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Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification in Local Indonesian Elections: A Case of Campaign Billboards in Sumbawa Regency

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Abstract

Political campaign billboards remain a prominent yet under-theorized medium of electoral communication, particularly in emerging democracies. This study investigates how legislative campaign billboards displayed during Indonesia's 2024 general election construct persuasive force through the interaction of speech acts, visual semiotics, and ideological coding. Drawing on speech act theory, social semiotics, visual grammar, and critical discourse analysis, the study analyzes 50 purposively sampled billboards from Sumbawa Regency. Findings reveal systematic cross-modal clustering patterns: directive speech acts align predominantly with religious imagery, commissive acts cluster with nationalist symbolism, and declarative positioning frequently co-occurs with elite proximity. These patterned alignments demonstrate that illocutionary force is not linguistically self-contained but amplified through visual and ideological scaffolding. The article proposes a conceptual framework, *Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA)*, that models persuasion as a layered process involving an illocutionary core, a semiotic scaffold, compositional structuring, ideological naturalisation, and voter subject positioning. While the framework is analytically transferable, its applicability is bound by regional socio-cultural configurations where religious and community-based patronage remain salient. Grounded in this localized context, the model advances political pragmatics and multimodal discourse studies by explaining how authority is visually performed and normalized in contemporary electoral communication.

[Baliho kampanye politik tetap menjadi media komunikasi elektoral yang menonjol namun belum banyak dikaji secara teoretis, khususnya di negara-negara demokrasi yang sedang berkembang. Studi ini meneliti bagaimana baliho kampanye legislatif pada Pemilu 2024 di Indonesia membangun daya persuasi melalui interaksi antara tindak tutur, semiotika visual, dan pengodean ideologis. Dengan mengacu pada teori tindak tutur, semiotika sosial, tata bahasa visual, dan analisis wacana kritis, kajian tersebut menganalisis 50 baliho yang dipilih secara purposif dari Kabupaten Sumbawa. Temuan menunjukkan ada pola pengelompokan lintas-modal yang sistematis: tindak tutur direktif cenderung selaras dengan citra keagamaan, tindak tutur komisif berkelompok dengan simbolisme nasionalis, dan pemosisian deklaratif sering kali muncul bersamaan dengan penonjolan kedekatan dengan kalangan elite. Keselarasan berpola tersebut menunjukkan bahwa daya ilokusi tidak berdiri sendiri secara linguistik, melainkan diperkuat melalui kerangka pendukung (scaffolding) visual dan ideologis. Artikel ini mengusulkan kerangka konseptual *Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA)*, yang memodelkan persuasi sebagai proses berlapis yang melibatkan inti ilokusi, kerangka pendukung semiotik, penataan komposisional, naturalisasi ideologis, dan pemosisian subjek pemilih. Meskipun kerangka kerja tersebut dapat diterapkan dalam

analisis lain, keberlakuannya terikat pada konfigurasi sosial-budaya daerah setempat, yakni patronase berbasis agama dan komunitas masih memegang peranan penting. Berlandaskan konteks lokal ini, model tersebut memajukan kajian pragmatik politik dan wacana multimodal dengan menjelaskan bagaimana otoritas ditampilkan secara visual dan dinormalisasi dalam komunikasi elektoral kontemporer.

Keywords: Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification; speech act theory; political billboards; electoral persuasion; critical discourse analysis

Introduction

Political communication in contemporary democracies is increasingly multimodal. Electoral persuasion no longer relies exclusively on speeches, manifestos, or televised debates. Still, it operates through a dense interplay of linguistic, visual, and spatial resources circulating across both digital and physical environments. Among these, campaign billboards remain a significant yet theoretically underexplored medium of political messaging, particularly in emerging democracies where public space continues to function as a key arena of electoral visibility.¹

While scholarship in political discourse has extensively examined speeches, parliamentary debates, and social media communication², billboard discourse has received comparatively limited theoretical attention. Existing studies on campaign billboards

¹ Roberto Rodríguez-Andrés and María José Canel, "Election Posters in Spain: An Old Genre Surviving New Media?," in *Election Posters Around the Globe*, ed. Christina Holtz-Bacha and Bengt Johansson (Springer International Publishing, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32498-2_15; Jyotirmaya Tripathy, "Picturing Development: Outdoor Campaign Materials during the 2019 General Election in India," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 45, no. 4 (2022): 686–705, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2022.2074034>.

² Mulyono Mulyono et al., "Speech Acts, Figures of Speech, and Their Functions in the 2024 Presidential & Vice-Presidential Debates: A Pragmasylistic Study," *Journal of Language Teaching and Research* 17, no. 1 (2026): 238–47, <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1701.24>; Kenneth Paul Tan, "Podcasting Politics in Singapore: Hegemony, Resistance, and Digital Media," *Critical Asian Studies* 57, no. 2 (2025): 211–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2025.2451755>.

and posters often focus on persuasive slogans,³ symbolic resources and metaphors,⁴ or visual campaign design strategies,⁵ frequently treating language and image as analytically separable components. However, such compartmentalized approaches risk overlooking how multimodal orchestration amplifies, mitigates, and naturalizes illocutionary force, which is central to speech act theory.

Speech act theory, originally developed by Austin⁶ and Searle⁷, conceptualizes utterances as performative actions that accomplish social functions such as commanding, promising, declaring, or expressing. In political contexts, speech acts have been widely used to analyze campaign rhetoric and leadership communication. Haroon et al.⁸ demonstrate how directive and commissive acts structure persuasive intent in Malaysian political speeches, while Mardiana et al.⁹ show how Indonesian political figures strategically deploy speech acts to shape public perception and policy discourse. More recently, Mulyono et al.¹⁰ identified the strategic deployment of expressive and directive acts in Indonesian presidential debates, highlighting their

³ Jinky V. Mangad et al., “Examining the Rhetorical Landscape of Political Campaign Slogans in the Philippines: A Rhetorical-Semantic Analysis,” *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2024): 2417510, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2417510>.

⁴ M. Tociu, “Metaphors or Symbolic Resources in Political Discourse. Symbolism of Electoral Logos and Local Events,” *Analele Universitatii Ovidius Constanta, Seria Filologie* 30, no. 2 (2019): 376–90, <http://bit.ly/4kTREba>.

⁵ G. G. Hipola, “Communicative Offer in Electoral Advertising. A Study of the Electoral Posters in Andalusia 2008-2018,” *Revista de Estudios Regionales*, no. 127 (2023): 15–45, <http://www.revistaestudiosregionales.com/documentos/articulos/pdf-articulo-2649.pdf>.

⁶ John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Harvard University Press, 1962).

⁷ J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*. (Cambridge University Press, 1969).

⁸ Harshita Aini Haroon et al., “Lakukan Ilokusi Ucapan Zahid Hamidi Dalam PAU 2017 Dan 2018 (Illocutionary Acts in Zahid Hamidi’s PAU 2017 and 2018 Speeches),” *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies* 20, no. 2 (2020): 96–114, <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2020-2002-06>.

⁹ Dina Mardiana et al., “Speech Act of Political Figures in the Discourse of Educational Development: An Interpersonal Pragmatic Approach,” *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 12, no. 1 (2025): 2463728, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2463728>.

¹⁰ Mulyono et al., “Speech Acts, Figures of Speech, and Their Functions in the 2024 Presidential & Vice-Presidential Debates.”

pragmatic and rhetorical functions. Yet, most speech act research remains linguistically oriented, implicitly assuming that illocutionary force resides within verbal structures.

Recent developments in multimodal discourse analysis challenge this assumption of linguistic containment. Multimodal political discourse integrates verbal, visual, and symbolic modes to construct persuasive meaning.¹¹ Kress and van Leeuwen's¹² visual grammar framework demonstrates that gaze, angle, salience, framing, and information value structure viewer positioning in ways analogous to linguistic mood and modality. Contemporary scholarship further emphasizes that meaning is distributed across semiotic modes rather than centralized in text alone.¹³ Political advertising research increasingly recognizes that visual symbolism, color schemes, and spatial composition function as persuasive mechanisms alongside language.¹⁴

Electoral billboard discourse exemplifies this multimodal integration. Studies of Iraqi electoral posters,¹⁵ Ghanaian campaign

¹¹ Andrei V. Babaitsev et al., "Semiotic Discourse of the Socio-Political Sphere of the Modern Russian Society: Challenges of Multimodality," *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology* 9 (April 2022): 1972–78, <https://doi.org/10.6000/1929-4409.2020.09.231>; Christoph Schubert, "Multimodal Cohesion in Persuasive Discourse: A Case Study of Televised Campaign Advertisements in the 2020 US Presidential Election," *Discourse, Context & Media* 43 (October 2021): 100537, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2021.100537>.

¹² G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2006).

¹³ Katarina Pettersson and Jari Martikainen, "Analysing Subject Positions in Multimodal Populist Communication," in *Qualitative Approaches to the Social Psychology of Populism*, 1st ed., by Inari Sakki (Routledge, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003492276-7>; Larysa I. Taranenko and Mariia K. Boichenko, "Multimodal Means of Boris Johnson's Representation as a Charismatic Leader on Social Media," *Alfred Nobel University Journal of Philology* 2, no. 26/2 (2023): 192–209, <https://doi.org/10.32342/2523-4463-2023-2-26/2-12>.

¹⁴ L. Nadal et al., "Perception and Decision Making: A Multi-Technique Analysis of Campaign Posters in the 2019 Bogotá Mayoral Election," *International Journal of Communication* 15 (2021): 2462–83, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/16107/3451>; S. Y. Pavlina, "Electoral Campaign Still Visuals: Making Politics Entertaining," *Journal of Siberian Federal University - Humanities and Social Sciences* 16, no. 6 (2023): 921–32, <https://elib.sfu-kras.ru/handle/2311/150133>.

¹⁵ K. S. Sharhan et al., "A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of 2018 Iraqi Parliamentary Electoral Posters," *Language, Discourse and Society* 11, no. 1 (2023): 121–41, <https://www.language-and-society.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/121-142.pdf>.

symbolism¹⁶, and Mexican electoral posters¹⁷ demonstrate how names, logos, colors, and cultural symbols combine with text to construct candidate credibility. Similarly, Mangad et al.¹⁸ show that linguistic simplicity and local language usage in Philippine campaign slogans foster emotional resonance and authenticity. However, while these studies document multimodal features, they seldom articulate the systemic mechanisms that link illocutionary categories to visual semiotics.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) provides additional insight into how political communication constructs and legitimizes authority. Political legitimation often involves moral framing, ideological naturalization, and symbolic association.¹⁹ For instance, Chibuwe and Munoriyarwa²⁰ demonstrate how campaign advertisements reproduce hegemonic narratives through repeated semiotic patterns, while Samaras²¹ illustrates how religious narratives are mobilized to legitimize exclusionary political positions. These studies underscore that political persuasion operates not only through argumentation but also through the normalization of power relations embedded in multimodal discourse.

¹⁶ Kobby Mensah et al., “Mapping the Formats and Significance of Signs and Meaning in Political Campaigns in Ghanaian Elections,” in *Visual Politics in the Global South*, ed. Anastasia Veneti and Maria Rovisco, Political Campaigning and Communication (Springer International Publishing, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22782-0_8.

¹⁷ Julio Juárez-Gámiz, “Electoral Posters in Mexico: From Monochromatic Iconography to Multicolor Saturation,” in *Election Posters Around the Globe*, ed. Christina Holtz-Bacha and Bengt Johansson (Springer International Publishing, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32498-2_12.

¹⁸ Mangad et al., “Examining the Rhetorical Landscape of Political Campaign Slogans in the Philippines.”

¹⁹ Merijn Oudenampsen, “Neoliberal Sermons: European Christian Democracy and Neoliberal Governmentality,” *Economy and Society* 51, no. 2 (2022): 330–52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2022.1987743>; Albert Chibuwe and Allen Munoriyarwa, “‘Repetition without Change?': A Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected ZANU-PF Advertisements for the July 2013 and July 2018 Elections,” *Discourse & Communication* 17, no. 2 (2023): 174–98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/17504813221132977>.

²⁰ Chibuwe and Munoriyarwa, “‘Repetition without Change?’”

²¹ Georgios Samaras, “Weaponising Religion in Greece Post Economic Crisis: An Analysis of Far-Right Political Discourse from 2019 to 2024,” *Journal of Empirical Theology*, February 17, 2025, 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1163/15709256-20240018>.

Within Southeast Asia, political semiotics operates across memorialization, media, and populist campaign narratives. Rakhmani and Saraswati²² show how Indonesian political campaigns engineer consent and coercion through populist imagery and media orchestration. At the same time, Hansson and Weiss²³ conceptualize political space in Southeast Asia as a contested domain shaped by symbolic practices. Tan²⁴ further demonstrates how digital political communication mediates hegemonic reinforcement and resistance. However, research integrating speech acts, visual grammar, and CDA in analyses of offline electoral billboards in Indonesia remains limited.

Existing speech act research predominantly treats illocutionary force as linguistically autonomous. However, this traditional framework fails to explain why identical verbal imperative structures (e.g., "*coblos nomor 1*") yield vastly different persuasive resonance and social acceptability across distinct visual contexts. This theoretical limitation highlights an underexplored pragmatic mechanism: the visual and semiotic scaffolding of illocutionary force.

To address this gap, this study examines legislative campaign billboards displayed during the 2024 Indonesian general election in Sumbawa Regency. Sumbawa serves as a critical microcosm of outer-island, rural-suburban archipelagic constituencies in Indonesia, where electoral dynamics are heavily mediated by a synthesis of Islamic values, customary traditions (*Adat Barenti ko Syara', Syara' Barenti ko Kitabullah*), and the informal institutional authority of the Sumbawa Sultanate represented by *Lembaga Adat Tana Samawa* (LATS).²⁵

²² Inaya Rakhmani and Muningsari Sri Saraswati, "Authoritarian Populism in Indonesia: The Role of the Political Campaign Industry in Engineering Consent and Coercion," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 40, no. 3 (2021): 436–60, <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034211027885>.

²³ Eva Hansson and Meredith L. Weiss, "The Contested Domain of Political Space in Southeast Asia," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Political Norms in Southeast Asia*, ed. Gabriel Facal et al. (Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-9655-1_27.

²⁴ Tan, "Podcasting Politics in Singapore."

²⁵ Fathurrijal Fathurrijal, "Political Marketing Elit Lokal Dalam Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah di Nusa Tenggara Barat," *Al-I'lam: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1, <https://doi.org/10.31764/jail.v2i1.534>; Sri Nurhidayati et al., "Perilaku Pemilih Dalam Menentukan Pilihan Pada Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Sumbawa Tahun 2024," *Jurnal Riset Kajian Teknologi dan Lingkungan* 8, no. 2 (2025): 416–22; Johan Wahyudi, "Tracking the Role of Lembaga Adat Tana

Unlike metropolitan centers where policy debates and digital campaigns dominate public discourse, rural-suburban constituencies rely extensively on physical outdoor space as the primary arena for competing over cultural, visual, and symbolic legitimacy.²⁶ In such sociopolitical settings, campaign billboards function not merely as promotional displays, but as condensed sites of religio-cultural patronage where candidates negotiate authority with local electorates through recognized local moral frameworks.²⁷

Adopting an integrated analytical framework that combines speech act theory,²⁸ Barthesian semiotics,²⁹ visual grammar,³⁰ and critical discourse analysis,³¹ this study evaluates how illocutionary acts are visually and ideologically scaffolded to propose a conceptual model termed Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA). The central research questions guiding the study are: (1) What types of illocutionary acts dominate legislative campaign billboards in Sumbawa Regency? (2) How are these speech acts multimodally reinforced through visual semiotics and compositional structuring? (3) What ideological mechanisms underpin these multimodal configurations?

Through qualitative multimodal analysis of 50 purposively sampled billboards, this study identifies recurrent cross-modal clustering patterns between speech acts and visual themes. Directive speech acts are frequently aligned with religious symbolism; commissive acts cluster with nationalist imagery; declarative positioning often co-occurs with elite proximity. These patterned

Samawa as an Informal Democratic Institution in the Local Political Arena in Sumbawa,” *Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan Widya Praja* 50, no. 1 (2024): 79–90, <https://doi.org/10.33701/jipwp.v50i1.4092>.

²⁶ Nurhidayati et al., “Perilaku Pemilih Dalam Menentukan Pilihan Pada Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Sumbawa Tahun 2024”; Aries Utomo, “‘Muda Dan Rakyat’: Political Campaign Posters Affecting The Indonesian General Election,” *Ilmu Budaya: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Budaya* 9, no. 3 (2025): 381–404, <https://doi.org/10.30872/jbssb.v9i3.21436>.

²⁷ Wahyudi, “Tracking the Role of Lembaga Adat Tana Samawa as an Informal Democratic Institution in the Local Political Arena in Sumbawa.”

²⁸ Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*; Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.

²⁹ R. Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (Fontana Press, 1977).

³⁰ Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*.

³¹ N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Longman, 1995); Chibuwe and Munoriyarwa, “‘Repetition without Change?’”

alignments indicate that illocutionary force in billboard discourse is neither linguistically autonomous nor visually incidental.

The MIA model theorizes political billboard persuasion as a layered process involving (1) an illocutionary core, (2) a semiotic scaffold, (3) compositional structuring, (4) ideological naturalization, and (5) voter subject positioning. Grounded in the Sumbawa case yet analytically transferable, the model extends speech act theory beyond linguistic containment, demonstrates how visual grammar intensifies pragmatic force, and shows how authority is naturalized through patterned semiotic alignment rather than explicit argumentation.

In doing so, this study reframes campaign billboards not as peripheral advertising artifacts but as condensed ideological apparatuses operating within public space. In emerging democratic contexts where identity, morality, and institutional legitimacy remain salient electoral resources, multimodal orchestration becomes central to how political authority is performed and normalized.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, multimodal discourse-analytic design. To model how illocutionary force is amplified through visual and ideological structuring, the research integrates four complementary analytical traditions: speech act analysis, semiotic analysis, visual grammar analysis, and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Such integrative multimodal approaches are appropriate for examining political texts in which meaning is distributed across semiotic modes rather than confined to linguistic structures.³²

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) treats visual, textual, and spatial elements as co-constitutive resources for meaning-making.³³ Within political communication research, MDA enables systematic examination of how images, typography, color, gaze, and layout contribute to persuasive effects.³⁴ The present study extends this

³² David Machin, "What Is Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies?," *Critical Discourse Studies* 10, no. 4 (2013): 347–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2013.813770>; K. L. O'Halloran, "Multimodal Discourse Analysis," in *Bloomsbury Companion to Discourse Analysis* (Continuum, 2011), <https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=3542877>.

³³ Carey Jewitt, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis* (Routledge, 2014).

³⁴ Machin, "What Is Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies?"

approach by integrating pragmatic and ideological dimensions into multimodal analysis.

The dataset consists of 50 legislative campaign billboards displayed during the 2024 Indonesian general election in Sumbawa Regency, West Nusa Tenggara. Billboards were selected through purposive sampling to ensure representation across candidates with the highest vote share, major political party affiliations, and gender. Purposive sampling is appropriate in qualitative discourse research, where analytical depth and theoretical saturation take priority over statistical generalizability.³⁵ The aim was not numerical representativeness but discursive diversity and pattern detection. The study documented billboards through systematic photographic capture during the official campaign period. Each image was archived with metadata including location, date, candidate name, and party affiliation. We included only publicly displayed materials to ensure ethical compliance. To account for spatial grammar and geosemiotic dynamics³⁶, the sampling site was categorized into two distinct physical zones: 30 billboards located along major urban thoroughfares and government centers in Sumbawa Besar, and 20 billboards situated along inter-district connecting roads in rural and suburban areas.

The analytical procedure consisted of five sequential stages, each corresponding to the Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA) model. In stage 1 (illocutionary coding), all verbal texts were transcribed and coded according to Searle's³⁷ taxonomy: directives, commissives, representatives, expressives, and declaratives. While Searle's speech act taxonomy originated in conversational pragmatics, its application to political billboards is methodologically justified because outdoor campaign signage inherently functions as performative public discourse designed to execute specific action-oriented communicative functions, namely issuing directives (appeals for votes), making commissives (development promises), asserting declaratives (establishing institutional status), or expressing affective stances. Although billboards are static, written, and asynchronous media, their linguistic components operate as compressed illocutionary prompts

³⁵ M. Q. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed. (SAGE, 2015).

³⁶ Ron Scollon and Suzie Wong Scollon, *Discourses in Place*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203422724>.

³⁷ Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.

designed to elicit specific perlocutionary responses from passing citizens. Coding followed pragmatic criteria established in political speech act research.³⁸ Where ambiguity occurred, we determined illocutionary force based on syntactic form, modal markers, and contextual intent. We identified 62 illocutionary acts across the 50 billboards. To reduce interpretive bias and ensure inter-rater reliability, two coders (the first and second authors) coded independently. Inter-rater agreement, calculated using Cohen's Kappa, was $K = 0.84$, indicating high coding consistency.

In stage 2 (semiotic coding), visual elements were analysed using Barthesian semiotic principles, distinguishing among denotation (literal depiction), connotation (culturally embedded meaning), and ideological myth (naturalised cultural narrative). Semiotic coding focused on recurring visual themes such as religious markers, nationalist symbolism, and elite proximity. This step aligns with social semiotic methodology, which views visual signs as culturally situated resources.³⁹

In stage 3 (visual grammar analysis), each billboard was examined using Kress and van Leeuwen's⁴⁰ visual grammar framework, operationalized through five key dimensions: gaze (demand vs offer), social distance (close-up, medium, long shot), angle (power positioning), salience (size, color contrast, placement), and information value (left/right, top/bottom structuring). Visual grammar analysis enabled systematic identification of how viewer positioning reinforced or mitigated illocutionary force. Such compositional analysis is widely recognized as essential in multimodal political advertising studies.⁴¹ Furthermore, spatial context was integrated by examining how billboard placement in urban thoroughfares versus rural inter-district routes reconfigured visual salience and audience engagement.

In Stage 4, cross-modal mapping, to identify structural clustering, illocutionary categories were cross-tabulated with dominant visual themes. A co-occurrence matrix was constructed to reveal

³⁸ Cornelia Ilie, "CHAPTER 8 Parliamentary Discourse and Deliberative Rhetoric," in *Parliament and Parliamentarism*, ed. Pasi Ihalainen et al. (Berghahn Books, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781782389552-011>.

³⁹ Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*; T. van Leeuwen, *Introducing Social Semiotics* (Routledge, 2005).

⁴⁰ Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*.

⁴¹ Machin, "What Is Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies?"

patterned alignments between speech act types and semiotic scaffolds. This step moves beyond descriptive analysis toward relational pattern modeling.⁴² Clustering analysis revealed three dominant alignments: directive–religious, commissive–nationalist, and declarative–elite proximity. This matrix provided the empirical basis for modeling multimodal reinforcement mechanisms.

In stage 5, model abstraction (MIA Development), following pattern identification, findings were iteratively synthesized to develop the Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA) model. Model abstraction involved identifying recurring reinforcement mechanisms across cases and conceptualizing them into layered analytical components. This abductive analytical strategy—moving from empirical patterns to conceptual modeling—is consistent with qualitative theory-building approaches in discourse studies.⁴³ Rather than imposing a pre-existing model, the study developed theoretical abstraction by systematically consolidating patterns.

To ensure credibility, the study employed several strategies: theoretical triangulation (integrating pragmatics, semiotics, visual grammar, and CDA) and peer debriefing, in which coding categories and cross-modal matrices were independently reviewed through a structured protocol involving a senior scholar specializing in multimodal discourse analysis. Interpretive discrepancies regarding primary speech act classification or visual theme dominance (occurring in approximately 8% of the initial sample) were documented in an audit trail and systematically resolved through iterative discussion between the coders until full interpretive consensus was achieved. We refined coding iteratively (categories were revised until analytical saturation was reached) and ensured transparency of analytical steps, including explicit documentation of cross-modal mapping procedures.⁴⁴ Given the interpretive nature of multimodal analysis, reflexivity was maintained throughout the coding process to acknowledge the

⁴² K. L. O'Halloran, and B. A. Smith, *Multimodal Studies: Exploring Issues and Domains* (Routledge, 2011), <https://www.routledge.com/Multimodal-Studies-Exploring-Issues-and-Domains/OHalloran-Smith/p/book/9780415754415>.

⁴³ Stefan Timmermans and Iddo Tavory, "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis," *Sociological Theory* 30, no. 3 (2012): 167–86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275112457914>.

⁴⁴ Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315134543>.

researcher's role in meaning construction.⁴⁵ Methodologically, numerical values and percentages presented in the analysis serve purely as descriptive frequency trends to highlight distributional patterns within the qualitative corpus, rather than claims of inferential statistical generalizability.

All data were collected from publicly displayed campaign materials during an official electoral period. No private or restricted content was accessed. Candidate identities are used solely for analytical illustration within publicly available political discourse.

Results

Distributional Overview of Speech Acts and Visual Themes

The analysis of 50 legislative campaign billboards yielded 62 identifiable illocutionary acts, as several billboards contained multiple speech acts. In parallel, systematic visual coding revealed three dominant semiotic clusters: religious identity, nationalist symbolism, and elite legitimization. This subsection establishes the macro-level distributional patterns that structure the multimodal typology developed in the next subsection. Rather than treating linguistic and visual resources as independent layers, the overview demonstrates that billboard persuasion in this dataset is organized around patterned alignments between illocutionary force and semiotic legitimation.

1. Distribution of Illocutionary Acts

We categorized speech acts according to Searle's (1969) taxonomy. Table 1 presents their distribution.

Table 1. Distribution of Illocutionary Acts in Legislative Campaign Billboards (N = 62)

No.	Speech Act Type	Frequency	Approximate Percentage (%)
1.	Directive	33	53%
2.	Commissive	10	16%
3.	Expressive	9	15%

⁴⁵ Jewitt, *Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*.

4.	Representative	7	11%
5.	Declarative	3	5%
	Total	62	100%

Directive speech acts account for approximately half of all illocutionary realizations (~53%), indicating that billboard discourse is structurally oriented toward behavioral activation rather than deliberative persuasion. Imperative constructions such as "*coblos nomor...*", "*pilih*", and "*lanjutkan*" do not merely inform voters of candidate identity; they directly attempt to structure electoral action. In Austinian terms, the billboard becomes a performative site where voting is linguistically pre-enacted.

Commissive acts (~16%) are the second most frequent category and typically take the form of forward-looking commitments to service and development. These utterances bind candidates to projected future conduct, constructing reliability and programmatic continuity. Expressive acts (~15%) function to index moral stance and affective orientation, while representative acts (~11%) primarily anchor candidate identity and party affiliation. Declaratives (~5%) occur least frequently and tend to formalize political alignment or institutional positioning.

To avoid pragmatic reductionism, it is critical to recognize that political utterances on campaign billboards are inherently hybrid and multifunctional. While Table 1 codes utterances by their primary illocutionary force, many statements operate across multiple pragmatic dimensions simultaneously. For instance, slogans such as "*Terus Bekerja Mengawal Pembangunan Pulau Sumbawa*" blend a primary commissive act (promising future service) with a secondary expressive act (indexing dedication and affective stance) and an implicit representative act (asserting ongoing development work). Assigning a primary category thus reflects analytical categorization for pattern detection rather than a claim of pragmatic exclusivity.

The predominance of directives suggests that campaign billboards operate as compressed mobilization devices, maximizing illocutionary force within limited spatial and textual constraints. However, this force is not linguistically autonomous. Its persuasive effect depends on visual scaffolding, as demonstrated below.

2. Distribution of Visual Semiotic Themes

Visual analysis identified three dominant semiotic configurations across the 50 billboards. These are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Dominant Visual Semiotic Themes in Campaign Billboards
(N = 50)

No.	Visual Theme	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Religious Identity	21	42%
2.	Nationalist Symbolism	17	34%
3.	Elite Legitimization	12	24%
	Total	50	100%

Religious symbolism emerges as the most salient visual resource (42%). Denotatively, this includes the wearing of *hijab* and a *peci*, visible prayer marks, and Islamic greetings. Connotatively, these signs index piety, ethical integrity, and social trustworthiness. At the ideological level, religious identity naturalizes authority by embedding political instruction within culturally legitimate moral frameworks.

Nationalist symbolism (34%) is conveyed through red-and-white color schemes, the Indonesian flag, regional landmarks, and formal attire associated with state authority. These visual codes construct candidates as embodiments of patriotic service and territorial belonging. The semiotic fusion of individual identity with national imagery frames political commitment as civic duty rather than partisan ambition.

Elite legitimization (24%) involves visual co-presence with nationally or regionally prominent political figures. Through spatial proximity and compositional alignment, candidates visually appropriate institutional credibility. Authority is transferred symbolically rather than discursively argued.

3. Cross-Modal Tendencies

Preliminary cross-modal inspection reveals systematic coupling between illocutionary categories and visual themes. Directive speech acts disproportionately co-occur with religious imagery, suggesting that instructional force is reinforced through moral coding. Commissive acts cluster around nationalist symbolism, framing political promises within broader narratives of collective progress. Declarative alignments most frequently appear alongside elite endorsement imagery, grounding institutional positioning in recognizable authority figures.

These patterned alignments suggest that illocutionary force in billboard discourse rarely operates in isolation. Instead, speech acts are embedded within culturally resonant semiotic scaffolding that amplifies credibility, mitigates coerciveness, and structures voter positioning. Persuasion thus operates through recurrent multimodal configurations rather than isolated textual strategies. The following section models these configurations as four typified persuasive formations, demonstrating how speech acts, visual grammar, and ideological coding interact to produce multimodal illocutionary amplification.

Multimodal Typology of Legislative Campaign Billboards

While the distributional overview established the predominance of directive speech acts and religious imagery, a deeper examination reveals that campaign billboards operate through recurrent multimodal configurations rather than isolated linguistic or visual strategies. Across the dataset, four dominant multimodal types emerge, each characterized by a distinctive alignment between illocutionary force, visual semiotics, spatial composition, and ideological positioning. These types are elaborated below.

1. Instructional–Religious Mobilization Billboards



Figure 1. Instructional–Religious Mobilization Billboard (A1)

This configuration represents the most dominant pattern in the dataset and corresponds with the high frequency of directive speech acts. Billboard A1 exemplifies this alignment between linguistic command and religious visual symbolism. The verbal component, "*PKB pojok kiri atas coblos nomor urut 1*," constitutes an explicit directive speech act. The imperative verb *coblos* ("mark" or "vote") directly positions the viewer as an electoral actor and frames the billboard as an instructional prompt. Rather than merely presenting a political option, the utterance urges compliance, transforming the message into a performative call to action.

At the visual level, meaning is layered semiotically. Denotatively, the candidate appears wearing a hijab and raising her hand, accompanied by an image of a pre-marked ballot paper. Connotatively, the hijab indexes piety and moral respectability within a Muslim-majority electorate, while the raised hand conveys enthusiasm and commitment. The ballot paper visually anticipates the

desired voter behavior. At the ideological level, these elements work together to naturalize political authority through moral legitimacy, embedding electoral instruction within a framework of religious virtue.

Compositional structuring further reinforces this effect. The candidate's direct gaze establishes a demand image, creating interpersonal engagement and a sense of obligation. The eye-level angle creates a sense of equality between the candidate and the voter, softening the directive's force while maintaining authority. The ballot paper is positioned prominently as a visual vector guiding the viewer's attention from candidate identity to electoral action. Size and color contrast create salience, keeping the candidate foregrounded against background elements. The left–right information structure frequently places party identity on the left (Given) and the voting instruction on the right (New), reinforcing a cognitive sequence of recognition followed by action.

From a critical discourse perspective, compliance is moralized rather than imposed. The directive is framed not as coercion but as ethically appropriate behavior aligned with shared religious values. Religious visual coding reduces the illocutionary risk inherent in commanding speech acts by embedding them within culturally legitimate authority. In this configuration, electoral obedience becomes socially normalized. This patterned alignment of directive speech acts with religious imagery appears in 21 billboards across the dataset, making it the most recurrent multimodal cluster identified in the analysis.

2. Commitment–Nationalist Legitimation Billboards



Figure 2. Commitment–Nationalist Legitimation Billboard (A3)

This configuration aligns predominantly with commissive speech acts, in which the candidate commits to future-oriented action. The slogan "*Terus Bekerja Mengawal Pembangunan Pulau Sumbawa*" ("Continue Working to Safeguard the Development of Sumbawa Island") constitutes a clear commissive act, binding the candidate to continued service and sustained engagement in development efforts. Unlike directives, which call upon the voter to act, commissives position the candidate as the responsible agent of future progress, constructing reliability and accountability through linguistic commitment.

Pragmatically, however, this slogan also demonstrates speech act hybridity. While its primary illocutionary force is commissive, it carries an auxiliary expressive function by signaling the candidate's dedication and emotional investment in regional progress, alongside a representative premise asserting that ongoing development is actively taking place.

At the semiotic level, the candidate is denotatively depicted wearing a peci and a formal suit. Connotatively, the peci indexes

Indonesian nationalism and cultural identity, while the formal attire signifies professionalism, institutional credibility, and bureaucratic competence. Together, these elements frame the candidate not merely as an individual aspirant but as a representative of national continuity. Ideologically, political service is constructed as a patriotic duty, aligning personal commitment with collective national aspiration.

Compositional choices further reinforce this alignment. The candidate is typically presented in a medium close-up shot, creating moderate social distance that balances approachability with authority. The camera angle, often at eye level or slightly low, subtly elevates status without suggesting overt dominance. Red-and-white color schemes enhance salience and visually anchor the candidate within national symbolism, echoing the Indonesian flag and reinforcing patriotic associations. Background placement frequently situates national symbols as given information, signifying collective identity, while foregrounding the candidate as New information, positioning them as the active agent responsible for sustaining development.

From a critical discourse perspective, political promises are legitimized through nationalist myth. Authority is constructed not solely as a personal attribute but as institutionally grounded and aligned with the broader national project. The candidate's commitment becomes inseparable from the narrative of national progress, which is framed as an uncontested common good rather than a partisan objective. Through this configuration, hegemonic ideology operates subtly: development is presented as self-evidently desirable, naturalizing the candidate's leadership within a shared patriotic horizon. This pattern appears in 17 billboards, where commissive speech acts systematically align with nationalist symbolism.

3. Associative Legitimization via Elite Proximity



Figure 3. Associative Legitimization Billboard (B1)

This configuration features the visual co-presence of local candidates alongside nationally recognized political leaders. In such cases, the illocutionary structure combines representative and declarative dimensions. Statements such as "*Nasdem Partaiku, Anies Presidenku*" function simultaneously as assertions of political identity and declarations of institutional alignment. The utterance affirms party affiliation while symbolically positioning the candidate within a broader national leadership structure. Rather than making a promise or issuing a command, the text performs alignment, constructing political positioning as a completed and publicly ratified fact.

At the semiotic level, the candidate is denotatively depicted alongside a prominent elite figure. Connotatively, spatial proximity signals endorsement, shared vision, and ideological coherence. The presence of a nationally recognized leader operates as visual shorthand for credibility. At the ideological level, authority is naturalized through association: legitimacy appears transferable, as if political validity can be inherited through proximity. The elite figure's symbolic capital becomes a resource that the local candidate can appropriate.

Compositional structuring intensifies this effect. The nationally recognized figure often occupies an equal or larger spatial proportion, increasing salience and reinforcing hierarchical prestige. Weak framing between the two figures visually merges their identities, suggesting partnership rather than subordination. The absence of clear physical separation reduces perceived hierarchy while maintaining associative power. Information value frequently places the elite leader on the left (Given), representing established and recognized authority, and the local candidate on the right (New), representing an emergent political actor. This arrangement symbolically transfers credibility from the nationally known figure to the local candidate.

From a critical discourse perspective, authority in this configuration is not discursively argued but visually assumed. Institutional hegemony operates through association rather than explicit justification: legitimacy flows from the political center to the periphery. The billboard performs a symbolic transfer of capital, enacting endorsement and institutional integration without argumentative elaboration. This pattern appears in 12 billboards across the dataset, forming a distinct cluster in which declarative alignment and elite proximity converge.

4. Moral Persona Construction and Expressive Positioning



Figure 4. Moral Persona and Expressive Positioning Billboard (A2)

This configuration foregrounds expressive speech acts and the construction of political identity through affective intensity. Phrases such as "*Kita Antar Kembali ke Senayan*" ("Let us send [him] back to Senayan") blend commissive and expressive dimensions, projecting both commitment and collective aspiration. The utterance signals determination while simultaneously invoking shared emotional investment, positioning the candidate and voters within a unified political project. Rather than focusing solely on instruction or institutional alignment, the language emphasizes resolve and solidarity.

At the semiotic level, the raised fist functions as a central visual sign. Denotatively, it depicts a gesture of uplifted strength; connotatively, it indexes struggle, resistance, and unwavering commitment. The gesture carries a long-standing association with political activism and collective mobilization. Ideologically, this symbolism constructs leadership as courageous advocacy, framing the candidate as someone willing to fight on behalf of constituents.

Compositional features amplify this affective orientation. The upward vector created by the clenched fist introduces directional dynamism, visually suggesting progress or ascent. A direct gaze establishes interpersonal intensity, while heightened salience, achieved through size, contrast, or central placement, draws immediate attention to the candidate. Close framing reduces social distance, fostering immediacy and emotional engagement. The viewer is positioned not as a detached observer but as a participant in a shared struggle.

From a critical discourse perspective, persuasion in this configuration operates primarily through affect. Leadership is moralized through symbolic struggle rather than institutional affiliation or procedural authority. Legitimacy emerges from perceived authenticity, emotional conviction, and visible commitment. Across the dataset, this pattern appears in nine billboards featuring expressive or hybrid speech acts, forming a distinct cluster centered on identity performance and affective mobilization.

Table 3. Multimodal Typology of Legislative Campaign Billboards

No .	Type	Dominant Speech Act	Visual Theme	Visual Grammar Feature	Ideological Function
1.	Instructional-Religious	Directive	Religious Identity	Demand gaze; ballot vector	Moralized compliance
2.	Commitment–Nationalist	Commissive	National Symbols	Medium framing; patriotic salience	Legitimized service
3.	Associative Legitimation	Declarative/Representative	Elite Proximity	Weak framing; authority transfer	Institutional endorsement
4.	Moral Persona	Expressive/Hybrid	Gesture & Identity	Close distance; dynamic vectors	Authentic leadership

Table 3 synthesizes these findings by systematically mapping the recurrent alignments between illocutionary force, dominant visual themes, compositional strategies, and ideological functions. Rather than treating speech acts and imagery as separate analytical layers, the table demonstrates how they operate as structured multimodal configurations. Each type reveals a patterned coupling: directives with religious symbolism to moralize compliance; commissives with nationalist imagery to legitimize service; declaratives or representatives aligned with elite proximity to transfer institutional authority; and expressive or hybrid acts with dynamic gesture to construct authentic leadership.

Thus, the typology illustrates that multimodal reinforcement is not incidental but structurally patterned across the dataset. Illocutionary force gains persuasive strength when scaffolded by culturally resonant visual codes and strategically organized compositional grammar. The

billboard thus emerges as a condensed ideological apparatus in which linguistic action, visual symbolism, and spatial arrangement converge to construct an invited voter subject position, framing morally, nationally, or institutionally aligned roles for the target electorate.

Cross-Modal Reinforcement Patterns

The previous subsection identified four dominant multimodal configurations; a broader systemic pattern emerges when the dataset is examined relationally rather than categorically. Across the 50 billboards and 62 illocutionary realizations, speech acts do not distribute randomly across visual environments. Instead, they cluster in patterned alignments that suggest a structured multimodal reinforcement system. This subsection models these alignments through co-occurrence mapping, structural clustering, and semiotic alignment analysis.

1. Co-occurrence Matrix of Illocutionary Force and Visual Theme

To identify systematic reinforcement patterns, we cross-tabulated each speech act category with the dominant visual themes coded across the dataset. The resulting co-occurrence matrix (Table 4) maps the relational distribution of illocutionary force and visual semiotic scaffolding across the 50 billboards. The counts reflect only the dominant visual theme per billboard, excluding overlapping minor elements. This methodological restriction allows the matrix to foreground patterned alignment rather than incidental multimodal overlap.

Table 4. Cross-Modal Co-occurrence Matrix (N = 50 Billboards)

No.	Speech Act Type	Religious Identity	Nationalist Symbolism	Elite Legitimization
1.	Directive (33)	18	9	6
2.	Commissive (10)	2	6	2
3.	Expressive (9)	5	2	2

4.	Representative (7)	2	3	2
5.	Declarative (3)	0	1	2

As Table 4 shows, speech acts do not distribute randomly across visual environments. Instead, three major systemic tendencies emerge. First, directive speech acts cluster most strongly with religious identity markers (18 of 33 directives), far exceeding their alignment with nationalist symbolism (9) or elite legitimization (6). Second, commissive acts align most strongly with nationalist symbolism (6 of 10), while appearing only marginally with religious imagery (2) or elite proximity (2). Third, declarative realizations are most frequently associated with elite legitimization (2 of 3 cases), suggesting that institutional alignment is visually reinforced through proximity to nationally recognized figures. Although representative and expressive acts show more dispersed distributions, they nevertheless display patterned tendencies consistent with these broader alignments.

These distributions indicate structured reinforcement mechanisms rather than isolated stylistic choices. The directive–religious coupling suggests that commands gain persuasive legitimacy when embedded within moral symbolism. The commissive–nationalist alignment indicates that future-oriented commitments are stabilized through patriotic semiotics that construct credibility and institutional continuity. The declarative–elite association demonstrates that acts of political positioning are strengthened through visual adjacency to established authority. In each case, culturally resonant visual codes scaffold illocutionary force, amplifying, mitigating, or naturalizing its persuasive intent.

Table 4, therefore, provides empirical grounding for modeling billboard discourse as a system of multimodal alignment. Speech acts function as illocutionary cores, while dominant visual themes operate as legitimizing scaffolds. The patterned clustering observed in the matrix confirms that multimodal reinforcement in the dataset is structurally organized, forming the basis for the cross-modal amplification mechanisms elaborated in the subsequent sections.

2. Structural Clustering of Multimodal Strategies

The structural clustering analysis reveals three dominant multimodal reinforcement patterns across the dataset. The strongest clustering occurs between directive speech acts and religious imagery, with 18 cases demonstrating this alignment. As illustrated in the instructional–religious examples previously discussed (e.g., A1 and some other billboards), imperative verbs are consistently embedded within moral symbolism. The directive does not operate in isolation; it is visually enveloped by signs of piety such as the hijab, peci, or Islamic greetings. From a visual grammar perspective, these billboards frequently deploy direct gaze (demand images), central framing of the candidate, high-salience religious attire, and minimal visual distancing. The cumulative effect is systemic rather than incidental: the illocutionary force of command is softened and legitimized through moral coding. What might otherwise appear as electoral instruction is recoded as socially appropriate, ethically aligned behavior. In critical discourse terms, this cluster performs the moralization of compliance, naturalizing authority through religious symbolism rather than contestable policy argumentation.

The second major cluster aligns commissive speech acts with nationalist imagery, accounting for six of the ten commissive realizations in the dataset. As seen in the commitment–nationalist configurations previously analyzed (e.g., A3 and comparable cases), future-oriented promises are embedded within patriotic semiotics, including red-and-white color schemes, formal attire with peci, national flags, and regional landmarks. Structurally, these billboards tend to position national symbols as background "Given" information while foregrounding the candidate as the "New" agent of continuity. Medium social distance is frequently employed to project professional credibility, and exaggerated gestures are typically avoided. This configuration reveals a clear reinforcement logic: promises require credibility, and credibility is constructed semiotically through nationalist myth. From a CDA perspective, development discourse is framed as neutral and universally desirable, rendering political commitment indistinguishable from patriotic duty. The commissive's persuasive force thus derives from its embedding within hegemonic narratives of national progress.

A third cluster emerges in the alignment between declarative or representative speech acts and proximity to elites. As previously illustrated in the associative legitimation examples (e.g., B1 and related

cases), authority is visually borrowed through symbolic adjacency to nationally recognized figures. Here, illocutionary force is reinforced not through linguistic elaboration but through visual association. Visual grammar analysis indicates weak framing between the candidate and elite figure, shared spatial planes, comparable salience, and frequent left–right sequencing in which the elite appears as "Given" authority and the local candidate as "New" representative. This compositional arrangement constructs legitimacy as transferable symbolic capital. Authority is not argued discursively but visually assumed. From a critical discourse standpoint, this cluster reflects the reproduction of institutional hegemony, where symbolic power circulates through networks of affiliation and endorsement rather than through explicit justification.

These clusters show that multimodal reinforcement operates through structured alignments rather than random stylistic preference. Illocutionary force is systematically embedded within culturally resonant visual environments that amplify, stabilize, or naturalize its persuasive intent.

3. Semiotic Alignment Patterns

Beyond structural clustering, the dataset reveals three recurring alignment mechanisms that operate across multimodal types. These mechanisms explain how illocutionary force is systematically reinforced through visual and ideological scaffolding rather than functioning as a purely linguistic phenomenon.

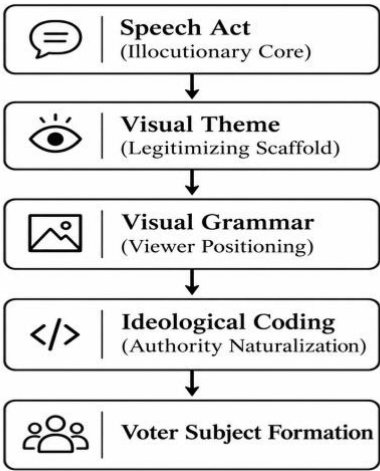
First, the data demonstrate a process of illocutionary amplification. Visual semiotics intensifies the persuasive force of speech acts by embedding them within culturally resonant symbolic frameworks. Religious coding amplifies directives by attaching moral authority to commands, while nationalist imagery stabilizes commissives by grounding promises in narratives of collective continuity. In this configuration, the speech act functions as a linguistic vector directing intended action, whereas the visual sign operates as a legitimacy multiplier. The relationship between language and image is therefore not additive but multiplicative: visual semiotics does not merely accompany verbal messages but enhances and recalibrates their pragmatic force.

Second, the analysis reveals a pattern of illocutionary mitigation. In directive–religious configurations, moral imagery

reduces the perceived coerciveness of imperative forms. Commands that might otherwise appear authoritarian are softened when embedded within culturally respected identity markers such as religious attire or symbols of piety. This mitigation mechanism explains why the dominance of directives across the dataset does not produce overtly aggressive discourse. Instead, imperatives are reframed as morally appropriate guidance aligned with shared values. Visual coding thus regulates the intensity of illocutionary force.

Third, ideological naturalization operates consistently across all clusters. Authority is constructed not through explicit argumentation but through normalization. In religious configurations, authority appears morally grounded; in nationalist alignments, it is framed as patriotic duty; in elite association patterns, it is institutionally endorsed. Across these contexts, political choice is presented as common sense rather than contestable ideology. Thus, the multimodal ensemble transforms contingent political positions into socially legitimate and seemingly self-evident forms of authority.

To sum up, these mechanisms demonstrate that legislative campaign billboards in Sumbawa Regency function through structured multimodal orchestration rather than incidental stylistic variation. Illocutionary force is consistently embedded within semiotic environments that amplify, mitigate, or naturalize persuasive intent. The systematic alignment observed across the dataset suggests that billboard discourse operates as a condensed ideological apparatus: it mobilizes behavior through directives, stabilizes trust through commissives, and transfers legitimacy through declarative alignment. This structural consistency provides the conceptual foundation for modeling billboard persuasion as a process of multimodal illocutionary amplification. Figure 5 summarizes the structural relationships among speech acts, visual scaffolding, compositional grammar, and ideological naturalization.



Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification: A Conceptual Model

The preceding analyses demonstrate that legislative campaign billboards in Sumbawa Regency do not rely solely on linguistic persuasion. Rather, speech acts are consistently embedded within structured visual and ideological environments that reinforce, legitimize, and normalize their illocutionary force. The patterned cross-modal clustering identified in the previous sections suggests that these

⁴⁶ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*; Kress and van Leeuwen, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*.

alignments are systematic rather than incidental. Such structural regularity warrants conceptual formalization.

Drawing on the dataset of 50 billboards and the reinforcement mechanisms identified through co-occurrence mapping and clustering analysis, this study proposes a model of Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA). Although empirically grounded in the Sumbawa case, the model offers a transferable analytical framework for examining political billboard discourse across electoral contexts.

1. Conceptualizing Illocutionary Amplification

In classical speech act theory, illocutionary force refers to an utterance's intended functional act, such as commanding, promising, declaring, or expressing. However, the Sumbawa dataset demonstrates that in multimodal political advertising, illocutionary force rarely operates in isolation. Instead, it is visually scaffolded and ideologically stabilized.

Across the dataset, three reinforcement mechanisms consistently recur. First, visual semiotics amplify illocutionary force by intensifying its persuasive orientation. Religious coding strengthens directives by attaching moral legitimacy to commands, while nationalist imagery stabilizes commissives by grounding promises in narratives of collective continuity. Second, visual symbolism can mitigate perceived coerciveness, particularly in directive–religious configurations where moral imagery softens the authoritarian potential of imperative forms. Third, multimodal alignment legitimates speech acts by embedding them in institutional, nationalist, or moral frameworks that naturalize authority.

Through these mechanisms, a simple imperative such as "coblos nomor 1" becomes not merely an instruction but a morally aligned, socially normalized, and institutionally endorsed act. Multimodal layering therefore amplifies illocutionary force.

2. The Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA) Model

The MIA model conceptualizes persuasion as a layered process composed of five interconnected dimensions. At its core lies the illocutionary act, which provides the functional orientation of persuasion. This linguistic core is scaffolded by a dominant visual theme, such as religious identity, nationalist symbolism, or elite proximity, which supplies cultural resonance and legitimacy. These

semiotic resources are structured through visual grammar, including gaze, angle, salience, framing, and information value, which position the viewer relationally and cognitively.

Beyond compositional structuring, the alignment of speech act and visual theme performs ideological coding, through which authority is moralized, promises are nationalized, or legitimacy is transferred via association. At the final layer, these processes culminate in voter subject formation, positioning viewers as morally responsible citizens, patriotic participants, or institutionally aligned supporters. Figure 6 visually summarizes this layered reinforcement structure.

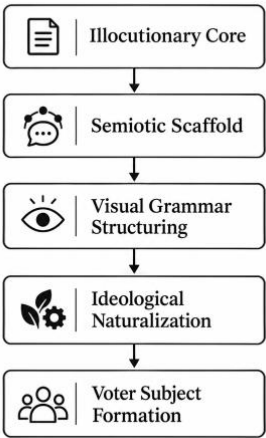


Figure 6. Multimedial Illocutionary Amplification (MIA) Model

3. Empirical Grounding in the Sumbawa Case

The Sumbawa billboards provide empirical grounding for each model dimension. In directive–religious configurations, imperative forms are amplified through moral semiotics and direct gaze, producing ethically framed mobilization. In commissive–nationalist alignments, future-oriented commitments are embedded within patriotic symbolism that stabilizes credibility through mythic narratives of national continuity. In declarative–elite configurations, institutional authority is visually transferred through proximity, reducing the need for discursive justification.

Across all clusters, multimodal alignment consistently transforms political instruction into culturally normalized practice.

Illocutionary force becomes persuasive not solely because of linguistic form but because it is embedded within semiotically resonant and ideologically stabilized environments. The Sumbawa case thus demonstrates the MIA model's operational validity.

4. Transferability and Theoretical Implications

Although derived from Indonesian legislative campaign billboards, the MIA model is not context-bound. Its underlying reinforcement logic is structurally transferable across political advertising environments characterized by spatial constraints, condensed messaging, and identity-based legitimacy. In other contexts, religious semiotics may be replaced by ethnic, racial, or civic identity markers; nationalist symbolism may shift toward populist imagery; elite proximity may take the form of celebrity endorsement. However, the amplification mechanism remains consistent: illocutionary force is visually scaffolded and ideologically naturalized.

The model contributes to political pragmatics by extending speech act theory beyond linguistic containment and showing that illocutionary force in political advertising is multimodally distributed. It advances multimodal discourse analysis by integrating visual grammar and semiotics into a functional explanation of persuasive intensification. It also enriches critical discourse studies by illustrating how authority is naturalized through layered semiotic orchestration rather than overt ideological argumentation.

Billboards thus operate as compressed ideological apparatuses that structure voter subjectivity through multimodal alignment. By modeling persuasion as multimodal illocutionary amplification, the Sumbawa case illustrates how electoral authority is simultaneously spoken, visualized, structured, and normalized. The following Discussion section situates these findings within broader debates on political legitimacy and multimodal governance in contemporary democracies.

Discussion

This study's findings reposition electoral billboards as multimodal sites where illocutionary force is not merely expressed but structurally intensified through semiotic orchestration. While previous scholarship has demonstrated that political advertising integrates

linguistic and visual resources⁴⁷, the present study advances this literature by modeling how specific illocutionary categories systematically align with distinct visual and ideological scaffolds. In doing so, it extends speech act theory beyond its traditional linguistic containment and situates it within a multimodal and ideological framework.

The predominance of directive speech acts in the Sumbawa dataset confirms earlier observations that campaign discourse is action-oriented.⁴⁸ However, this study demonstrates that directive force does not operate independently. Rather, it is consistently embedded within religious semiotics that frame moral expectations for electoral compliance. This pattern resonates with research showing that political authority is frequently legitimized through moral or identity-based coding.⁴⁹ However, it goes further by specifying the compositional mechanisms, gaze, salience, and framing through which such moralization becomes visually enacted. The directive is thus not simply mitigated by religious symbolism; it is transformed into ethically normalized action.

In Sumbawa, the visual dominance of religious and customary identity markers on political billboards reflects the region's deep-seated informal governance structures. As Wahyudi⁵⁰ demonstrates, political authority in Sumbawa operates at the intersection of formal state mechanisms and informal customary institutions like *Lembaga Adat Tana Samawa* (LATS), which normalize governance through the traditional ethos of *Taket ko Nene'*, *Kangila boat Lenge* (fear of God and shame of wrongdoing). Consequently, candidates deploying directive speech acts scaffolded by religious and traditional attire are

⁴⁷ Nadal et al., "Perception and Decision Making: A Multi-Technique Analysis of Campaign Posters in the 2019 Bogotá Mayoral Election"; Sharhan et al., "A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of 2018 Iraqi Parliamentary Electoral Posters."

⁴⁸ Haroon et al., "Lakukan Ilokusi Ucapan Zahid Hamidi Dalam PAU 2017 Dan 2018 (Illocutionary Acts in Zahid Hamidi's PAU 2017 and 2018 Speeches)"; Mulyono et al., "Speech Acts, Figures of Speech, and Their Functions in the 2024 Presidential & Vice-Presidential Debates."

⁴⁹ Chibuwe and Munoriyarwa, "'Repetition without Change?'; Samaras, 'Weaponising Religion in Greece Post Economic Crisis.'"

⁵⁰ Wahyudi, "Tracking the Role of Lembaga Adat Tana Samawa as an Informal Democratic Institution in the Local Political Arena in Sumbawa."

not merely adopting arbitrary marketing strategies; they are tapping into established local socio-cultural norms to construct moral legitimacy.⁵¹

This finding contributes to debates in political pragmatics by suggesting that illocutionary force in campaign communication is distributed across modes. Classical speech act theory conceptualizes directives and commissives as linguistically encoded functions⁵², but multimodal political environments complicate this containment. As scholars of multimodality have argued, meaning emerges from intersemiotic relations rather than from isolated textual structures.⁵³ The Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA) model proposed here formalizes this insight by demonstrating how visual grammar and ideological coding act as force multipliers for speech acts. In this sense, illocutionary force becomes relational rather than purely linguistic.

The commissive–nationalist cluster further illustrates how political promises acquire credibility through symbolic embedding. Prior studies have shown that nationalist imagery enhances persuasive appeal, yet they often fall short of connecting it to pragmatic force.⁵⁴ The present findings indicate that commissive utterances achieve stability when visually anchored in patriotic symbols that naturalize developmental discourse. This finding aligns with Oudenampsen's argument that neoliberal and nationalist narratives frequently operate as moral common sense rather than contested ideology.⁵⁵ By situating commissives within nationalist myth, candidates reduce epistemic uncertainty and frame future-oriented commitments as civic inevitabilities rather than political propositions.

The declarative–elite proximity cluster, meanwhile, reveals how authority circulates through visual association. Borrowed legitimacy

⁵¹ Fathurrijal, “Political Marketing Elit Lokal Dalam Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah di Nusa Tenggara Barat”; Wahyudi, “Tracking the Role of Lembaga Adat Tana Samawa as an Informal Democratic Institution in the Local Political Arena in Sumbawa.”

⁵² Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*.

⁵³ Jewitt, *Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*; Machin, “What Is Multimodal Critical Discourse Studies?”

⁵⁴ Hsuan-Yi Chou and Tzu-Ying Lu, “The Effects of Political Advertising Aesthetics on Voter Perceptions, Attitudes, and Voting Intentions toward Candidates,” *Journal of Management and Business Research* 39, no. 2 (2022): 203–34, [https://doi.org/10.6504/JMBR.202206_39\(2\).0004](https://doi.org/10.6504/JMBR.202206_39(2).0004); Pavlina, “Тексты Предвыборной Визуальной Рекламы: Игровой Аспект Политической Коммуникации.”

⁵⁵ Oudenampsen, “Neoliberal Sermons.”

through co-presence reflects broader patterns of symbolic capital transfer in political communication.⁵⁶ However, this study adds a structural account of how compositional features, weak framing, shared salience, and left–right sequencing materialize this transfer visually. Authority is not discursively justified but spatially arranged. This observation supports critical discourse arguments that ideology often operates through normalization rather than argumentation.⁵⁷ The billboard becomes a condensed ideological apparatus where legitimacy is visually assumed rather than rhetorically defended.

Furthermore, the expressive–moral persona cluster (exemplified in Figure 4) illustrates a distinct amplification mechanism: affective mobilization through symbolic advocacy. Unlike directives that command voter compliance or commissives that offer program promises, expressive speech acts construct candidate standing through emotional conviction and moral posture. Visual markers such as direct eye contact, dynamic upward vectors, and raised fists position the candidate as a courageous advocate engaged in popular struggle. In this configuration, illocutionary force rests not on institutional status or formal platform commitments, but on perceived authenticity and moral solidarity with the electorate.

More broadly, the findings engage ongoing discussions about multimodal populism and identity politics. In Southeast Asia, symbolic practices shape political space by merging populist imagery, religious identity, and institutional narratives.⁵⁸ The Sumbawa case demonstrates how these dynamics materialize in localized electoral contexts, where religious markers and nationalist colors function as culturally resonant resources for voter subject formation. Importantly, this process does not require overt populist rhetoric; it operates through subtle multimodal reinforcement. As Wodak⁵⁹ has shown in her analysis of right-wing populist discourse that normalization often precedes symbolic hegemony. The billboard medium, with its compressed spatial

⁵⁶ Pettersson and Martikainen, “Analysing Subject Positions in Multimodal Populist Communication.”

⁵⁷ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*.

⁵⁸ Hansson and Weiss, “The Contested Domain of Political Space in Southeast Asia”; Rakhmani and Saraswati, “Authoritarian Populism in Indonesia.”

⁵⁹ Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446270073>.

constraints, is particularly suited to normalizing political authority, even without acute ideological polarization.

To rigorously test the MIA model against falsifiability, we must examine instances of pragmatic failure, cross-modal friction, and voter resistance. Multimodal illocutionary amplification is not a guaranteed mechanism of persuasion; instead, over-saturated directive text combined with hyper-religious symbolism can trigger pragmatic failure or voter cynicism at the grassroots level.⁶⁰ When candidates deploy overly aggressive directives (e.g., explicit voting commands) alongside hyper-inflated religious or patriotic claims, voters may reinterpret the intended moralization of compliance as manipulative patron-client posturing. In localized electoral environments like Sumbawa, where voters maintain informal social vigilance, visual signs that appear overly ostentatious or incongruent with a candidate's actual community record often elicit public skepticism or physical defacement of billboards.⁶¹ Such pragmatic breakdowns demonstrate the boundary conditions of the MIA model: amplification succeeds only when the semiotic scaffold aligns authentically with existing socio-cultural expectations.

The MIA model also contributes to multimodal discourse studies by offering a layered analytical architecture that integrates speech act theory, visual grammar, and CDA. While previous multimodal political research has documented intersemiotic cohesion⁶² and subject positioning,⁶³ few studies have articulated a systematic reinforcement model linking illocutionary categories to ideological naturalization. By conceptualizing amplification, mitigation, and legitimation as recurrent mechanisms, this study provides a transferable template for examining political billboards in other cultural contexts.

Importantly, the model does not claim universal uniformity. Rather, it identifies structural tendencies that may manifest differently across socio-cultural contexts. In contexts where religion is less salient, amplification may rely on ethnic, racial, or civic identity markers. In highly mediatized environments, elite proximity may involve celebrity

⁶⁰ Nurhidayati et al., "Perilaku Pemilih Dalam Menentukan Pilihan Pada Pemilihan Umum Kepala Daerah Kabupaten Sumbawa Tahun 2024."

⁶¹ Utomo, "'Muda Dan Rakyat.'"

⁶² Schubert, "Multimodal Cohesion in Persuasive Discourse."

⁶³ Pettersson and Martikainen, "Analysing Subject Positions in Multimodal Populist Communication."

endorsement rather than party leadership. Nevertheless, the underlying mechanism, embedding illocutionary force within legitimizing semiotic scaffolds, remains consistent. This finding aligns with broader scholarship suggesting that political communication increasingly operates through affective and visual regimes.⁶⁴

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of cross-modal mapping and abductive model construction in discourse research. Rather than isolating linguistic or visual elements, the relational matrix approach reveals systemic clustering patterns. Such pattern modeling responds to calls for more theoretically integrative multimodal methodologies.⁶⁵ By grounding abstraction in empirical clustering, the study avoids purely speculative theorization while still advancing conceptual innovation.

The Sumbawa case also invites reflection on democratic practice. If campaign billboards function as condensed ideological apparatuses, then public space becomes a site of normalized persuasion rather than deliberative debate. Directive dominance suggests a mobilization logic prioritizing behavioral activation over policy explanation. When reinforced through moral and nationalist coding, such mobilization may limit discursive contestation. This tendency does not imply manipulation *per se*, but it highlights how multimodal structuring shapes the horizon of political imagination.

At the same time, the study acknowledges limitations. Geographically, the focus on Sumbawa Regency naturally privileges traditional, religio-cultural, and elite-patronage identity markers over the highly policy-driven or celebrity-centered communication strategies often found in metropolitan urban hubs such as Jakarta. Methodologically, categorizing billboards by their dominant visual theme necessarily simplifies complex visual artifacts; highly hybrid billboards containing overlapping religious attire, party flags, and elite endorsements simultaneously may house competing amplification mechanisms that warrant multi-layered coding in future research. Future research could compare rural and metropolitan billboard

⁶⁴ Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism : Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford University Press, 2016); John Street, "Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation," *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 6, no. 4 (2004): 435–52, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2004.00149.x>.

⁶⁵ O'Halloran, and Smith, *Multimodal Studies*.

strategies, incorporate audience reception studies, or extend the MIA model to digital campaign platforms. Integrating eye-tracking or experimental perception studies⁶⁶ may further empirically validate amplification mechanisms.

Despite these limitations, the findings substantively advance three scholarly conversations: political pragmatics, multimodal discourse analysis, and critical discourse studies. By demonstrating that illocutionary force is visually scaffolded and ideologically stabilized, the study reframes campaign billboards as multimodal authority performances. The MIA model provides a structured explanation for how speech acts become amplified through semiotic alignment and how voter subjectivity is shaped through layered positioning.

In contemporary democracies where visual saturation and identity politics increasingly define electoral competition, understanding the mechanisms of multimodal reinforcement is not merely descriptive but analytically urgent. The Sumbawa case illustrates that even in localized contexts, political persuasion operates through structured multimodal orchestration. Authority is spoken, shown, arranged, and normalized simultaneously. Recognizing this layered process is essential for advancing discourse studies of political communication in both emerging and established democracies.

Conclusion

This study offers a philosophical synthesis regarding how the visual commodification of religious identity and nationalist symbolism impacts local democratic quality. In localized Indonesian electoral arenas such as Sumbawa, the systemic dominance of directive speech acts, scaffolded by religious attire, sacred phrases, and patriotic imagery, signals a shift from deliberative democracy toward paternalistic mobilization. When political communication in public space relies primarily on moralized instructions (*coblos nomor...*) rather than programmatic argumentation, electoral choices are reframed as tests of moral obedience and cultural loyalty rather than critical evaluations of policy platforms.

This visual commodification of sacred and patriotic symbols carries profound implications for democracy at the periphery. By

⁶⁶ Nadal et al., "Perception and Decision Making: A Multi-Technique Analysis of Campaign Posters in the 2019 Bogotá Mayoral Election."

visually wrapping candidates in the traditional moral ethos of *Taket ko Nene'*, *Kangila boat Lenge*, campaign billboards transform contingent political ambitions into naturalized, unquestionable authority. The Multimodal Illocutionary Amplification (MIA) framework demonstrates that authority in local elections is rarely discursively debated; instead, it is visually performed, compositionally structured, and ideologically normalized. This reliance on symbolic shortcuts threatens to reduce public space to an arena of paternalistic instruction, where voters are invited into passive, morally compliant subject roles rather than active, deliberative citizenship.

Ultimately, this study demonstrates that political billboards are not peripheral advertising artifacts, but condensed ideological apparatuses that systematically shape the boundaries of political imagination. While the MIA model provides a robust analytical tool for mapping how illocutionary force is visually scaffolded and naturalized, its findings issue a critical warning for emerging democracies: when electoral persuasion is dominated by amplified directives and commodified identity markers, the transformative potential of local democracy is subtly constrained, replacing open policy deliberation with the quiet normalization of symbolic power.

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