and civic reasoning in higher education. In the wake of Indonesia's 2024 general election, campaign discourse has permeated digital platforms, shaping public perception and political engagement. This study applies Norman Fairclough's dialectical-relational Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to online campaign materials published between November 2023 and February 2024. The research investigates how rhetorical strategies reflect power dynamics and ideological framing, while also exploring CDA's applicability as a pedagogical tool in civic and media education. Analysis reveals recurring discursive patterns, including aggressive diction, strategic ambiguity, instrumental truth claims privileging practicality over evidence, and the erosion of empathetic or constructive language. These features often steer public narratives toward polarized, personality-driven debate formats, diminishing deliberative quality and civic trust. Findings underscore the civic implications of political discourse and support the integration of CDA-based tasks—such as metaphor audits, stance tracking, and ethical reframing—into curricula like SKOM4314 (Perencanaan Pesan dan Media). Positioned as both method and pedagogy, CDA enables students to critically engage with language, identify manipulative rhetoric, and produce evidence-based counter-discourse. The study contributes to discourse-analytic and educational scholarship by demonstrating how analysis of political language can directly inform instructional design aimed at strengthening democratic participation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language rhetoric refers to the strategic use of language, symbols, and delivery to influence how audiences perceive, interpret, and act upon messages. At its core, rhetoric is the art of purposeful persuasion that depends on audience awareness, logical reasoning, and stylistic appropriateness—

ranging from choices in diction and syntax to overall coherence and cohesion (Leech, 1983). Rhetorical acts encompass both verbal and non-verbal forms, including declarative statements, interrogatives, imperatives, and paralinguistic cues such as tone and gesture. As an ancient yet evolving field, rhetoric remains a foundational component of public communication and meaning-making.

Political rhetoric, as a specialized domain within rhetoric, plays a pivotal role in democratic societies. It is oriented toward public decision-making and is designed to influence collective judgment, mobilize support, and legitimize action (Charteris-Black, 2011). Political actors use framing, metaphor, euphemism, and evaluative language to shape perception, construct ideological alignments, and articulate policy preferences (Lakoff, 2004; Edelman, 1988). These rhetorical strategies do not exist in isolation; they are embedded in institutional interests and civic norms, functioning as tools for maintaining or contesting power. In the contemporary media landscape—spanning broadcast, print, and digital platforms—political rhetoric serves as a principal mechanism through which agendas are constructed and disseminated.

Given this entanglement of language, power, and participation, political discourse holds significant pedagogical value in civic and media education. Civic education seeks to cultivate reflective, participatory, and ethically responsible citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), while media literacy develops the capacity to access, analyze, evaluate, and create messages within complex and often saturated information environments (Hobbs, 2010; UNESCO, 2011). However, many existing curricula fall short of providing systematic frameworks for interrogating political language. Specifically, the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a routine, assessable practice in civic or media literacy instruction remains limited (Luke, 1995; Janks, 2010). This gap hampers students' ability to decode persuasive and ideological content in political messaging.

Addressing this gap, the present study integrates Norman Fairclough's dialectical-relational CDA model into the context of SKOM4314—Perencanaan Pesan dan Media, a university-level course in media and communication planning. Fairclough's CDA is well-suited for educational purposes, as it bridges linguistic analysis with socio-political critique, enabling students to explore how language constructs social realities (Fairclough, 1992, 2008). The model operates across three interrelated stages: description of textual features (lexis, syntax, cohesion), interpretation of discourse practices (production, distribution, and consumption), and explanation of socio-cultural practices that inform or are informed by the text. These stages align with the analytical dimensions of text, discourse practice, and sociocultural context (Fairclough, 1995; Eriyanto, 2003), providing a multi-level lens through which rhetorical strategies can be critically examined.

The urgency of such an approach is amplified in the aftermath of Indonesia's 2024 general election, held on February 14, 2024. The election period was marked by an unprecedented volume of political communication across digital platforms, with candidates leveraging social media, news portals, and influencer networks to shape public opinion. Post-election discourse continues to influence societal perceptions of electoral legitimacy, policy priorities, and civic trust. Algorithmically curated content and remix cultures exacerbate the spread of persuasive yet often decontextualized rhetoric, blurring distinctions between journalism, opinion, and political mobilization (Tufekci, 2015; Kencana & Meisyanti, 2020). In this environment, equipping students with CDA skills becomes essential for fostering informed, critical, and resilient civic participants.

This study conducts a CDA of online campaign discourse published between November 2023 and February 2024, focusing on how Indonesian political actors deploy rhetorical strategies to construct authority, discredit opponents, and mobilize publics. It also examines how these strategies are mediated and recontextualized through digital platforms. The analysis seeks to identify dominant rhetorical patterns and evaluate their implications for civic reasoning and democratic engagement.

Beyond its analytical contribution, this study offers a pedagogical framework for embedding CDA into civic and media education. It proposes a set of classroom-ready activities—including transcript annotation, frame-counterframe analysis, and ethical re-framing assignments—that align with course objectives in SKOM4314. These tasks are designed not only to strengthen students' linguistic and

analytical skills but also to enhance their capacity for ethical communication planning, media critique, and democratic participation.

In sum, by integrating discourse analysis with instructional design, the study contributes to both political communication scholarship and educational practice. It demonstrates how systematic inquiry into political rhetoric can serve dual purposes: uncovering the mechanics of ideological influence and empowering learners to navigate, contest, and reshape public discourse.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative design to uncover patterned meanings in political discourse (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). It adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Approach (DRA) as the guiding framework (Fairclough, 2008), which is well suited to examining how rhetoric operates within power structures and ideological contexts linked to civic education and democratic participation. CDA's multidimensionality—linking linguistic form to social practice—provides the conceptual bridge between textual features and broader sociopolitical effects germane to civic literacy (Fairclough, 1992, 2008).

To delimit the scope, the analysis concentrates on two levels: the textual/microstructural dimension (lexis, syntax, cohesion, rhetorical moves) and the sociocultural/macrostructural dimension (ideology, power, civic implications). The mesostructural level of discourse practice (e.g., production routines, distribution pipelines, and platform algorithms) is excluded because the primary aim is to connect what is said to why it matters civically, rather than to audit heterogeneous newsroom workflows or recommendation systems. This narrowing enables depth in tracing textual–sociocultural linkages across multiple genres within a constrained scope. Acknowledged limitations include under-specification of mediation effects arising from editorial processes and platform affordances. To mitigate this, sampling spans platforms and genres, thick contextual description is provided for focal texts, and meso-level influences are explicitly flagged when interpretation plausibly depends on them.

Beyond interpretation, CDA is positioned as a teachable method for civic/media education (e.g., SKOM4314/Perencanaan Pesan dan Media). The three CDA moments—description, interpretation, explanation—map onto classroom workflows: text laboratories where students annotate rhetorical strategies and cohesion devices; civic-reasoning seminars that link linguistic choices to civic values, rights, and responsibilities; and applied briefs (fact-checks, op-eds, policy memos) in which students craft evidence-based responses. This alignment supports learning outcomes in critical literacy, ethical communication planning, and informed participation, positioning CDA not only as analytic content but also as a replicable pedagogical process with assessable artifacts and rubrics (Fairclough, 1992).

Data were collected from online media during the Indonesian presidential campaign (November 2023–February 2024). Sources included audio-visual platforms (YouTube, Instagram) and online news portals (Tribunnews.com, Kompas.com, Liputan6.com, Detik.com, and CNBC Indonesia). Using purposive sampling, the study selected political speeches, campaign narratives, and opinion pieces exhibiting clear rhetorical features (persuasion, figurative language, and argumentation). Selection sought variation in speakers, genres, and outlets to capture a range of rhetorical performances salient to civic meaning-making.

Analytic procedures followed Fairclough's CDA cycle. At the text/micro level (description), close readings examined diction, clause combining, discourse markers, evaluative language, and cohesion, alongside the identification of rhetorical moves such as framing, metaphor, othering, and legitimation. At the sociocultural/macro level (explanation), interpretations linked textual choices to power relations, ideological narratives, and civic implications (e.g., trust, legitimacy, participation) in Indonesian contexts. Procedures were logged in an audit trail (coding memos, decision logs), with iterative movement between text and context to sustain analytic warrant (Fairclough, 1992, 2008).

To enhance trustworthiness, the study used data triangulation (multiple platforms, genres, and outlets), methodological triangulation (rhetorical analysis integrated within CDA), and peer debriefing with two colleagues to probe the plausibility of interpretations. Reflexive memos documented researcher

assumptions as educators in civic/media literacy. Where feasible, transcript segments were verified against original audio-visual materials to reduce transcription error. These steps are proportionate to the study's interpretive aims while acknowledging that claims are theoretical/analytic rather than statistical (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Finally, to handle audio-visual materials efficiently and responsibly, TubeMate was used to lawfully download publicly available clips and an AI speech-to-text application (Transcriber) produced initial transcripts, which were then manually corrected for key segments. Tool outputs functioned strictly as aids; all final analyses relied on researcher-verified transcripts and annotations. Taken together, this design both reveals rhetorical strategies employed by political actors and explicates their civic significance, while simultaneously generating course-ready CDA tasks for SKOM4314. The combined scholarly-pedagogical orientation is intended to strengthen civic literacy by enabling students and educators to analyze—and responsibly act upon—political discourse in contemporary media environments.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In Guided by Fairclough's CDA, the analysis connects microstructural textual choices to macro-level sociocultural meanings, using three moments—description, interpretation, and explication—to show how debate talk both performs persuasion and organizes civic imaginaries. To maintain continuity with the methods, “interpretation” focuses on situated meanings (not production/circulation workflows), while “explication” draws out ideological and civic implications.

Table 1. Excerpted turns from the Third Presidential Debate (YouTube)

Speaker	Utterance
Moderator 1	“The question is a question...”
Moderator 2	“Question C.”
Candidate Pair 2 (PS)	“A strong national defense can be achieved by utilizing cyber technology, artificial intelligence, and satellites... What is the candidate's policy for gaining access to technology and its development to strengthen Indonesia's defense?”
Moderator 2	“Answering time is 2 minutes, Mr. (AB)... starting now.”
Candidate Pair 1 (AB)	“Thank you. Before I answer... I would like to clarify the data that was wrong... not 320 hectares, but 340,000 hectares.”
Candidate Pair 2 (PS)	“That's already wrong.”
Candidate Pair 1 (AB)	“On what I said.”
Candidate Pair 2 (PS)	“Mas Anies... Don't.”
Candidate Pair 1 (AB)	“Mr. Prabowo... Sorry Mr. Prabowo.”
Moderator 1	“Please... audience... calm down... we will continue.”
Moderator 2	“Please calm down.”
Candidate Pair 1 (AB)	“This is one of the non-traditional threats... hacking... we need to build a serious cyber defense structure.”
Candidate Pair 1 (AB)	“(1) comprehensive system... involving all institutions... (2) Procurement of the latest technology... (3) Mechanism to respond back... speed to recover.”
Candidate Pair 2 (PS)	“Mr. Anies is also too theoretical... everything is good, beautiful, but what is real about the problem?... EAI.”

3.1 Description (Text/Micro Level)

At the micro level, AB opens with a correction/credentialing move (“not 320 hectares, but 340,000”), asserting accuracy and competence before answering. He then reframes the topic as “non-

traditional threats,” using technical lexicon (cyber, AI, satellites) and problem–solution structuring into a triadic list (comprehensive system → technology procurement → rapid recovery). Repetition of “speed” functions as emphasis and urgency framing. Frequent inclusive pronouns (“we”) align speaker and audience, projecting collective agency. PS counters with delegitimation (“too theoretical”), a stance/evaluation that downranks AB’s proposals as impractical and pivots the footing from policy substance to competence contestation. Interjections and address terms (“Mas Anies,” “Mr. Prabowo”) produce face-threats and turn competition, while moderators’ imperatives (“calm down”) index interactional turbulence.

Educational implications (after Description). In media-literacy classrooms, this passage supports text labs where students (a) annotate rhetorical moves (correction, triadic listing, urgency), (b) track evaluative lexis (“too theoretical”), and (c) mark cohesion devices (pronoun reference, repetition). Students gain skills in identifying argumentative structure, separating claims from evaluations, and recognizing facework that can distract from policy content. A practical task: color-code the transcript for framing, stance, evidence, and attack/defense to visualize how attention shifts away from substantive issues.

3.2 Interpretation (Situating Meanings)

Interpreting these textual choices, AB’s data correction seeks to pre-empt attacks on credibility and recenter expertise, while the triadic plan performs policy preparedness. The inclusive “we” builds identification and distributes responsibility across institutions and citizens. By labeling the problem “non-traditional,” AB positions cybersecurity as both novel and urgent, legitimizing expansive state capacity. PS’s “too theoretical” frames AB’s stance as impractical technocracy, inviting a pragmatism test (“what is real?”). The exchange thus rekeys the event from deliberation to competence and authenticity trials, in which technical detail is recast as a liability. The moderators’ repeated calming moves foreground spectacle risk and a fragile interactional order, shaping audience uptake toward contest drama rather than policy scrutiny.

Educational implications (after Interpretation). Teachers can guide stance/messaging analyses: How do micro moves (labels like “theoretical”) reframe the opponent and steer topic agendas? Students practice (1) stance detection (epistemic vs. pragmatic), (2) frame diagnosis (novel threat → capacity build-up; technocratic vs. practical leader), and (3) audience design (how turns prime viewers to value grit over detail). Assessment can ask students to write brief rebuttals that reframe the frame (e.g., turning “theoretical” into “evidence-based planning”) without escalating incivility.

3.3 Explication (Sociocultural/Macro Level)

When scaled up, these patterns index competing ideological formations. AB’s discourse reflects technocratic solutionism—security as governance by expertise, rapid response, and whole-of-society mobilization. PS’s counter-stancing performs populist pragmatism, valuing concreteness, immediacy, and experiential “realness” over abstract planning. The adversarial facework and delegitimation normalize agonistic personalization (leader vs. leader) and narrow the deliberative space, crowding out multi-stakeholder policy reasoning. Such dynamics risk empathy erosion and binary public narratives (“real” vs. “theoretical”), with downstream effects on trust, civic patience, and policy learning. In media ecologies where short clips and comment-driven virality dominate, these rhetorical compressions travel well, further privileging performative contest over substantive comparison.

Educational implications (after Explication). Pedagogically, this invites macro-level modules on ideological framing and manipulation detection. Students can (a) map claims to ideology profiles (technocratic vs. pragmatic populist), (b) evaluate deliberative quality (civility, responsiveness, evidence), and (c) practice ethical reframing: rewrite a heated exchange to preserve disagreement while recovering policy substance (e.g., specify metrics, timelines, trade-offs). Capstone tasks can include counter-discourse briefs (op-eds, explainers) that transform spectacle into civic learning resources.

Table 2. Linking CDA Dimensions to Rhetorical Patterns, Evidence, and Pedagogical Applications

CDA Dimension	Rhetorical pattern observed	Evidence from Table 1	Civic/media education application
Description (Micro)	Correction/credentialing; triadic listing; urgency via repetition; inclusive “we”	“not 320... but 340,000”; “(1)... (2)... (3)...”, “speed... speed”; “we need to build...”	Text lab: annotate moves; identify cohesion; distinguish claim vs. evaluation; build checklists for argument structure.
Interpretation (Situated meanings)	Reframing competence; technocracy vs. practicality; rekeying to authenticity trials	“too theoretical... what is real?”; plan vs. practicality contrast	Stance analysis: detect frames, write rebuttal memos that reframe labels without ad hominem.
Explication (Macro)	Technocratic solutionism vs. populist pragmatism; personalization; deliberative narrowing	Leader-on-leader exchanges; moderator containment; clip-ready zingers	Ideology mapping + ethical reframing: create counter-discourse (explainers, policy compare charts) that restore substance and civility.

3.4 Scaling Micro-Level Rhetoric into Macro-Level Ideology

The same micro features that make utterances memorable—lists, repetition, stance labels—also scale into ideological signals (expert governance vs. common-sense pragmatism). In digital circulation, these compact markers become indexical shortcuts that instruct audiences how to feel about policy (trust expertise? distrust abstraction?), thereby bridging the text-level craft and the society-level consequences. Making this bridge explicit in class helps students see how small choices in wording translate into big civic effects.

3.5 Pedagogical Value: Detecting Manipulation, Framing, and Strategy

Across the three moments, students learn to (1) detect manipulation (e.g., DE legitimization labels, topic shifts), (2) unpack ideological framing (technocratic vs. pragmatic storylines), and (3) analyze strategy (how speakers build credibility, shift footing, and manage audience alignment). Concrete outputs—annotated transcripts, stance maps, frame-counter frame briefs, and ethical-reframing rewrites—provide assessable artifacts aligned with critical literacy and democratic engagement outcomes.

Discussion

The Microstructural Analysis

This analysis examines the microstructural aspects of the political discourse used in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election debate, using Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework. This approach focuses on how language constructs meaning and power within discourse. The text analyzed consists of various discourse structures, such as statements, questions, responses, and provocative remarks, each contributing to shaping the narrative and ideological positioning of the candidates.

The discourse begins with a declarative statement that emphasizes the necessity of utilizing cyber technology, artificial intelligence, and satellites for national defense. This statement establishes authority and positions the speaker as knowledgeable and committed to advancing national security through technological innovation. By presenting this as an urgent issue, the speaker reinforces the

assertive nature of the discourse, positioning themselves as a proactive leader with expertise in national defense.

Following this, a question is posed to explore the candidate's policy regarding access to and the development of defense technology. In Fairclough's framework, the interrogative form of discourse plays a crucial role in directing the conversation, demanding accountability and forcing the candidate to articulate their stance on the issue. The question shifts attention toward specific policy measures, making it a strategic move to guide the discussion and assess the competence of the candidate.

The response demonstrates a clear strategic use of clarification before providing the actual answer. The candidate first corrects a factual error regarding the land area, changing the figure from 320 hectares to 340,000 hectares. This clarification is a defensive rhetorical tactic to maintain credibility and correct potential misinformation before continuing the response. By preemptively addressing any doubts, the speaker seeks to strengthen their position and limit possible counterarguments from opponents, thus controlling the flow of information and reinforcing their authority.

A subsequent response shifts from addressing the question to identifying non-traditional security threats, particularly the increasing risk of cyberattacks. This move reflects a strategic shift in the discourse, framing cybersecurity as a critical issue that affects both individual security and national defense. The discourse moves from problem identification to solution proposal, as the speaker emphasizes the need for a comprehensive cyber defense strategy rather than relying on a few individuals or small groups to tackle the problem. The use of collective pronouns like "we" fosters solidarity, aligning the speaker with the audience and promoting the idea of collective responsibility in addressing national security concerns.

The report and idea conveyance section outlines a structured policy proposal, detailing three key strategies to enhance cybersecurity:

1. Comprehensive institutional involvement, which involves collaboration across various government agencies and community sectors.
2. Acquisition of advanced technology, emphasizing the importance of both technological innovation and human involvement in strengthening national defense.
3. A rapid-response mechanism to ensure swift recovery in the event of cyberattacks.

This structured approach demonstrates the speaker's ability to present concrete solutions, in line with Fairclough's view that discourse is a tool for constructing social reality. Through this problem-solving discourse, the speaker provides a vision for the future, aligning with societal goals while reinforcing their leadership qualities.

The repetition of the word "speed" in the final part of the discourse underscores the urgency of developing a fast-response system, reinforcing the need for quick action in the face of emerging cyber threats. The structured, solution-oriented rhetoric emphasizes the speaker's competence in handling national security issues.

Finally, the provocative statement that shifts the discussion from technical matters to a rhetorical critique adds another layer to the debate. The candidate uses humor and satire to highlight the irony of discussing environmental concerns while using plastic bottles, in contrast with the use of glass bottles by other candidates. This humorous remark functions as a rhetorical device to subtly undermine the credibility of the opponent while adding a personal touch to the discourse. This tactic not only critiques the opponent's actions but also shifts the conversation towards broader national development issues, particularly advocating for an Indonesia-centric approach to development rather than a Java-centric one. This rhetorical shift reorients the focus toward the equitable development of all regions in Indonesia, reinforcing the speaker's commitment to regional inclusivity and fair governance.

The Macrostructural Analysis

The macrostructural analysis examines the broader socio-cultural and political context in which the political rhetoric is embedded, providing insights into how language reflects and reinforces power dynamics within society. Based on Fairclough's framework, this analysis reveals how political

discourse in the 2024 Indonesian presidential debate is not just a means of communication but also a strategic tool for shaping public perception, asserting authority, and reinforcing ideological positions.

Table 3. Macro structural of the speech

Macro Structural Function	The Text
Showing dominance/hegemony and weakening the opponent	"Mr. Anies is also too theoretical" – Prabowo Subianto's remark positions Anies Baswedan as disconnected from practical concerns.
Attacking the opponent	"Mr. Prabowo" – Anies Baswedan's repeated direct address to Prabowo emphasizes opposition.
Mocking the opponent	"That's already wrong" – Prabowo dismisses Anies' statement, undermining his credibility and mocking his competence.

The macrostructural analysis focuses on the strategic use of language by the candidates to manipulate public opinion and contest power. It reveals how discourse in political debates becomes a battleground for ideological control. The declarative statements, counter-arguments, and rhetorical strategies employed by the candidates serve to legitimize their authority, discredit rivals, and construct narratives that align with public values. These tactics are essential in framing issues like national security, economic stability, and governance transparency, all of which are central to the broader political landscape of Indonesia.

In this context, political rhetoric in the debate represents more than just a communication exchange; it is a form of social action that reflects and reproduces power relations. As Fairclough (1989) states, discourse is not merely a reflection of social practice, but also a tool for constructing and contesting societal norms and power structures. The discourse of both candidates illustrates a battle for dominance, where the use of language is integral to shaping public consciousness and influencing perceptions about leadership and governance.

Civic Education and Political Discourse

Our analysis reveals recurring rhetorical patterns—evaluative metaphors, inclusive pronouns ("we/us"), strategic ambiguity in policy detail, and platform-driven amplification on YouTube through sensational titles and montage clips. These patterns bear directly on citizens' capacity to distinguish evidence-based argument from manipulative persuasion. To avoid a merely descriptive contribution, this section translates those findings into ready-to-implement instructional interventions. The aim is to bridge the empirical results with the strengthening of civic and media literacy in the classroom.

As a structured debate-analysis assignment, students select a 3–4 minute debate excerpt and conduct CDA-based annotation of framing, modality, evaluative lexis, and coherence management. One central claim is then mapped using the Toulmin model (claim–data–warrant) to assess the robustness of reasoning and the legitimacy of its rhetorical presentation. The output is a 1,000-word memo that links micro-level features to civic implications such as public trust, legitimacy, and participation. A rubric evaluates identification accuracy, depth of CDA–civic linkage, use of textual evidence/quotation, and clarity of exposition, thereby responding directly to the patterns identified in the debate corpus.

For an in-class activity on identifying manipulative rhetoric, students undertake a "spot-the-manipulation" exercise, sorting discourse snippets into categories such as fear appeal, false dilemma, ad hominem, glittering generalities, and whataboutism. Each categorization must be justified with brief linguistic reasoning that references our findings, so plenary discussion interrogates how these tactics shape public reasoning. The activity is paired with a civic online-reasoning drill involving lateral reading of viral clips: tracing original uploads, verifying channel ownership, and comparing coverage across outlets to produce a provenance log. Taken together, these tasks address platform problems surfaced by our study—amplification, de-contextualization, and comment cues—while cultivating rapid yet responsible detection of manipulation.

These interventions are grounded in critical pedagogy's problem-posing dialogue and reflective action (Freire, 1970/2000) and in transformative learning's emphasis on critical reflection in response to disorienting claims (Mezirow, 1997). They are also aligned with UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy framework—access, evaluate, and create—and with civic online-reasoning practices for assessing source credibility in digital ecosystems (Wineburg & McGrew, 2017). Within SKOM4314/Perencanaan Pesan dan Media, the CDA arc (description–interpretation–explanation) is mapped onto text laboratories, civic-reasoning seminars, and the production of ethical counter-rhetoric. Consequently, this section is tightly coupled to the findings while offering a pedagogical model with measurable learning outcomes that strengthens students' civic agency.

Shaping National Identity and Governance

The candidates' rhetoric in the debate also reflects broader societal concerns about Indonesia's national identity and governance. Nationalistic appeals, references to historical narratives, and moral arguments are frequently employed to connect with voters on an emotional level. By invoking these themes, candidates seek to reinforce their political stance and bolster their credibility as leaders committed to the nation's values. This rhetorical strategy helps to shape public perceptions of leadership, governance, and national identity—important elements in the ongoing construction of Indonesia's democratic framework.

The use of national identity and regional inclusivity is particularly evident in the shift from a Java-centric approach to an Indonesia-centric one. This transition in discourse reinforces the need for equitable development across Indonesia's diverse regions, resonating with the broader population's concerns about regional equality and fair governance.

From Analysis to Pedagogy: Implementing CDA in the Classroom

Building directly on the micro–macro patterns identified above, curriculum integration should sequence CDA tasks along the description → interpretation → explication arc so that students first stabilize textual evidence, then surface situated meanings, and finally articulate sociocultural implications. A three-meeting cycle works well: Meeting 1 focuses on annotated transcripts and argument reconstruction; Meeting 2 develops stance mapping and frame–counterframe writing; Meeting 3 produces public-facing counter-discourse (policy explainers or op-eds) that restore substance and civility to the debate topic. This progression keeps analytic depth aligned with civic purposes rather than stopping at decontextualized “language spotting.”

Assessment design needs to evidence learning at each moment of the CDA arc. Rubrics should weight (a) accuracy and completeness of textual annotation; (b) coherence of the interpretation narrative linking micro features to frames and audience design; and (c) quality of explication—how convincingly students connect rhetoric to civic effects such as trust, deliberative openness, and willingness to scrutinize evidence. A short reflective memo accompanying each product should document source triangulation and justify ethical choices in reframing.

Because polarization pressures can derail classroom dialogue, instructors should institute a discussion protocol that foregrounds reason-giving, reciprocity, and verification. Ground rules—no ad hominem, cite before you claim, and respond to the strongest version of an opposing view—help model deliberative norms that counter the agonistic personalization observed in the debate corpus. Instructors can also pre-teach vocabulary for disagreeing civilly so that turn-taking remains substantive.

Equity and inclusion require scaffolds that do not privilege only high-proficiency speakers or students already comfortable with political talk. Providing bilingual glossaries for stance and evaluation terms, offering a choice of corpus segments from multiple regions and outlets, and allowing multimodal submissions (text + short video rationale) broaden access while maintaining analytic rigor. Peer-pairing protocols that rotate roles (annotator, skeptic, synthesizer) distribute participation and accountability.

Given the clip-driven circulation dynamics demonstrated in the findings, digital-platform literacy should be embedded rather than appended. Students should practice lateral reading, channel provenance checks, and feature analysis (recommendation cues, comment affordances, editing/montage signs) alongside CDA so they can trace how micro cues are amplified or muted by platform design. Short “trace logs” documenting an item’s diffusion across outlets make visible the meso-level influences the study bracketed but flagged as consequential.

To connect analysis with civic action, capstone tasks should ask students to convert their explication into audience-appropriate products: a one-page policy comparison chart with explicit trade-offs, a 90-second explainer that neutralizes manipulative frames without moralizing, or a brief to a campus organization proposing debate-watch norms that maximize learning value. These outputs embody ethical counter-discourse and provide authentic evidence of transfer.

Instructor capacity is pivotal; brief professional-development sessions can model the CDA workflow using a shared, pre-annotated mini-corpus, walk through the rubric, and simulate facilitation of heated moments. A common resource pack—annotation keys, exemplar memos, and mini-lectures on framing and modality—reduces variability across sections and supports sustainable adoption in courses like SKOM4314/Perencanaan Pesan dan Media.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that rhetorical choices in the 2024 Indonesian presidential debates operate as instruments of symbolic power that shape public perception, privilege performative confrontation over substantive policy reasoning, and circulate effectively within algorithmically curated, clip-based media environments. Through the application of Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis, the study links micro-level discursive features—such as correction strategies, triadic listing, stance labeling, repetition, and inclusive pronouns—with macro-level ideological dynamics, including technocratic solutionism, populist pragmatism, and the erosion of deliberative norms. These findings reveal how language choices in political communication not only reflect but also shape civic values, public trust, and democratic participation. The study contributes both analytically and pedagogically by offering a replicable CDA framework—organized around the description → interpretation → explanation arc—that can be embedded in civic and media education curricula. Practical outputs include text-based laboratory tasks, civic-reasoning seminars, and applied counter-discourse activities, all aligned with course-level integration (e.g., SKOM4314), rubric design, and ethical communication objectives.

However, the study is not without limitations. The exclusion of meso-level discourse practices—such as content production workflows and algorithmic amplification—means that the full mediation effects of digital platforms are not fully captured. Moreover, while the pedagogical recommendations are grounded in theory and analysis, they have yet to be tested through empirical implementation in classroom settings.

Future research should address these limitations by incorporating mesostructural analyses of media circulation, conducting classroom-based action research to evaluate the effectiveness of CDA-infused pedagogy, and employing mixed-methods or quasi-experimental designs to assess impacts on students’ critical media literacy, deliberative capacity, and resistance to misinformation. Comparative studies across electoral contexts and media systems would further clarify the transferability of rhetorical frames and audience uptake conditions. Collectively, such work can enhance our understanding of how discourse shapes democratic engagement and inform the design of educational interventions that equip learners with the analytical tools needed to navigate and transform political communication in an increasingly mediated public sphere.

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