

Rebranding Gerindra: Strategies of Political Discourse and Millennial Engagement on Twitter

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Abstract: Twitter has emerged as a key platform for political parties to campaign and communicate their agendas. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative approach to examine how the Gerindra Party rebranded itself on Twitter. Utilizing Roger Fowler's discourse analysis theory, the study examines the changes in linguistic style, particularly in lexical and grammatical aspects, employed by the Gerindra Party. The findings reveal a strategic shift from a formal and rigid language style to a more relaxed and engaging tone. This transformation is evident in the way the party communicates political information about Prabowo Subianto, aiming to connect more effectively with the millennial generation. The study analyzes tweets from the @Gerindra account, demonstrating that this shift in language style is a deliberate rebranding effort. The findings suggest that the adoption of a casual and approachable discourse has become a key element of Gerindra's strategy to enhance its political appeal and engagement on social media.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis Theory, Gerindra Party, Millennial Generation, Rebranding, Social Media.

1. Introduction

The rapid advancements in the technology sector have significantly facilitated various aspects of societal life. One notable technological product is the emergence of new media in the form of internet-based information technology [1]. Initially, new media was limited to read-only websites, but it has now evolved into user-generated content platforms, allowing internet users to become content creators [2]. This development has transformed traditional direct communication (face-to-face) into digital communication. Currently, digital communication is primarily conducted through social media.

Social media is a group of internet-based applications built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content [3]. Today, a wide variety of social media platforms exist for different purposes, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, KakaoTalk, TikTok, and others. As the name suggests, social media primarily functions as a medium for social networking and virtual communication [4], [5]. The rapid growth of social media has expanded and complicated its role in contemporary life. It has become a platform for interaction and content sharing across various domains, including social life, education, economy, entertainment, culture, religion, and even politics.

The evolution of social media has strengthened its connection with politics, as its features can be leveraged for political purposes by individuals and groups [6]. Social media allows for the rapid and structured dissemination of information, policies, political campaigns, and critiques. In Indonesia, political phenomena have embraced social media for virtual campaigning, where political content is uploaded and accessible to the public. Political figures and parties have actively created social media accounts to garner public attention, with Twitter being one of the most popular platforms for political activities.

Twitter, a microblogging social media platform, has been an effective promotional tool for various domains, including business, music, arts, and culture, since its inception. For instance, Twitter influences public perceptions of certain films [7]. The active engagement of Twitter users facilitates rapid information dissemination, as seen in the study "The Phenomenon of the Caption 'Twitter Please Do Your Magic' in Mobilizing Netizens to Help" [8].

The use of Twitter for political purposes gained momentum in 2012 during the political rivalry between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, and peaked again during the political battles involving Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, and Joe Biden. In Indonesia, the Gerindra Party is one of the major political parties that have recognized the importance of social media, particularly Twitter, in engaging with the electorate. Founded in 2008 by Prabowo Subianto, Gerindra quickly established itself as a significant force in Indonesian politics [9]. In the 2009 legislative elections, the party garnered 4.5% of the vote, which increased to 11.8% in 2014, making it the third-largest party in the legislature. Prabowo Subianto's presidential candidacies in 2014 and 2019 further solidified Gerindra's prominence on the national stage.

The Gerindra Party has been a prominent political entity on Twitter for several years, joining the platform in 2011 and navigating through Prabowo Subianto's presidential candidacies in 2014 and 2019. The party's popularity on Twitter is evident through its political communication style. Before 2019 and 2020, the @Gerindra Twitter account maintained a formal image, primarily posting political agendas without interacting with followers. This formal image shifted post-2019 elections and during the 2020 pandemic when

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@Gerindra responded to humorous tweets involving Prabowo Subianto. This marked the beginning of a rebranding strategy through a change in political messaging style.

Given this background, this study aims to explore the political rebranding of the Gerindra Party on the Twitter platform to gain support from the millennial generation. The theoretical framework employed in this study is Roger Fowler's Discourse Analysis Theory, utilizing his concept of "analytic tools" as described in his book *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (1991) [10], [11]. This framework includes lexical analysis (related to diction) and grammatical analysis (related to the style of message delivery), focusing on how these aspects uncover ideological practices or meanings produced through language [12].

Numerous studies have explored the use of social media for political communication in Indonesia [13]–[16]. These studies have examined various aspects of how political entities leverage social media platforms to engage with the public, disseminate information, and influence voter behavior. However, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the specific strategies employed by political parties to rebrand themselves and connect with the millennial generation through these platforms. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the Gerindra Party's use of Twitter for political rebranding. By focusing on the linguistic and stylistic changes in the party's communication approach, this research highlights the innovative methods used to resonate with younger voters, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of contemporary political communication strategies in the digital age.

2. Materials and Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on providing a detailed description and explanation of the phenomenon under investigation [17]. Specifically, a descriptive qualitative method is utilized, with the analysis based on Roger Fowler's discourse analysis theory [10], [11], [18]. The subject of this research is the official Twitter account of the Gerindra Party, @Gerindra. The study concentrates on tweets posted by @Gerindra in May 2023, particularly those related to the Prabowo Subianto presidential election issue.

Data collection involved systematic observation and documentation of relevant tweets. The analysis process comprised several steps: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. This structured approach ensures a comprehensive examination of the lexical and grammatical aspects, highlighting the strategic rebranding efforts of the Gerindra Party on Twitter.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on observations and data collection, 20 tweets related to the Prabowo Subianto presidential election issue were identified in May 2023. These tweets were analyzed using Roger Fowler's Discourse Analysis Theory, focusing on specific aspects of vocabulary and grammar. The vocabulary analysis included classification vocabulary, limiting

perspective vocabulary, discourse contest vocabulary, and marginalization vocabulary. The grammatical analysis involved examining the use of passive sentences and nominalization. This comprehensive analysis provides insights into the linguistic strategies employed by the Gerindra Party in their rebranding efforts on Twitter.

A. Lexical Analysis: Classification Vocabulary

Classification vocabulary is designed to shape a particular perception. As widely known, Prabowo Subianto has run for the presidency of Indonesia three times, since 2009, with different vice-presidential candidates in each period. These defeats have led some Indonesians, particularly Twitter users, to believe that Prabowo Subianto should step down.

"*Iya, makasih sarannya, tapi gak dulu.*" ("Thank you for the suggestion, but not yet").

The tweet above was posted by @Gerindra in response to a user who commented: "*bersukur di kasi masukan ituh wowo wktunya istirahat.*" ("Be grateful for the advice, Wowo, it's time to rest"). This user's tweet was a reaction to a main tweet from @Gerindra: "*Terima kasih hari ini kamu sudah sangat peduli dengan Gerindra, tapi sayang...*" ("Thank you for your concern for Gerindra today, but unfortunately..."). The main tweet was in response to a statement by Denny Siregar: "*Kenapa @Gerindra gak bisa jualan kader2 partainya sendiri? Karena andalannya cuman Prabowo. Prabowo udah sepuh, udah 72 tahun. Kalo Pilpres 2024 doi gak jadi Presiden dan pensiun, suara Gerindra anjlok krn jagoannya hilang. Beda ma @PDI_Perjuangan yg lineupnya kuat.*" ("Why can't @Gerindra promote its own party cadres? Because its mainstay is only Prabowo. Prabowo is already old, 72 years. If he doesn't become president in the 2024 election and retires, Gerindra's support will plummet because its champion is gone. Unlike @PDI_Perjuangan, which has a strong lineup").

Denny Siregar is an author who regularly shares his views on Indonesia's political situation, often including sarcastic remarks about political figures and their parties. In this context, Denny Siregar was criticizing Prabowo Subianto's candidacy for the 2024 presidential election. The Gerindra Party responded to Denny Siregar's tweet with the phrase "*Tapi, gak dulu*" ("But not yet").

The term '*gak*' is a colloquial, non-standard abbreviation of '*enggak*,' which means 'no' according to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI). '*Dulu*' is an informal term for '*dahulu*,' meaning 'before' or 'previously.' Combined, '*gak dulu*' is modern slang for a rejection, indicating a firm response that rejects Denny Siregar's opinion, asserting that Prabowo Subianto will continue his candidacy.

B. Lexical Analysis: Limiting Perspective Vocabulary

Limiting perspective vocabulary refers to the choice of words aimed at conveying a specific understanding to the audience, thereby emphasizing the credibility of certain information over others.

"*Siap, ditampung sarannya*" ("Understood, we will consider the suggestion").

The above data is a primary tweet from @Gerindra in

response to a user's single tweet: “*Prabowo-erick min. kalo gak, Prabowo-RK*” (Prabowo-Erick min. if not, Prabowo-RK”). The term ‘*siap*’ (understood) indicates agreement with the user’s opinion regarding the suggested Prabowo-Erick or Prabowo-RK pairing. The agreement also emphasizes the mention of Prabowo Subianto’s name always at the forefront, indicating his role as the presidential candidate. The use of the word ‘*saran*’ (suggestion), which according to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) means opinion, proposal, or aspiration to be considered, shows that @Gerindra regards the user’s tweet as a suggestion to be taken into account. This establishes a perspective that Prabowo Subianto will indeed run for president in 2024.

C. Lexical Analysis: Discourse Contest Vocabulary

According to Roger Fowler, discourse contest vocabulary is used as a form of defense to ensure the audience does not need to trust alternative sources of information.

“*Pelayanan publik biasanya diserahkan kpd pejabat seperti Lurah, Camat, Walikota, Bupati, atau Gubernur. Presiden kelasnya nasional, yg mengkoordinir semua jabatan tsb & memasukan pelayanan public agar berjalan dgn baik. Bagaimana dengan dunia internasional?*” (“Public services are typically handled by officials such as Lurah, Camat, Mayors, Regents, or Governors. The President’s scope is national, coordinating all these positions and integrating public services to function well. What about the international arena?”).

The above tweet was posted by @Gerindra in response to a user's tweet asking: “*Coba sebutkan prestasi dan karya Prabowo dibidang pelayanan publik.*” (“Name Prabowo's achievements and contributions in public service”). In defending Prabowo Subianto’s record, the @Gerindra Twitter account uses two terms with different levels of meaning, ‘*nasional*’ (national) and ‘*internasional*’ (international). These terms are employed to explain that Prabowo Subianto manages state affairs on an international level. The use of this vocabulary emphasizes the discourse surrounding Prabowo's strengths and achievements

D. Lexical Analysis: Marginalization Vocabulary

Roger Fowler posits that in the context of language, the choice of words or sentences carries specific ideologies or meanings. This implies that the use of phrases, diction, and vocabulary is not merely a linguistic technicality but also conveys particular connotations.

“*Nanya mulu, kayak warga baru. Padahal bisa googling.*” (“Always asking, like a newcomer. You can just Google it”).

The tweet above responds to Denny Siregar's tweet: “*Gua sih lebih setuju kalo @fadlizon jadi capres @Gerindra. Dia muda, kuat, ganteng, berwibawa dan juga kader yg udah sangat lama. Yang anehnya, kenapa kok cuman Fadli zon aja yg gua ingat di Gerindra. Kader lain pada kemana?*” (“I would prefer if @fadlizon became @Gerindra's presidential candidate. He is young, strong, handsome, authoritative, and a long-time cadre. Strangely, why is Fadli Zon the only one I remember from Gerindra? Where are the other cadres?”). In the context of marginalization vocabulary, the @Gerindra Twitter account uses this to address negative opinions from netizens. Instead of

responding negatively, @Gerindra employs the word ‘googling,’ implying searching on Google. The term ‘googling’ serves as an implied directive, suggesting that Denny Siregar should not ask too many questions and instead look up the information himself. The use of ‘googling’ in this context carries a sarcastic tone, employed by Gerindra to counter Denny Siregar’s comments.

E. Grammatical Analysis: Passive Sentence Grammar

Roger Fowler emphasizes passive sentences as a grammatical technique to omit the agent performing the action. In @Gerindra's Twitter posts, passive constructions are often used to convey meaning within the discussed context.

“*Pelayanan publik biasanya diserahkan kpd pejabat seperti Lurah, Camat, Walikota, Bupati, atau Gubernur. Presiden kelasnya nasional, yg mengkoordinir semua jabatan tsb & memasukan pelayanan public agar berjalan dgn baik. Bagaimana dengan dunia internasional?*” (“Public services are usually delegated to officials such as Lurah, Camat, Mayors, Regents, or Governors. The President’s role is national, coordinating all these positions and ensuring public services function well. What about the international arena?”).

The term ‘*diserahkan*’ (delegated) explains the tasks carried out by the government, both nationally and internationally, as exemplified by Prabowo Subianto. Without explicitly mentioning Prabowo Subianto, the Gerindra Party can imply his involvement by referencing national and international duties. Thus, the sentence focuses solely on the action, omitting the mention of the actor.

F. Grammatical Analysis: Nominalization Grammar

Nominalization is typically used to obscure or protect the agent performing an action, employing sentences that convey a softer meaning than the actual context.

In the tweet above, the phrase ‘*Bagaimana dengan dunia internasional*’ (“what about the international arena?”) omits the agent. This implies that Prabowo Subianto is responsible for international affairs without explicitly naming him. The Gerindra Party rarely employs nominalization grammar as it seldom discusses criminal contexts requiring the removal of the agent. Instead, in the tweet above, nominalization is used positively to highlight Prabowo Subianto’s responsibilities.

4. Conclusion

Based on the tweets analyzed, the @Gerindra account consistently responds to netizens on both political and non-political topics using specific diction and grammatical choices to support, clarify, and provide information about Prabowo Subianto. The chosen diction and grammatical style create a relaxed and contemporary tone, often incorporating colloquial expressions. This approach represents a positioning strategy through the use of modern and trendy language, aligning political messages with current trends, employing hashtags for statement positioning, and utilizing images and captions effectively. This positioning strategy is an integral part of Gerindra Party's political rebranding efforts on the Twitter platform.

This study focuses solely on Twitter content from May 2023. Future research is encouraged to examine the responses from Gerindra Party's target audience, collect data over a longer period, and explore the topic of statement positioning in greater depth.

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