DIGITAL POLITICS OF PRABOWO: POLITICAL POWER REPRESENTATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ON INSTAGRAM

Rachmat Efendi,[1] Suhartono,[2] Murni Fidiyanti,[3] Samsul Arifin[4]

[1,2.] Universitas Negeri Surabaya, [3.]UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya [4.]Universitas PGRI Madiun

rachmatefendi@unesa.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study explores how President Prabowo Subianto's official Instagram account is utilized as a strategic tool in digital politics and political communication. By applying a cyber sociopragmatic approach, which integrates sociopragmatic theory (Haugh, Kádár, & Terkouraf) with concepts of digital politics, this research investigates how language, imagery, and symbols are carefully crafted to communicate political authority, represent national identity, and engage with the public. Employing qualitative methods such as observation and document analysis, the study examines how Instagram posts contribute to shaping political narratives and diplomatic discourse, focusing on the symbolic use of protocol, international cooperation, and Indonesia's foreign relations. The analysis, guided by the social, interactional, and normative dimensions of sociopragmatics, highlights how textual and visual elements work together to convey subtle messages of political power, shape diplomatic relations, and influence public perception. The findings indicate that Instagram is not merely a platform for information sharing, but a political space for constructing political identity, enhancing public engagement, and projecting Indonesia's presence on the global stage. This research contributes to theoretical development by linking cyber sociopragmatics with digital politics, shedding light on how sociocultural norms and contextual reasoning inform online political communication. Practically, it offers insights into how social media can be strategically leveraged by political leaders to facilitate communication, strengthen domestic and international ties, and navigate the complex landscape of digital political discourse.

Keywords: Cyber Sociopragmatic, Digital Politics, Political Communication, Instagram Captions, National Identity

INTRODUCTION

Political communication today is increasingly mediated through digital platforms, where language and symbolic representation serve as key resources for shaping power and public perception. In contemporary political contexts, communication extends far beyond traditional official statements and speeches; it is increasingly conducted through the strategic use of digital platforms such as Instagram. This shift has transformed digital politics into an essential arena for political leaders to present authority, manage international relations, and engage with both domestic and global audiences. Digital politics refers to how digital technologies reshape political practices by enabling new forms of communication, public engagement, and information management, while also presenting new challenges for foreign policy and international relations (Hayden, 2018). Digital platforms facilitate continuous interaction with diverse publics beyond conven-

tional political channels (Manor, 2016) and serve as crucial tools for public diplomacy, where social media plays a central role in strengthening political relations through greater interaction and transparency (Rashica, 2018). To understand how political messages function on social media, it is crucial to examine not only the content itself but also the context in which meaning is created in digital environments.

This study utilizes a cyber sociopragmatic approach to explore how language and visual elements on social media are employed by political leaders to communicate political and diplomatic messages. The evolution of technology has created both new opportunities and challenges for diplomats and political leaders, allowing for expanded public engagement, enhancing global commerce, and introducing new dynamics in digital warfare through online platforms (Hayden, 2018). By carefully selecting words and images, political actors can convey authority, cooperation, respect, or restraint, thereby shaping how diplomatic messages are interpreted and perceived by online audiences.

Although sociopragmatic methods have been widely discussed in the context of political discourse, there has been limited research on how these methods are applied in the digital sphere to negotiate power, solidarity, and national identity. Much of the existing literature on political discourse in social media has focused on branding, hate speech, or civility, rather than the sociopragmatic tactics employed by political figures on platforms like Instagram. Social media platforms have become venues for identity performance, cultural negotiation, and real-time political engagement in the current Web 2.0 environment (Drus & Khalid, 2019). This gap is especially relevant in countries like Indonesia, where Instagram plays a pivotal role in state communication and public diplomacy. Instagram has emerged as a critical platform for political leaders to express collective identities and pursue political goals (Ghenai et al., 2025; van der Meij & Declercq, 2025). With carefully selected images and concise textual messages, Instagram enables strategic self-presentation and plays an increasing role in creating public narratives and encouraging audience engagement (Naeem et al., 2025). Instagram has become the most popular platform in Indonesia, essential for state-sponsored initiatives that promote civic identity, religious moderation, and patriotism (Hadiyanto et al., 2025). Like many leaders in the digital era, President Prabowo Subianto has increasingly turned to this platform to communicate directly with his people, convey official political narratives, and project a sense of proximity with the populace.

While political figures are increasingly using Instagram for branding and public communication, little research has examined how sociopragmatic tactics in textual and visual content are employed to foster public engagement and political identity. Prior studies on Indonesian political discourse have analyzed political branding, rudeness, and hate speech on Instagram and Twitter (Bastoni, 2024; Prakoso Aji, 2024; Rinna A. Putri et al., 2023; Try et al., 2023), but they largely overlook the cyber sociopragmatic mechanisms through which posts incorporate images, captions, hashtags, and symbolic cues to evoke responses aligned with ideals such as hospitality, authority, and national pride.

This study makes two main contributions. First, it advances the use of cyber sociopragmatics by applying it to the analysis of digital politics, demonstrating how meaning, context, and interaction operate in political communication on social media. Second, it provides empirical insights into digital politics and public engagement by examining how Instagram posts from the President of Indonesia function as a platform for political representation and communication.

Accordingly, this study explores how cyber sociopragmatics can elucidate the role of Instagram as a tool of digital politics in Indonesia's political communication. Positioned within the fields of political communication and digital politics, this study treats social media as a political space where leadership, power, and national representation are publicly performed. Through qualitative analysis, it examines how President Prabowo Subianto uses language, images, and symbols on Instagram to construct political meaning, represent national identity, and engage audiences within a digital political context. It argues that these posts are strategically shaped in accordance with sociocultural norms to strengthen political representation and foster audience engagement. This study contributes to a clearer understanding of how political meaning is produced in digital politics, particularly in emerging democracies such as Indonesia, and offers insights into the strategic use of social media for public diplomacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is based on cyber sociopragmatics and digital politics, both of which are crucial for understanding how political messages are constructed and conveyed through digital platforms. Cyber sociopragmatics is applied to understand how meaning is created through language and images on social media, while digital politics helps explain how these messages operate within the broader context of political communication and diplomacy in the digital space.

Digital Politics

Digital politics has evolved with the advancement of technology, especially with the rise of the internet and social media since the 1990s. These digital platforms have fundamentally transformed how political communication is carried out. Digital politics has gained prominence through significant global events, such as the Arab Spring, and the development of Public Diplomacy 2.0, which highlights the increasing importance of digital platforms in international political communication (Rashica, 2018). Technology now functions not just as a tool, but as a defining environment that shapes how states imagine, formulate, and implement foreign policy strategies (Hayden, 2018).

Digital politics serves multiple strategic goals, including information management, public and consular communication, crisis response, and policy support. These strategies aim to advance national interests, maintain engagement with diverse publics, and enhance communication, especially during crises (Rashica, 2018). Digital platforms play a critical role in nation branding, allowing states to shape their international image in an era of rapid and fragmented information exchange (Manor, 2016). Governments can

now directly communicate their policy positions, national issues, and strategic narratives, allowing them to compete more effectively in the global media environment.

However, digital politics also reshapes traditional public diplomacy, integrating technology into everyday political practice, while raising significant political concerns. Issues such as unequal access to digital tools create power imbalances, where some states are better equipped to shape and control narratives, making critical perspectives on digital diplomacy essential (Hayden, 2018). Moreover, digital politics intersects with traditional diplomacy in broader governance processes, particularly in shaping global internet governance through interactions involving state, civic, and commercial actors (Hayden, 2018). Despite the opportunities, digital politics faces challenges, including public scrutiny, potential backlash, high resource demands for maintaining active online engagement, and problems like the use of bots and algorithm-driven echo chambers that limit outreach and distort communication (Manor, 2016). Overall, this framework explains how digital politics operates through social media as a powerful tool for political communication, while providing a lens to understand how issues of power, representation, and public engagement emerge in contemporary diplomatic practices.

Cyber Sociopragmatics

Sociopragmatics, a branch of linguistics, examines how speakers convey meanings that go beyond the literal content of their utterances. It emphasizes how context—both real and potential—shapes meaning, in contrast to traditional linguistic methods, which prioritize formal structure (Rahardi & Firdaus, 2023). By analyzing how language is used to accomplish communication goals and how listeners deduce meaning from context, sociopragmatics positions language as a flexible, context-sensitive resource.

Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) introduced the distinction between sociopragmatics, which refers to the socially acceptable use of language based on cultural, environmental, and interpersonal circumstances, and pragmalinguistics, which focuses on the linguistic forms used to convey meaning (Leech, 1983). Sociopragmatics studies how variables like power, solidarity, social distance, and face influence the interpretation of utterances and determine communicative appropriateness. Effective communication requires both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence (Eslami et al., 2022).
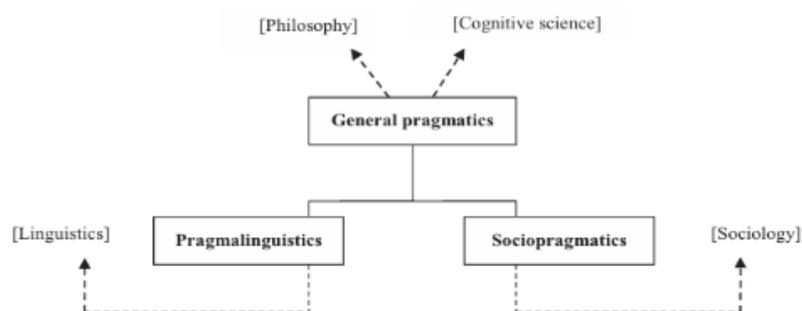

Figure 1 Leech's General pragmatics, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics composed by Haugh, Kádár, and Terkouraf

The three key dimensions of sociopragmatics—the social (roles, relationships, hierarchies), the normative (cultural expectations, shared communicative rules), and the interactional (real-time negotiation of meaning)—are central to understanding how digital platforms shape communication. These dimensions reveal how language is embedded in broader social structures, influencing how meaning is negotiated and understood in digital spaces (Haugh, Kádár, & Terkouraf, 2021). Sociopragmatic meaning-making involves contextual reasoning and social cue sensitivity, which are particularly important in digital communication (Abdullah, 2022; Wijana, 2010).
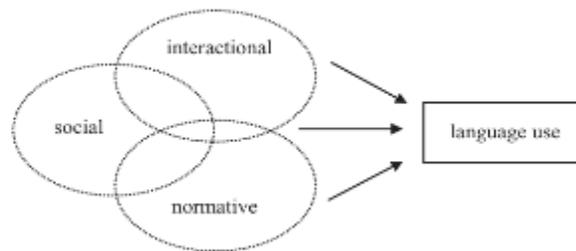

Figure 2 Meaning in sociopragmatics by Haugh, Kádár, and Terkouraf

As communication shifts to digital platforms, cyber sociopragmatics has emerged as a field that combines the study of computer-mediated discourse with sociopragmatic theory. This approach considers how social meaning is created in digital spaces, including identity formation, storytelling, and public interaction (Fusillo & Lino, 2024; Koskimaa, 2007). Digital narratives, or cybertexts, are characterized by hypertextuality, interaction, and user agency, blurring the lines between author and audience.

Despite growing interest in cyber pragmatics, which focuses on speaker intentions and discursive strategies in digital contexts (Rahardi et al., 2025), previous research has largely concentrated on functional elements like hate speech, comedy, and civility. The construction, negotiation, and interpretation of sociopragmatic meaning in digital contexts—especially in multimodal platforms that combine text, visuals, and interactivity—remain underexplored in political discourse (Fusillo & Lino, 2024).

This gap is significant because cyber sociopragmatics examines not only how language functions but also how identities are performed, social roles are enacted, and values are projected through language and semiotic decisions in the digital age. It requires attention to factors such as audience perception, political authority, cultural norms, and platform-specific conventions, all of which shape how messages are constructed and understood online. Despite the growing importance of this field, sustained theoretical development and applied research in digital politics and public diplomacy remain limited, especially in political discourse.

Overall, the cyber sociopragmatics framework allows us to connect language use with broader social and political contexts, highlighting how digital platforms function as spaces for negotiating identity, values, and diplomatic meanings. This approach is crucial

for understanding how political messages are constructed, represented, and perceived in digital political communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design to allow for an in-depth interpretation of the complex meanings embedded in the textual and visual elements of Instagram posts, particularly those used in political communication. Qualitative research is particularly suited for exploring the nuanced and context-dependent meanings of political messages in digital platforms. The primary goal is to analyze the representations of political power and public engagement in social media, specifically focusing on Instagram posts. By examining occurrences within a specific context and timeframe, this research aims to generate new insights into the role of social media in political discourse without attempting to generalize findings or predict future political trends (Taherdoost, 2022).

The cyber sociopragmatics approach, which integrates sociopragmatic theory with the dynamics of digital communication, guides the interpretation of how political messages are crafted and disseminated through social media. This approach emphasizes the role of language, imagery, and symbols in shaping digital politics and facilitating public engagement. Specifically, it explores how Instagram posts by political figures, like President Prabowo Subianto, serve as strategic tools for political communication and public diplomacy.

This study analyzes five Instagram posts from Prabowo Subianto's official account, each selected for their consistent tone and visual elements. The posts primarily focus on welcoming foreign dignitaries, thereby framing political and diplomatic interactions on social media. To gather data, this study employs two qualitative techniques: observation and document analysis. These methods allow for a comprehensive understanding of both the visual and textual components of the posts and their contextual implications in the realm of political communication.

The observation technique involves systematically examining and evaluating Instagram images where President Prabowo Subianto extends a warm welcome to international guests. The posts were chosen based on their thematic focus on political meetings, which is a key aspect of digital diplomacy. The research identifies formal political terminology and analyzes the images to understand the symbolic messages being conveyed. The document analysis method was used to analyze the content of the posts, including the written text, images, and symbolic elements. The posts were specifically selected based on their relevance to the theme of political engagement and diplomatic communication, particularly those in which the President interacts with foreign leaders. These posts are then analyzed in their broader political context, considering external factors such as the political climate, cultural norms, and diplomatic procedures that influence the choice of language, images, and themes. This approach helps contextualize the political messages within the larger discourse of international relations and political leadership.

Both observation and document analysis provide rich insights into the phenomena being studied. Observation allows for capturing real-time interactions on social media, while document analysis offers a deeper understanding of the visual and textual content of the posts and their strategic use in political representation and public diplomacy (Muzari et al., 2022).

Given the limited number of posts analyzed—five Instagram updates with a specific theme—the findings may not fully represent President Prabowo Subianto's entire online communication strategy. The study's scope is further restricted by focusing on a particular type of political message conveyed through diplomatic interactions. However, the posts were selected based on consistent and explicit thematic criteria, and the observations were systematically documented. Additionally, interpretations were cross-checked with existing research on political discourse, digital communication, and sociopragmatics, helping mitigate bias and ensuring the results are both reliable and contextually grounded. Despite the interpretive nature of the study, these methods provide valuable insights into the role of social media in shaping political identity and public engagement in the digital age.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Mapping Political Representation in the Cyber Context

The widespread use of the internet, social media, mobile apps, and other digital technologies has become integral to everyday life for billions globally (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Social media, in particular, has provided new opportunities for citizen participation and political engagement. Its real-time, interactive nature makes it a powerful tool for engaging broad audiences and fostering new forms of interaction between governments and their citizens (Lin & Kant, 2021). Digital politics relies on robust organization, cybersecurity, timely and relevant content, risk management, and continuous training to ensure that digital platforms are utilized effectively in political communication (Rashica, 2018).

The findings from this study show how President Prabowo Subianto's Instagram posts serve as a platform for conveying political messages and engaging the public. By analyzing patterns in language, imagery, and interaction, the study highlights how cyber sociopragmatics (Haugh, Kádár, & Terkouraf) can reveal the interactional, social, and normative dimensions of political communication in a digital space. Instagram, as a visual and performative platform, allows political figures not only to communicate policies and events but also to represent authority, hospitality, and national identity in ways that resonate both domestically and internationally.

The act of welcoming foreign dignitaries on Instagram becomes a crucial component in digital political performance. Through strategically chosen images and carefully crafted captions, these posts go beyond mere diplomatic protocol—they serve as political signaling that reinforces the President's position as an honorable and legitimate leader. At the interactional level, these posts emphasize formal exchanges and

ceremonial gestures; socially, they reinforce historical and regional relationships; and normatively, they advocate shared ideals like mutual respect, collaboration, and sovereign equality.

The data below presents selected Instagram posts in which President Prabowo engages with representatives from partner nations. Each post is analyzed through the lens of cyber sociopragmatic dimensions.

Instagram post and its Contextual Factors

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DJQ5TfQRT2n/?igsh=OWw5MzJpdGQ3YnFo

Caption: The President welcomed the President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency Hun Sen, on a courtesy visit to Indonesia aimed at strengthening bilateral relations between Indonesia and Cambodia. The visit is expected to expand cooperation across various strategic sectors and further reinforce the friendship that has been established for more than 65 years. During his visit, Senate President Hun Sen was accompanied by a high-level delegation from the Kingdom of Cambodia. Both countries expressed a shared commitment to continue strengthening the collaboration that has been built, particularly in enhancing contributions within the ASEAN region and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Merdeka Palace, Jakarta, May 5, 2025.

Caption: The President welcomed the arrival of the President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency Hun Sen, on his courtesy visit to Indonesia aimed at strengthening bilateral relations between Indonesia and Cambodia. This visit is expected to broaden cooperation in various strategic sectors and reinforce the friendship that has flourished for more than 65 years. During his visit, Senate President Hun Sen was accompanied by a high-level delegation from the Kingdom of Cambodia. Both countries reaffirmed their shared commitment to further consolidating the established collaboration, particularly in enhancing their contributions within the ASEAN region and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Istana Merdeka, Jakarta, 5 May 2025.

Meaning in Sociopragmatics (Interactionals, Social, normative)

- Interactional: Diplomatic exchange between President of Indonesia and President of Cambodian Senate
- Social: Long-standing bilateral friendship (65+ years) and ASEAN regional ties

- Normative: Commitment to inclusive, sustainable growth and regional cooperation norms.

The Instagram post featuring President Prabowo Subianto's warm welcome of the President of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia, His Excellency Hun Sen, serves as a strategic act of digital diplomacy. The carefully crafted image, combined with formal diplomatic language in the caption, does more than convey a simple diplomatic gesture; it signifies Indonesia's strong commitment to reinforcing its bilateral relations with Cambodia, a relationship that has lasted for over 65 years. The interactional aspect of this post highlights the official exchange between two heads of state, underscoring the importance of these diplomatic visits. Socially, it reinforces the historical friendship between the two nations, while normatively, it advocates for shared values of mutual respect, regional cooperation, and sustainable growth. The post, therefore, not only serves as a diplomatic greeting but also projects Indonesia's role as a reliable partner in ASEAN and emphasizes its leadership in promoting inclusive economic growth.

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DJQSTM3yB4l/?igsh=dXMwaTFhZWxtbzM5

Caption: President Prabowo received a visit from former Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in May 2025. "I welcomed the visit of former Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, along with his delegation." During the meeting, we discussed developments in the economic and political situation at both the regional and global levels. I also received an official letter from the current Prime Minister of Japan, Shigeru Ishiba. Indonesia and Japan reaffirmed their commitment to continue strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation for the interests and progress of both countries.

Caption: President Prabowo receiving the visit of Former Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida on 4 May 2025, "I received the visit of former Prime Minister of Japan, Fumio Kishida, along with his delegation". During the meeting, we discussed the dynamics of the economic and political situation both in the region and globally. I also received an official letter from the current Prime Minister of Japan, Shigeru Ishiba. Indonesia and Japan are committed to continuing to strengthen mutually beneficial cooperation for the interests and progress of both nations.

Meaning in Sociopragmatics (Interactionals, Social, normative)

- Interactional: Meeting and discussion between Indonesian President and former Japanese PM Kishida

- Social: Longstanding Indonesia–Japan relations and official diplomatic protocol

- Normative: Mutual commitment to beneficial cooperation and regional/global stability

In this post, President Prabowo's interaction with former Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida exemplifies how Instagram is used to project diplomatic engagement and leadership. The meeting discussed various geopolitical issues and solidified the enduring partnership between Indonesia and Japan. The interactional nature of the post is emphasized through the dialogue between the two leaders, while socially, it reflects the longstanding diplomatic ties between Indonesia and Japan. The normative aspect is highlighted by the commitment to mutually beneficial cooperation, as both countries reaffirm their dedication to regional and global stability. This post demonstrates how social media functions as a platform for enhancing diplomatic ties and demonstrates Indonesia's active participation in shaping regional and global political dynamics.

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DIwNSC6Syly/?igsh=a204MHJ5Znp6N2U5
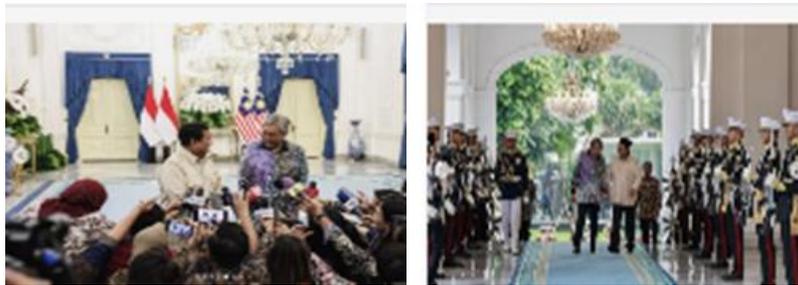
Caption: The President received Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi, during his visit to Indonesia. During the meeting, the two leaders discussed developments in bilateral relations between Indonesia and Malaysia and exchanged views on various geopolitical issues currently unfolding in the region and globally. On the occasion, the President also expressed his hope that the friendship between Indonesia and Malaysia would continue to grow stronger, grounded in mutual respect and strong cooperation for the progress and well-being of the people of both countries. Merdeka Palace, Jakarta, April 22, 2025.

Caption: The President received the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid bin Hamidi, during his visit to Indonesia. In the meeting, the two leaders discussed the development of bilateral relations between Indonesia and Malaysia, and exchanged views on various ongoing geopolitical issues in the region and around the world. On this occasion, the President also expressed his hope that the friendship between Indonesia and Malaysia will grow ever closer, founded on the spirit of mutual respect and strong cooperation for the advancement and prosperity of the peoples of both nations. Istana Merdeka, Jakarta, 22 April 2025.

Meaning in Sociopragmatics (Interactionals, Social, normative)

- Interactional: Bilateral meeting between Indonesian President and Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister

- Social: Close Indonesia–Malaysia relations rooted in shared regional identity
- Normative: Emphasis on mutual respect, cooperation, and shared prosperity.

This post highlights the bilateral diplomatic exchange between Indonesia and Malaysia, with a focus on the two countries' close political and regional ties. The interactional component is reflected in the formal meeting and exchange of views between the two political leaders. Socially, the post emphasizes the long-standing relationship rooted in shared regional identity and ASEAN cooperation. The normative dimension is expressed through the emphasis on mutual respect, cooperation, and the shared goal of prosperity for both nations. Through this post, President Prabowo demonstrates his commitment to regional cooperation and underscores Indonesia's leadership role in promoting ASEAN solidarity and addressing regional challenges in a collaborative manner.

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/DI0qvXCSMb9/?igsh

Caption: The President warmly welcomed the arrival of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency Sitiveni Rabuka, accompanied by an honor guard, on the occasion of his state visit to Indonesia. The meeting between the two heads of government marked an important moment in strengthening strategic collaboration across various fields, as well as commemorating the close bilateral relations between Indonesia and Fiji that have flourished for more than five decades. During this visit, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to deepening mutually beneficial cooperation and to playing an active role in jointly addressing various global challenges. Istana Merdeka, Jakarta, 24 April 2025.

Meaning in Sociopragmatics (Interactionals, Social, normative)

- Interactional: State visit and meeting between Indonesian President and Fijian Prime Minister
- Social: Over 50 years of Indonesia–Fiji diplomatic relations and formal state protocols
- Normative: Commitment to mutual benefit and joint response to global challenges

The post featuring President Prabowo's warm welcome to the Prime Minister of Fiji, His Excellency Sitiveni Rabuka, is a clear example of how Instagram is used to showcase Indonesia's diplomatic engagement with smaller Pacific nations. The interactional aspect is conveyed through the ceremonial welcome and official meeting, while socially, it reinforces Indonesia's longstanding diplomatic ties with Fiji, which have

lasted for over 50 years. The normative aspect of the post is seen in the commitment of both nations to deepen mutually beneficial cooperation and address global challenges together. By highlighting this meeting on social media, President Prabowo strengthens Indonesia's image as a proactive player in global diplomacy, emphasizing solidarity with small island nations and the importance of global cooperation in addressing common challenges such as climate change, security, and economic development.

Sumber: https://www.instagram.com/p/DIgHJLUy_gd/?igsh

Caption: The President received the courtesy visit of the First Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Denis Manturov, who also serves as the Russian Co-Chair of the Russia–Indonesia Joint Commission on Economic, Trade, and Technical Cooperation. During the meeting, Indonesia and Russia expressed their commitment to establishing a new framework format to strengthen their economic partnership. The President conveyed his hope that cooperation between the two countries would continue to expand, particularly in the sectors of economy, industry, trade, energy, agriculture, and investment. Istana Negara, Jakarta, 15 April 2025.

Meaning in Sociopragmatics (Interactionals, Social, normative)

- Interactional: Courtesy visit and discussion between Indonesian President and Russian Deputy Prime Minister
- Social: Institutional ties through the Russia–Indonesia Joint Commission
- Normative: Shared commitment to expanding cooperation across economic and strategic sectors.

In this post, President Prabowo's meeting with Denis Manturov, Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister, underscores Indonesia's efforts to expand economic cooperation with Russia. The post highlights the interactional exchange between the two leaders, focusing on the economic partnership through the Russia-Indonesia Joint Commission. The social dimension is seen in the strengthening of institutional ties through bilateral cooperation, particularly in the economic, trade, and technical fields. The normative aspect is illustrated through the mutual commitment to expanding cooperation across key sectors such as energy, trade, and agriculture. This Instagram post, with its emphasis on economic diplomacy, demonstrates how President Prabowo uses digital platforms to promote Indonesia's economic interests and solidify its position as an influential player in both regional and global economic diplomacy.

These posts illustrate how Instagram serves as a digital extension of political protocol, showcasing state hospitality to the public. By hosting ceremonial greetings, red-carpet events, and symbolic gestures such as honor guards and handshakes, the President's digital identity is crafted not only as a leader but also as a statesman who symbolizes national dignity and international recognition. This sociopragmatic framing allows the public to interpret these posts as political actions that reflect Indonesia's place in the world, rather than simply as news.

The study reveals a new dimension of digital politics: the deliberate use of images and captions as a form of political messaging. This contrasts with earlier studies on political leaders' use of social media, which focused on policy, hate speech, or campaign messages. The findings contribute to filling the gap in the literature concerning the use of visual media in political representation, especially during diplomatic events.

Interestingly, some posts emphasize the personal side of the President, showing his friendliness and approachability, such as through informal conversations with guests. This shift from traditional formalities might be a conscious effort to make the leader appear more relatable to the domestic audience, while still conveying core diplomatic messages.

The Role of Images and Captions in Constructing Social Meaning

Social media platforms such as Instagram are transformative tools that reshape how political identity is constructed and communicated. Through mobile and web-based technologies, these platforms provide users the ability to create and share content that is highly interactive, facilitating co-creation, discussion, and modification (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Politicians have increasingly utilized these platforms, not only for communication with the public but also for curating political identities and performing leadership. Digital platforms, including Instagram, enhance engagement by eliminating geographical barriers and enabling real-time political interaction (Rashica, 2018).

In President Prabowo Subianto's Instagram posts, the images and captions are carefully selected, not as spontaneous contributions but as strategic acts to convey political authority, national identity, and leadership characteristics. Each image holds symbolic value, and in the context of digital politics, these posts help shape public perceptions of leadership in Indonesia.

For instance, the handshake between the President and foreign dignitaries is a recurring visual theme. This gesture, often seen as a symbol of warmth, mutual respect, and cooperation, carries significant political weight. It communicates a commitment to bilateral relations and the intention to advance collaborative efforts. Another recurring element is the President's personal engagement with visitors, such as escorting them to vehicles. This personal gesture projects confidence, compassion, and a sense of safety, signaling Indonesia's respect for its guests and reinforcing its diplomatic identity.

Many of the photographs also feature ceremonial elements, such as honor guards, marching bands, and schoolchildren, which emphasize national pride and institutional readiness. These images convey Indonesia's capabilities and enthusiasm in hosting diplomatic visitors, and they function beyond formalities—they act as symbolic celebrations of Indonesia's commitment to global cooperation and diplomatic engagement.

The facial expressions and body language in these images further contribute to the humanization of political leadership. The President is often depicted with a smile or friendly gesture, reinforcing the image of Indonesia as a kind, welcoming nation. These emotional cues serve to soften the rigidity of formal diplomacy, making the leadership appear more approachable and grounded in cultural decency.

In the digital realm, Instagram posts become more than just content distribution—they perform leadership. Through the lens of cyber sociopragmatics, these posts are strategically constructed to influence public perception, project authority, and foster emotional connections with both domestic and international audiences.

The integration of the social, interactional, and normative dimensions of cyber sociopragmatics, as proposed by Haugh, Kádár, and Terkouraf, reveals the deeper meanings in the chosen captions of these posts. These elements emphasize formality, engagement, and diplomatic decorum, positioning President Prabowo as an active participant in international affairs and reinforcing Indonesia's sovereign agency in regional and global contexts.

Performing Political Authority through Cyber Sociopragmatic Practices in Social Media

The analysis of how President Prabowo Subianto's Instagram posts shape public political identities and engagement highlights the role of social media in digital diplomacy. This section explores the broader cyber sociopragmatic strategy that governs how political actors use language and imagery to curate political leadership in digital environments. Social media, by their nature, have transformed the ways in which leaders engage with their publics. Instagram, in particular, serves as a platform for presenting leadership as responsive, approachable, and relatable, attributes that are essential in digital politics.

Each post is carefully curated to project political values and national identity, using language and symbolic gestures. Phrases such as "welcoming with honor" and "strengthening bilateral ties" carry pragmatic meaning beyond their literal interpretation, positioning the President as a figure who aligns with diplomatic norms and values such as mutual respect and shared goals.

Social media, particularly Instagram, facilitates a rhetorical performance of leadership that engages audiences in real-time. Through carefully chosen images and captions, these posts not only communicate political content but also serve as a digital act

of positioning that reinforces political authority and national identity. This cyber sociopragmatic practice allows political leaders to craft a public persona that is authoritative yet relatable, ensuring they remain visible, responsive, and connected to their audience.

The digital public sphere has created new expectations for engagement, where political leaders are expected to be authentic and interactive (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Social media platforms enable real-time interaction, facilitating political branding and offering new avenues for political leaders to engage directly with citizens. Instagram, in particular, has become a vital tool for political communication, enabling leaders to manage their digital presence and perform political identity with precision (Almestarihi et al., 2021; Rehman et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

In summary, this study used President Prabowo Subianto's Instagram activity as a case study to investigate how political leadership is portrayed and exercised through social media in the context of digital politics. The conversation that follows highlights the broader implications of these digital practices for understanding public engagement, political leadership, and diplomacy in the modern digital age. President Prabowo Subianto's Instagram posts are not just means of communication, but rather performative acts that form part of a larger digital diplomacy strategy. By combining carefully selected images with formal, diplomatic language, these posts create narratives that underscore Indonesia's international position, its commitment to regional cooperation, and the President's leadership style, which is both powerful and approachable.

This study bridges the gap between digital communication and sociocultural meaning-making by applying a cyber sociopragmatic approach to analyze political discourse on social media. Unlike classical pragmatics, cyber sociopragmatics takes into account how digital norms, interactions, and platform aesthetics influence the way political communications are constructed and received. The findings contribute to expanding the application of sociopragmatic theory to the representation of leadership in the digital media context.

The study emphasizes how formality, politeness, identity, and political expectations influence, and are influenced by, the textual and visual choices made on platforms such as Instagram. These choices transform routine political posts into symbolic performances that uphold state ideals, strengthen national identity, and foster public confidence. By doing so, this study highlights the growing significance of social media as a political space where ongoing negotiations about national identity, diplomacy, and political authority take place in the digital era.

However, this analysis was based on a relatively narrow set of Instagram posts with a specific thematic focus and timeframe. This limited sample may not fully capture the range of communicative strategies employed by the President's digital team across different political contexts or the evolving expectations of digital audiences. A more

comprehensive dataset, including posts related to domestic issues, crisis communication, or ceremonial events, would provide deeper insights into the sociopragmatic patterns embedded in Indonesia's digital political communication.

Ultimately, President Prabowo's Instagram posts demonstrate that political leadership is not merely communicated but actively practiced in the digital age. Through the strategic use of language that adheres to sociopragmatic norms of formality, politeness, and diplomacy, coupled with carefully selected imagery, these posts serve as symbolic performances that support state ideals, influence public opinion, and mediate national identity and authority in the online space.

REFERENCES

Abdullah, A. S. (2022). impact of pragma-linguistic & socio-pragmatic components on understanding English pragmatic utterances. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, *6*(1), 222–229. https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v6n1.2197

Almestarihi, R., Gharaibeh, M. K., Al-Gasawneh, J., Al-jabali, S., Enaizan, O., & Nusairat, N. M. (2021). The impact of social media marketing on brand equity: A systematic review. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education*, *12*(6), 4073–4088. https://turcomat.org/index.php/turkbilmat/article/view/8378

Bastoni, R. P. (2024). *Analisis Sentimen Opini Publik Terhadap Calon Presiden Indonesia 2024 Menggunakan Metode Naive Bayes Dan Lexicon Based Pada Platform YouTube*. 1–207.

Beltrama, A., Solt, S., & Burnett, H. (2023). Context, precision, and social perception: A sociopragmatic study. *Language in Society*, *52*(5), 805–835. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404522000240

Drus, Z., & Khalid, H. (2019). Sentiment analysis in social media and its application: Systematic literature review. *Procedia Computer Science*, *161*, 707–714. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procs.2019.11.174

Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, *59*(May 2020), 102168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168

Emini, A., & Zeqiri, J. (2021). Social Media Marketing and Purchase Intention: Evidence From Kosovo. *Economic Thought and Practice*, *30*(2), 475–492. https://doi.org/10.17818/EMIP/2021/2.8

Eslami, Z. R., Raeisi-Vanani, A., & Anani Sarab, M. R. (2022). Variation Patterns in Interlanguage Pragmatics: Apology Speech Act of EFL Learners vs. American Native Speakers. In *Contrastive Pragmatics* (Vol. 2, Issue 6). https://doi.org/10.1163/26660393-bja10068

Fusillo, M., & Lino, M. (2024). Inter-mediality in Digital Media Environment. *New Techno-Humanities*, *4*(1), 58–64. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techum.2024.11.002

Ghenai, A., Noorian, Z., Moradisani, H., Abadeh, P., Erentzen, C., & Zarrinkalam, F. (2025). Exploring hate speech dynamics: The emotional, linguistic, and thematic impact on social media users. *Information Processing and Management*, *62*(3), 104079. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2025.104079

Hadiyanto, A., Putri, K. Y. S., & Fazli, L. (2025). Religious moderation in Instagram: An Islamic interpretation perspective. *Heliyon*, *11*(4), e42816. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e42816

Haugh, M., Kádár, D. Z., & Terkourafi, M. (2021). Introduction. *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociopragmatics*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108954105.001

Hayden, C. (2018). *Digital Diplomacy*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118885154.dipl0068

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, *54*(3), 241–251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005

Koskimaa, R. (2007). The Challenge of Cybertext: Teaching Literature in The Digital World. *Uocpaper: E-Journal on the Knowledge Society*, *4*(March), 1–9. https://uocpapers.uoc.edu/uocpapers/8/eng/index.html

Kunjana Rahardi, R., Rahmat, W., Setyaningsih, Y., & Handoko. (2025). The Power of Visual Communication: Analyzing Visual Multimodal Cybertext Contexts in Indonesian Cyber Pragmatics. *Jurnal Arbitrer*, *12*(1), 54–68. https://doi.org/10.25077/ar.12.1.54-68.2025

Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman.

Lin, Y., & Kant, S. (2021). Using social media for citizen participation: Contexts, empowerment, and inclusion. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *13*(12). https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126635

Manor, I. (2016). What is Digital Diplomacy, and how is it Practiced around the World? A brief introduction. *The 2016 Annual Review of the Diplomatist Magazine, University of Oxford*.

Muzari, T., Nevers Shava, G., & Shonhiwa, S. (2022). Qualitative Research Paradigm, a Key Research Design for Educational Researchers, Processes and Procedures: A Theoretical Overview. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, *2*(1), 14–20. https://indianapublications.com/Journals/IJHSS

Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Ranfagni, S., & Howell, K. (2025). User Generated Content and Brand Engagement: Exploring the role of electronic semiotics and symbolic interactionism on Instagram. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *168*(November 2024), 108642. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2025.108642

Prakoso Aji, M. (2024). Political Analysis of Prabowo Subianto'S Branding Through Instagram Social Media @Prabowo: Case Study of the 2024 Election Campaign. *JHSS (Journal of Humanities and Social Studies)*, *08*(03), 806–812. https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v8i3.10965

Rahardi, R. K. (2020). The Shifts of Conventional Context Element Aspects: Towards a Cyberpragmatics Perspective. *Jurnal Arbitrer*, *7*(2), 151–161. https://doi.org/10.25077/ar.7.2.151-161.2020

Rahardi, R. K., & Firdaus, W. (2023). Expert Judgements of Integrated Cyberpragmatics Learning Model with Socio-Semiotics Multimodality-Based Cybertext Contexts. *Aksara*, *35*(2), 211. https://doi.org/10.29255/aksara.v35i2.4160.211--227

Rashica, V. (2018). THE BENEFITS AND RISKS OF DIGITAL DIPLOMACY. *SEEU Review Volume 13 Issue 1*. doi: 10.2478/seeur-2018-0008

Rehman, S. ul, Gulzar, R., & Aslam, W. (2022). Developing the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) through Social Media (SM): The Modern Marketing Communication Approach. *SAGE Open*, *12*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221099936

Rinna A. Putri, Rismayani Pelawi, Ruth Febriyanti Br. Simarmata, & Frinawaty Lestarina Barus. (2023). Ujaran Kebencian Terhadap Capres-Cawapres Prabowo-Gibran Pada Kolom Komentar Media Sosial Instagram Prabowo. *Pragmatik : Jurnal Rumpun Ilmu Bahasa Dan Pendidikan*, *2*(1), 70–79. https://doi.org/10.61132/pragmatik.v2i1.161

Taherdoost, H. (2022). A Guide to Evaluate Academic Sources to Develop Research Paper: Source Selection in Academic Writing. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, *January 2022*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4178672

Try, A., Rizky, J., Harris, E. A., & Soekarno, Z. P. (2023). Analisis Komunikasi Politik Prabowo Subianto Di Media Sosial Menjelang Kontestasi Pemilihan Presiden 2024. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional*, 673–680.

van der Meij, S., & Declercq, J. (2025). The best views come after the hardest climbs: Identity and community in infertility discourse on Instagram. *Discourse, Context and Media*, *65*(April), 100880. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2025.100880

Wijana, I Dewa Putu, R. (2010). *Pragmatik: Kajian Teori dan Analisis*. Putra Pelajar.