

EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT ON MEGAWATI'S SPEECH IN GOLKAR ANNIVERSARY

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Abstract

Emotional engagement in political rhetoric significantly shapes public perception and influences political narratives. This study explores the rhetorical strategies employed by Megawati Soekarnoputri during the Golkar Party's 60th-anniversary celebration. By adopting a qualitative discourse-historical approach, the research identifies three core themes: the strategic use of humor and irony to address past tensions, cultural alignment to resonate with Indonesian values, and the narrative of reconciliation to promote unity. Megawati's ironic remark, "Kan aku dimusuhin sejagat Dewa Pitara. Sekarang diundang, bingung aku," exemplifies her ability to transform historical grievances into opportunities for emotional connection and relatability. Her use of humor diffuses tension while reinforcing her leadership image. Furthermore, her alignment with Indonesian cultural principles, such as *gotong royong* (cooperation) and *rukun* (harmony), enhances the emotional resonance of her rhetoric, positioning her as both approachable and authoritative. This study underscores the significance of emotional engagement and cultural sensitivity in political communication, particularly in Indonesia's coalition-driven political landscape. By highlighting the intersection of rhetorical strategy, cultural resonance, and political unity, the research contributes to understanding the role of culturally informed rhetoric in navigating complex socio-political contexts.

Keywords: Cultural Alignment, Emotional Engagement, Indonesian Politics, Political Rhetoric

INTRODUCTION

Political rhetoric has always been central to leadership and governance, serving as a bridge between the aspirations of leaders and the expectations of their audiences. It allows political figures to articulate their vision, build alliances, and manage public perception. Globally, rhetoric has been a powerful tool to influence societies and shape political outcomes, from the ancient speeches of Cicero to the modern oratory of figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Winston Churchill. The ability to craft persuasive and emotionally resonant messages often determines the success of political campaigns, policymaking, and public leadership.

In Indonesia, a country renowned for its cultural diversity and rich traditions, political rhetoric holds a unique significance. The nation's complex socio-political fabric, characterized by pluralism and coalition politics, demands that leaders carefully balance cultural sensitivity with strategic communication. The Indonesian concept of *gotong royong* (cooperation) and the emphasis on *rukun* (harmony) deeply influence public discourse. This cultural context requires leaders to employ rhetoric that resonates with shared values while addressing the nuanced dynamics of power and conflict.

A compelling example of effective rhetorical strategy is found in Megawati Soekarnoputri's speech during the Golkar Party's 60th anniversary celebration. Her statement, "*Kan aku dimusuhin sejagat Dewa Pitara. Sekarang diundang, bingung aku,*" is a succinct yet powerful reflection of irony, humor, and political acumen. This remark not only acknowledges the historical tensions between the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) and Golkar but also positions Megawati as a leader capable of transcending past animosities for the sake of unity. Her rhetorical choices highlight the role of humor and irony in navigating contentious relationships while fostering emotional connections with audiences.

Historically, the relationship between PDI-P and Golkar has been fraught with conflict, rooted in the political dynamics of the New Order era. During Suharto's regime, Golkar served as the dominant political force, while PDI-P faced systemic marginalization. Megawati's leadership during this period established her as a symbol of resistance against authoritarianism, further intensifying the rivalry between the two parties. However, her presence at the Golkar anniversary, coupled with her humorous remark, signifies a shift toward reconciliation and collaboration in Indonesia's coalition-driven political landscape.

On a broader scale, Megawati's rhetorical approach reflects the universal importance of emotional engagement in political communication. Leaders like Barack Obama have demonstrated how emotionally charged rhetoric can inspire hope and unity, while Angela Merkel's understated yet effective communication style underscores the power of precision and relatability. Megawati's humor-driven and culturally resonant rhetoric adds to this global discourse by illustrating how cultural context shapes the application of rhetorical strategies.

This study aims to explore the intersection of emotional engagement, cultural resonance, and strategic communication in political rhetoric, with a focus on Megawati's speech. By employing a discourse-historical approach, it seeks to uncover how leaders navigate complex socio-political dynamics through culturally informed rhetoric. Furthermore, this research contributes to the field of political communication by addressing the gap in scholarship on Southeast Asian rhetoric, offering valuable insights into the unique interplay between language, culture, and power in the Indonesian context.

Emotional Engagement in Political Rhetoric

Emotional engagement is widely recognized as a critical component of effective political communication. Aristotle's rhetorical framework, particularly the concept of *pathos*, emphasizes the importance of emotional appeal in persuading audiences and fostering trust. According to Aristotle (2004), *pathos* connects leaders with their audiences on a visceral level, enabling them to convey messages that resonate deeply with public sentiments. This principle is especially relevant in political contexts, where leaders must address diverse constituencies with varying perspectives and emotions.

In Indonesia, the role of emotional engagement is amplified by cultural norms that prioritize harmony and subtlety in communication. Geertz (1973) highlights how Indonesian societal values, such as *gotong royong* and *rukun*, influence public discourse, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect and collective well-being. Leaders who

align their rhetoric with these values can enhance their credibility and relatability, fostering stronger connections with their audiences.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the impact of emotional engagement in political rhetoric. Chilton (2004) argues that emotionally charged language, including humor and irony, can disarm critics and create solidarity among audiences. Lakoff's (2004) framing theory further illustrates how rhetorical choices shape public narratives by aligning them with shared cultural values. In Megawati's speech, the use of humor serves as a strategic tool for addressing historical tensions while fostering emotional connections with her audience.

Goffman's (1981) concept of face-saving mechanisms provides additional insight into the role of humor and irony in political communication. By using indirect language and humorous remarks, leaders can navigate sensitive topics without alienating their audiences. Megawati's rhetorical strategy reflects this dynamic, as her ironic comment about being previously "ostracized" by Golkar transforms a potentially divisive narrative into an opportunity for reconciliation.

Cultural Alignment in Rhetorical Strategies

Cultural alignment is another crucial aspect of effective rhetoric. In Indonesia, the principles of cooperation (*gotong royong*) and social harmony (*rukun*) shape communication styles and societal expectations. Geertz (1973) emphasizes the role of cultural narratives in defining societal norms, while Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory explains how indirectness and subtlety are used to maintain harmony in communication.

Megawati's rhetorical choices exemplify this cultural alignment. Her use of informal language and humor reflects the Javanese cultural preference for subtlety and humility, enhancing the emotional and cultural resonance of her message. By aligning her rhetoric with these cultural norms, she reinforces her image as a leader attuned to the values of her constituents.

The Role of Humor and Irony in Political Discourse

Humor and irony are powerful rhetorical tools that enable leaders to address contentious issues while maintaining relatability. Van Dijk (2006) argues that humor can create solidarity, diffuse tension, and facilitate the delivery of complex messages. In the Indonesian context, Yulianto (2020) highlights the prevalence of humor in political rhetoric, noting its effectiveness in enhancing emotional engagement and fostering trust among audiences.

Megawati's speech demonstrates how humor and irony can be employed to navigate historical tensions and reinforce leadership narratives. Her remark, "*Kan aku dimusuhin sejagat Dewa Pitara. Sekarang diundang, bingung aku,*" exemplifies the strategic use of humor to address sensitive topics while projecting confidence and resilience. This approach aligns with Goffman's (1981) theory of face-saving mechanisms, illustrating how indirect language can mitigate conflict and preserve social harmony.

Comparative Perspectives and Research Gaps

While existing literature on political rhetoric extensively explores Western contexts, there is a lack of research on culturally specific rhetorical strategies in Southeast Asia. Fairclough (2001) and Habermas (1984) provide valuable frameworks for analyzing language and power, but their theories often overlook the informal and emotionally charged nature of rhetoric in non-Western contexts.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating discourse-historical analysis with cultural insights, offering a comprehensive examination of Megawati's speech. By highlighting the interplay between emotional resonance, cultural alignment, and rhetorical strategy, it contributes to a deeper understanding of political communication in Indonesia and beyond.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the rhetorical and emotional strategies employed by Megawati Soekarnoputri during the Golkar Party's 60th-anniversary celebration. By integrating a discourse-historical approach (Wodak, 2009) with rhetorical analysis grounded in Aristotle's (2004) classical rhetoric, the study examines the interplay between language, culture, and political strategy within the speech. This qualitative approach is particularly suitable for uncovering the nuanced dynamics of political discourse and emotional engagement, as it focuses on the contextual, linguistic, and cultural dimensions of rhetoric.

The primary data source for this research is the transcript and video recording of Megawati's speech. To enrich the analysis, supplementary data were gathered from media reports, online public responses, and academic literature on Indonesian political communication. The transcript was transcribed verbatim to ensure precise documentation of the language and rhetorical devices used. Media coverage provided historical context for the broader political dynamics surrounding the event, while social media reactions offered a glimpse into audience interpretations and emotional responses.

The data were analyzed using a discourse-historical approach, focusing on how rhetorical strategies align with socio-political contexts. The analysis involved thematic coding to identify key themes such as humor, irony, cultural resonance, and reconciliation, following Creswell's (2014) open and axial coding techniques. Additionally, the rhetorical analysis drew from Aristotle's framework, examining the use of ethos (credibility), pathos (emotional appeal), and logos (logical argument) within the speech. Contextual analysis further illuminated the historical and political significance of specific rhetorical choices.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, the study employed a triangulation method by cross-referencing data from the speech transcript, media reports, and public reactions. Peer debriefing with experts in political communication added to the credibility of the analysis. Ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process by ensuring an accurate representation of the speech and respecting the confidentiality of public commentary. All secondary data sources, including media reports and social media content, were appropriately cited to uphold academic integrity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is the central part of the research article. Data analysis processes such as statistical calculations and hypothesis testing processes need not be presented. Only the results of the analysis and the results of hypothesis testing need to be reported. Tables and graphs can be used to clarify the presentation of research results verbally. Tables and graphs must be commented on or discussed.

This section presents a detailed analysis of the rhetorical strategies employed in Megawati Soekarnoputri's speech during the Golkar Party's 60th-anniversary celebration. The findings are organized into three primary themes: rhetorical use of humor and irony, cultural resonance in rhetorical strategies, and the strategic narrative of reconciliation.

Rhetorical Use of Humor and Irony

Megawati's phrase, "*Kan aku dimusuhin sejagat Dewa Pitara. Sekarang diundang, bingung aku*", is a deliberate use of irony and hyperbole. This statement reflects her ability to address complex political dynamics humorously, transforming potential criticism into a lighthearted narrative. Beneath the humor, though, is a strategic rhetorical device meant to recognize the tensions without causing further harm. Humor, in this context, disarms opponents while fostering emotional connections with the audience. This rhetorical device supports Chilton's (2004) theory that humor in political discourse can serve as a tool for fostering unity and lowering tensions. A speaker can address contentious or emotionally charged subjects with humor in a way that feels safe and familiar to the audience. Megawati may have been consciously reducing the event's formality in order to humanize herself and enhance the impression of genuineness, as seen by the informal language and tone.

From a global perspective, leaders such as Barack Obama frequently employ humor to soften controversial messages and establish relatability. In this case, Goffman's (1981) idea of face-saving is equally pertinent. Megawati avoids direct confrontation by addressing a historically delicate relationship with comedy, protecting her reputation and that of her audience—especially Golkar Party members. Similarly, Yulianto (2020) highlights the effectiveness of humor in Indonesian political rhetoric as a mechanism for diffusing tension and enhancing engagement. By blending humor with subtle critiques, Megawati not only mitigates the impact of past conflicts but also repositions herself as a resilient and approachable leader.

Cultural Resonance in Rhetorical Strategies

Indonesian political communication is deeply rooted in cultural norms, especially Javanese values that emphasize humility (*andhap asor*), harmony (*rukun*), and mutual collaboration (*gotong royong*). Megawati's informal and metaphorical language aligns with these cultural values which can be seen in her casual tone, figurative vocabulary, and avoidance of direct conflict, enhancing the relatability and effectiveness of her rhetoric. This aspect is clarified by Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, especially their concept of negative politeness, which holds that indirectness is employed to preserve social harmony.

This analysis is further supported by Geertz's (1973) anthropological observations on Javanese cultural communication. Power is frequently conveyed in Javanese language through nuance, innuendo, and elegance rather than volume or conflict. This communication custom is reflected in Megawati's composed, sardonic tone throughout the speech, and her ability to use common cultural allusions deepens the audience's feeling of emotional intimacy.

Furthermore, a narrative of collective identity is constructed through the employment of inclusive cultural idioms, such as allusions to historical characters and common political conflicts. Megawati reinforces the validity of her attendance at the event by placing herself inside a larger cultural and historical continuity rather than as a lone political figure.

Strategic Narrative of Reconciliation

Megawati's rhetorical narrative of reconciliation addresses historical tensions between her party, PDI-P, and Golkar. By framing her presence at the anniversary as a gesture of unity, she demonstrates her ability to prioritize national interests over personal or partisan grievances. Her amusing introductory statement serves as a springboard for a larger story of political development, forgiveness, and maturity in addition to relieving the historical tension. This approach aligns with Habermas's (1984) theory of communicative action, which emphasizes discourse as a medium for resolving conflicts and fostering mutual understanding.

Her deliberate use of inclusive language and focus on *kebersamaan* (togetherness) shows that she is trying to reframe the occasion as a national moment of unity rather than merely a Golkar celebration. By raising the conversation beyond party politics and transforming it into a common national story, this rhetorical posture fulfills both an ideological and a strategic purpose.

Implications for Emotional Framing and Audience Engagement in Political Rhetoric

The findings underscore the critical role of emotional engagement in political rhetoric. Leaders who leverage emotional appeals effectively create stronger bonds with their audience, fostering trust and credibility. Bourdieu's (1991) theory of symbolic power highlights how language constructs authority, emphasizing the importance of rhetoric in political strategy. Since a speech's ability to evoke emotion frequently determines its lasting impact, Aristotle's concept of *pathos* becomes especially pertinent in this context. Both Golkar members and onlookers responded to Megawati's speech with audible laughing, enthusiastic applause, and smiles, suggesting that her emotional framing was well received.

The public's reactions, as seen in news reports and comments on social media, point to a mixture of curiosity and respect. While some viewers saw the speech as brave yet laid back, many others viewed her presence and message as an indication of political maturity. This suggests that Megawati was successful in changing public opinion about both herself and the potential for peace between opposing groups.

Her speech's structure also demonstrated her emotional framing: irony at the outset to pique interest and establish a connection, cultural allusions to enhance resonance, and calls for political unity and vision at the end. This methodical development is consistent with Lakoff's (2004) framing theory, which holds that audiences' interpretations of ideas are influenced by their structure.

Additionally, her measured, conversational, and reflective speaking style served to lessen the psychological gap between the speaker and the audience. In the Indonesian setting, where political trust frequently results from emotional closeness, this intimacy is crucial.

Ideological Implications and Political Positioning

Megawati's statement must be interpreted in the context of its wider ideological ramifications in addition to its emotional and cultural dimensions. She used the occasion to reaffirm the importance of PDI-P in the context of changing political coalitions. Although emotionally compelling, the tone of reconciliation also served a strategic political purpose: to indicate an openness to forming alliances in advance of any election realignments. This is consistent with the symbolic power theory of Bourdieu (1991), which holds that language serves as a tool for establishing authority. Megawati recaptured symbolic capital and positioned herself as a uniting national figure by taking the stage at a Golkar celebration and giving a speech that was both politically neutral and emotionally impactful.

Furthermore, the speech's timing, it was given at a time when PDI-P was seeing an increase in conversation regarding the generational leadership transition, indicates that she was reclaiming her moral authority inside the party. As a mother of the party and a cultural representation of democratic tenacity, she continues to play a significant role in Indonesian politics, as her appearance reminded spectators. Her rhetoric's ideological undertone might potentially be a covert attempt to alter political memory. She challenges the people to reevaluate previous differences as a part of a larger story of democratic evolution rather than as enduring animosity by interacting with Golkar in a lighthearted and united manner. This framing allows for more nuanced readings of Indonesia's political development and challenges oversimplified historical dichotomies.

Comparative Perspectives

Comparing Megawati's approach to global leaders like Angela Merkel and Barack Obama reveals distinct cultural influences on rhetorical styles. While Merkel's understated pragmatism emphasizes precision, and Obama's rhetoric often inspires through optimism, Megawati's humor-driven and culturally resonant approach demonstrates the flexibility of effective communication strategies.

Practical Applications

For contemporary political leaders, the integration of emotional engagement and cultural alignment into rhetoric is essential. Training programs for political communication should incorporate insights from this study, equipping leaders to navigate diverse political and cultural contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study delved into the rhetorical and emotional strategies employed by Megawati Soekarnoputri during the Golkar Party's 60th-anniversary celebration. Her speech exemplifies the intricate interplay of humor, cultural resonance, and strategic messaging, reflecting both her political acumen and her ability to navigate Indonesia's coalition-driven political landscape. By analyzing her speech through qualitative methodologies, the findings underscore the multifaceted role of emotional engagement in shaping political narratives and fostering reconciliation in a socio-political context characterized by its historical complexities.

One of the most striking aspects of Megawati's rhetoric is her adept use of humor and irony. These rhetorical tools enable her to address sensitive historical tensions with grace and relatability. Moreover, Megawati's speech reflects a profound understanding of Indonesian cultural values, particularly those emphasizing harmony, mutual respect, and subtlety. By aligning her rhetorical style with these values, she enhances the emotional and cultural resonance of her message. This alignment underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity in political communication, particularly in a nation like Indonesia, where societal norms deeply influence public perception. Her informal and metaphorical language echoes the Javanese cultural emphasis on humility and subtlety, positioning her as a leader who is both approachable and authoritative.

The implications of this study extend beyond the Indonesian context, offering valuable insights into the broader field of political communication. The findings highlight the critical role of emotional engagement in enhancing rhetorical effectiveness and building public trust.

Comparative perspectives further enrich our understanding of Megawati's rhetorical strategies. By juxtaposing her approach with those of global leaders such as Angela Merkel and Barack Obama, this study highlights the diverse ways in which cultural contexts shape rhetorical styles. Merkel's understated pragmatism and Obama's inspirational optimism contrast with Megawati's humor-driven and culturally resonant rhetoric, demonstrating the flexibility and adaptability of effective communication strategies across different socio-political landscapes.

From a practical standpoint, the insights gleaned from this study have significant implications for political leaders and communication strategists. This study also contributes to the academic discourse on political communication by addressing the gap in research on culturally specific rhetorical strategies in Southeast Asia. While existing literature predominantly focuses on Western contexts, this research underscores the importance of cultural specificity in understanding the dynamics of political rhetoric. By integrating discourse-historical analysis with cultural insights, this study offers a nuanced examination of Megawati's speech, enriching our understanding of the interplay between emotional resonance, cultural alignment, and political strategy.

Future research could build on these findings by exploring similar rhetorical strategies in other political contexts, both within and beyond Southeast Asia. Comparative studies could shed light on the universal and culturally specific elements of emotional engagement in political rhetoric, further advancing our understanding of its role in

shaping political narratives. Additionally, longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of emotional engagement on public perception and political outcomes would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of these rhetorical strategies.

In conclusion, Megawati Soekarnoputri's speech during Golkar's 60th-anniversary celebration exemplifies the power of emotional engagement in political communication. Her skillful use of humor, cultural resonance, and strategic messaging highlights the importance of aligning rhetorical choices with the cultural and historical sensibilities of the audience. This research not only sheds light on the unique dynamics of Indonesian political rhetoric but also offers broader insights into the universal principles of effective communication. As political landscapes continue to evolve, the lessons gleaned from this study will remain relevant for scholars, practitioners, and leaders seeking to navigate the complexities of rhetoric, culture, and power in diverse contexts.

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