

Speech event analysis of President Prabowo's statement on the August 2025 protests

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Abstract

This study analyzes President Prabowo Subianto's speeches delivered in response to the August 2025 demonstrations in Indonesia using Dell Hymes's SPEAKING framework. The background of this research arises from the growing importance of speech event analysis in understanding how political leaders communicate during social crises. The study aims to identify how each SPEAKING component appears in Prabowo's statements and how these speech events illustrate the communicative function of language amid public unrest. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, the data were drawn from official video recordings and verified transcripts, then coded and interpreted systematically. The findings show that Prabowo's speeches apply structured participation, directive and commissive acts, and deliberate keying to calm the public, legitimize state authority, and distinguish peaceful aspirations from unlawful behavior. This research demonstrates the role of speech events as social acts that influence public perception, support political stability, and guide crisis communication.

Keywords: *Speech events; SPEAKING model; sociolinguistics; Dell hymes; political speech*

Introduction

Language is a system of sound symbols agreed upon by members of a community and used for interaction, cooperation, communication, and self-identification (Lauder et al., 2009) in (Aisyah & Rosalina, 2022). Although every language has its own unique characteristics and uses, all languages essentially function as tools for everyday communication. Over time, languages undergo changes and the creation of new words, which must be integrated into language teaching because language and society are closely interconnected. In addition, language functions not only as a means of exchanging information but also as a tool for building, maintaining, and negotiating social relationships. Forms of communication in social life, such as verbal communication or spoken forms, can be studied within the field of Sociolinguistics.

Sociolinguistics is the study of the relationship between language and society, which is usually influenced by situational factors, such as who is speaking, what form the language takes, what topic

it is about, to whom, where, and when the communication occurs. Sociolinguistics put the language as part of the social system, communication system, and a part of a certain community and culture (Amin, 2020). Sociolinguists explain why people speak differently in different social contexts because language use is shaped by social roles, interpersonal relationships, and the culture within a society. Sociolinguistics sees language not only as part of a social and communication system, but also part of a particular society and culture (Amin, 2020). Therefore, sociolinguists not only examine linguistic diversity but also examine how communication is organized and adapted to specific social situations.

In sociolinguistics, language use is always understood as part of a social practice that is inseparable from the situational context in which the speech takes place. Many linguists state that sociolinguistics is the key area of language study that explains pragmatic and contextual conditions (Sankar, 2022). Every utterance delivered by a person, especially in the public sphere, is influenced by social factors such as the role of the speaker, the

position of the listener, and the communication goals to be achieved. Hymes emphasized that language acts must always be understood through the socio-cultural context that binds them, because language is not only to convey meaning linguistically, but also to articulate the relationships and values that exist in society. Therefore, speech analysis cannot be conducted solely at the level of language structure but must also examine how the utterance functions within a particular social order (Hymes, 2020).

This speech event is a type of communication style that occurs when a speaker delivers an utterance to a listener within a particular social context, with a specific purpose or intention (Nisa et al., 2025). A speech event can be understood as a communicative process between individuals or groups who exchange information, ideas, thoughts, and emotions. This reflects interactive communication, where speakers interact with listeners in a specific social context and for a specific purpose. This concept is clearly seen in President Prabowo's response to the demonstrations that occurred in August 2025 in various regions of Indonesia, which in some cases resulted in looting and public unrest due to provocation by certain parties.

In this context, the speech event is a crucial unit for understanding how communication occurs holistically within a given situation. This speech event is viewed as a form of communication activity governed by social norms, specific purposes, and particular interaction patterns that can be observed in daily life (Nisa et al., 2025). This concept allows language to be viewed as a structured and directed social act, not simply a series of words. Therefore, analyzing speech events provides an opportunity to understand how messages are formed, conveyed, and interpreted by communication participants within a given social context. This perspective serves as the basis for examining how communication occurs in situations of high social and political significance.

His speeches, such as: “Pidato lengkap Prabowo menyikapi demo berujung penjarahan” (Saputra, 2025), “10 Poin Pernyataan Presiden Prabowo Bersama Ketum Parpol soal Demo” (Setiawan, Madjid, 2025), and “President Prabowo

Expresses Condolences, Instructs to Investigate Demonstration Incident” (YouTube), illustrate how speech event function not only to convey information but also to provide direction to the public. Through his statements, Prabowo emphasized the importance of maintaining order, expressed condolences to the victims, and ordered authorities to investigate the incidents. This demonstrates that language in political speeches functions as a tool for crisis management and social calm.

Based on the article “Politeness in Language and Speech Events in War Situations: Analysis of Abu Ubaidah’s Speech” (Said et al., 2024), the focus of the research lies in the analysis of Abu Ubaidah’s speech using Geoffrey Leech’s politeness theory and Dell Hymes’s concept of speech events. However, the research has not fully applied the SPEAKING model developed by Hymes. This creates a research gap that this research aims to fill. Different from previous research, this study examines President Prabowo’s speech in response to the August 2025 demonstration by emphasizing the analysis of speech events through the complete application of Dell Hymes’ SPEAKING framework. Therefore, this research aims to answer two questions: (1) how the components of the SPEAKING model are realized in Prabowo’s speeches, and (2) how these speech events reflect the communicative function of language in the context of political demonstrations.

Furthermore, the analysis of Prabowo's speeches is important not only for understanding how a political leader constructs messages in a social crisis situation, but also for demonstrating the relevance of Dell Hymes' SPEAKING framework in sociolinguistic studies of political responses. This research is expected to contribute to broader discussions on the relationship between language, society, and political communication. Furthermore, by placing the analysis within the framework of speech events, this research emphasizes the importance of viewing language as a social act that reflects values, norms, and power relations in society.

The findings of this study are expected to enrich the study of political discourse in Indonesia and provide insights that can be applied to similar

contexts in other countries facing crises or demonstrations. Practically, this research provides an understanding of how language can be used strategically by leaders to maintain authority, direct actions, and manage social situations. At the same time, it emphasizes that speech events are not merely linguistic phenomena but also social practices that shape collective societal responses in times of tension. Thus, this research reaffirms the relevance of sociolinguistics in bridging theory with actual communication practices, highlighting how language functions as a tool for interaction and shaping social reality.

Therefore, this study aims to argue that President Prabowo's speeches during the August 2025 demonstrations demonstrate how language functions as a social act that reflects power relations, social values, and the spirit of national unity in Indonesian political communication.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design to examine meaning, context, and communicative functions in President Prabowo's speeches regarding the August 2025 demonstrations; data consist of official video recordings and verified transcripts from governmental channels, followed by close listening, accurate transcription, and systematic reduction aligned with the study (Ayton, Tsindos, Berkovic, 2023). This qualitative research helps the researcher easily access the participants' thoughts and feelings, allowing for the development of a deeper understanding of the meanings they intend to convey (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The design is also appropriate for analyzing language in natural socio-cultural settings and for treating language as social action that is evidence-driven yet faithful to context (Ayton, Tsindos, Berkovic, 2023). Cross-checks between video and transcript from help minimize interpretive bias and ensure referential accuracy, with primary data drawn from the official press briefing on 31 August 2025 and the August 2025 state address.

Analytically, the study applies Dell Hymes' SPEAKING. Each letter in this acronym has specific determining meanings, namely discussing

setting and scene, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrument, norms, and genre (Hymes, 2020). Speech-act theory guides the identification of locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary force to explain how political leadership constructs messages in demonstrations/social crises (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Speech Acts"). Finally, a critical discourse lens particularly the sociocognitive approach links micro-choices in language to broader relations among discourse, society, and power, clarifying how messages stabilize sentiment and legitimize authority (van Dijk, n.d.). Thesis statement: the August 2025 addresses combine participation structure, keying, and directive/commissive acts to stabilize public affect, legitimize executive authority, and reframe the protests as coordinated policy action.

Findings and discussion

Hymes (in Noy, 2017) make SPEAKING (scene and setting; participants; ends; act sequence; key; instruments; norms; genre) as a framework for examining the contextual factors of a speech for interpretation of what is going on Prabowo's speech. The following is an explanation of the use of SPEAKING models Dell Hymes, components of speech events, and the domains used in Prabowo responses of the August's demonstration.

Setting and scene of the presidential address

In the ethnography of communication, setting and scene are key components in understanding the context of a speech event. In the context of public communication, especially during a crisis. The choice of time, place, and tone of delivery is a crucial strategic factor in restoring public trust (Coombs, 2015). Therefore, analyzing setting and scene helps clarify how context and atmosphere shape the meaning and impact of a leader's communication.

President Prabowo Subianto's speech on 31 August 2025, delivered at the State Palace in Jakarta, took place amid nationwide tension caused by demonstrations and looting across several regions. The setting of the speech highlights a moment when the government needed to reassert its control and authority before the public. The formal

venue of the palace and the ceremonial nature of the address underscore its role as a symbol of order and national resolve. The situation demanded the president's direct presence to reassure the public and demonstrate that the state remained steadfast in the face of crisis.

The scene of the speech conveys a strong emotional atmosphere a mixture of concern, firmness, and determination to restore national security. Amid public anxiety, Prabowo's tone and delivery show an effort to calm the people through empathy and decisiveness. His rhetorical stance projects leadership that is firm yet compassionate, aiming to rebuild national solidarity. In this way, the speech serves not only as a form of political communication but also as a means of rebuilding public confidence and reinforcing the government's legitimacy.

Participants and power relations

In this framework, participants are not identified by name but by their positions, status, power, and roles, such as describing individuals who are culturally relevant, especially for speech events, so that the rules of interaction clearly indicate how they are expected to behave during the event (Kiesling, 2007) in (KiyancıÇek & Karatepe, 2023). In the context of Prabowo's speech, Dell Hymes' theory discusses participants, which include all individuals and groups involved in an interaction (Hymes, 2020).

The first is the speaker in the speech, President Prabowo plays a central role in this speech event. He serves as both the source of the message and the authority figure who delivers responses to emerging social issues. In a press conference at the Istana Merdeka, he declared: "Mari kita jaga persatuan nasional. Indonesia di ambang kebangkitan jangan sampai kita terus diadu domba." (Saputra, 2025) His status as President of the Republic of Indonesia, or the first person in Indonesia, makes every statement performative, not only conveying information but also shaping policy direction and public perception. His presence creates a formal communication structure that reflects the power relationship between the country's leaders and the public.

Analysis of the Participants' points in Prabowo's speech shows that the presence of political party chairmen played a significant role in shaping the context of the speech event. According to an Antara News report, "Presiden RI Prabowo Subianto beserta delapan ketua umum partai politik di DPR RI menyampaikan sikap dan pernyataan bersama atas perkembangan situasi demonstrasi..." (Saputra, 2025).

The presence of these political party leaders was not merely ceremonial, but also demonstrated political consolidation that strengthened the President's position in the speech. Media reports indicate that several parties in attendance were represented by their leaders and prominent figures, such as Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono from Partai Demokrat, Muhammad Khalid from PKS, Bahlil Lahadalia of Golkar, Muhaimin Iskandar from PKB, Zulkifli Hasan from PAN, and Surya Paloh of the NasDem. The involvement of these party representatives demonstrates that this speech took place within the framework of coordinated, cross-party political communication. In fact, their commitment was reflected in their statement that "para pimpinan parpol telah sepakat mengambil langkah internal berupa pencabutan keanggotaan DPR terhadap anggota yang dianggap menyampaikan pernyataan keliru..." (Saputra, 2025). Thus, the participants in this speech not only function as listeners but also as institutional actors who help strengthen the message, goals, and pragmatic effects of the president's speech.

The third is the staff and administrative team at the Merdeka Palace. This staff and team serve as internal support, ensuring the smooth running of the President's response speech. They are behind the scenes managing protocol, preparing speech materials, audiovisual systems, security, and guest coordination. Sociolinguistically, they are silent participants, but they play a crucial role in shaping the context of the situation, both physically (venue, layout) and administratively (order of events). Their presence allows the speech to proceed according to state protocol.

These journalists act as both recipients and relayers of messages to the public. They record, cover, and interpret speeches for distribution through the mass media. Within Dell Hymes's

framework, they constitute a secondary audience that influences how messages are conveyed and received by the wider public. The interaction between speakers and the media also demonstrates power dynamics: the media ensures transparency, while the president uses the moment to build his image and legitimacy.

Communicative goals of the speech

The ends or purposes of communication are the expectations or goals that each member or group aims to convey (Rojo-Laurilla, 2022) based on the transcript is reflected through the President's emphasis (running from 00:00 to 11:05) on upholding freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, ensuring transparent legal accountability for misconduct committed by state officers, and highlighting firm actions taken by political party leaders and the DPR in response to public concerns. The speech also conveys the government's intention to distinguish legitimate aspirations from unlawful and anarchic acts, reaffirming the state's duty to protect citizens and uphold public order. Additionally, the President aims to open channels for dialogue by encouraging community representatives to communicate their concerns directly to the DPR and government institutions. Ultimately, the speech seeks to restore public trust, maintain national stability, and encourage citizens to remain calm while continuing to voice their aspirations through lawful and constructive means.

Structure and sequence of the speech

The act sequence is described as the order and content of events in a speech act, including how the conversation or speech unfolds over time. According to Elzahal (2021), "Act sequence refers to the form and content of an utterance, focusing on the sequence of speech acts and their organization within communication". In President Prabowo Subianto's speech, the act sequence of actions included the first thing President Prabowo did was to open the meeting and deliver an interfaith greeting. He then described the current situation and events surrounding the demonstrations. President Prabowo expressed his condolences and empathy, condemned the actions of the authorities, and

ordered an investigation. Afterwards, President Prabowo called on the public to remain calm and trust the government and issued a warning to those who wanted to cause chaos. He then read out his vision for a developed and independent Indonesia, followed by the closing and a salam. Warning to those who wanted to cause chaos. He also read out his vision of a developed and independent Indonesia, followed by closing remarks and greetings.

Tone and emotional framing

Dell Hymes explains that the act sequence relates to how an utterance is structured, what it contains, and the order in which speech actions take place during a communication event (Diani et al., 2021). This component highlights how utterances are organized, beginning with the opening of the conversation, the flow of exchanges between participants, and the closing of the interaction. The tone of voice or manner of delivery in Mr. Prabowo's speech was serious, firm, authoritative, yet also protective. The speech conveyed concern about the event that occurred in August 2025. President Prabowo's speech aimed to calm public fears and encourage cooperation between citizens and political groups. The speaker uses respectful, inclusive language that references shared values and national unity, setting a solemn and hopeful tone for the communication.

Instrumentalities and modes of communication

Instrumentalities refer to channel and form of speech. Channel means the way a message travels from one person to another. The form of speech refers to language and its subdivisions, dialects, codes, varieties and register (Nisa et al., n.d.) Relating to the channels and forms of communication, including the spoken language used in interactions. Verbal conversation in Indonesian with gestures to enhance the impression.

Interactional and interpretive norms

Norms in a speech event consist of norms of interaction and norms of interpretation. Norms of interaction refer to the socially and institutionally regulated rules governing how communication takes

place, including who is entitled to speak, when speech occurs, and how audiences are expected to respond. In President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the State Palace, these norms are clearly formal and hierarchical. The President delivers his statement in a one-way communication format without interruption, questions, or direct audience response. The audience—including political party leaders, palace officials, and journalists—assumes a passive role, listening attentively without verbal engagement. This interactional pattern reflects established conventions of presidential crisis communication in Indonesia, where authority and control are maintained through uninterrupted, carefully structured public addresses.

Norms of interpretation, on the other hand, relate to the shared belief systems and cultural expectations that shape how the speech is understood by the audience and the wider public. Within the Indonesian sociopolitical context, a presidential address delivered from the State Palace is interpreted as an official, authoritative, and binding statement. Prabowo's firm yet calming tone is therefore understood not merely as personal opinion, but as a reflection of the state's stance toward the August 2025 demonstrations. The absence of audience response further reinforces the expectation that the message is to be received, accepted, and disseminated rather than debated in the moment. As a result, the speech functions as a directive and reassurance simultaneously, relying on shared cultural norms that position the president as the ultimate voice of national stability during periods of crisis.

Genre and communicative function

One important factor in how individuals communicate with one another is their participation in certain events or communication genres (Wahana Putra & Padmadewi, 2023). President Prabowo Subianto's speech on the social issues surrounding the August demonstrations exemplifies the informative and persuasive nature of the public statement genre. In his speech, Prabowo urged the public to remain calm and trust the government in addressing the dynamics of the ongoing demonstrations. He emphasized that peaceful

aspirations must be respected, but that anarchic actions that damage public facilities and threaten security must be dealt with firmly in accordance with existing laws. This communication style demonstrates the government's efforts to reassure the public while strengthening law enforcement, reflecting the primary goal of this genre: conveying vital information to the public to maintain social order and stability.

Conclusion

The article concludes that the speech delivered by President Prabowo during the August 2025 demonstrations shows how social actions can be expressed through language that is constructed from context, power relations, and communicative roles. The analysis shows that elements such as setting and scene, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instruments, norms, and genre work together to create meaning and guide public interpretation. This study also shows that the speech not only served to convey information but also to calm the public, strengthen unity and sovereignty, and reinforce the authority of the government during demonstrations and social tensions in the community. From a broader perspective, this study underscores the importance of sociolinguistic perspectives in understanding any form of communication, such as political communication, especially in the context of national instability as conveyed by President Prabowo, where language functions as a tool to shape the perceptions and behavior of society. Further research could expand the discussion of this case study analysis and compare it with speeches from different leaders and on different issues or observe how the public receives the speeches or whether the audience and media gain deeper insight into how messages are conveyed and negotiated outside of the speeches themselves.

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