CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background of the Study

Indonesia held its Presidential Election on February 14, 2024. Before the official campaign schedules were released by the General Election Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*: KPU), some politicians began their early presidential campaigns to present their idealized images, shape the way people think about them, and make their names recognizable. Realizing that the road to the State Palace will be long, expensive, and exhausting, the politicians spark the art of persuading electorates variously and creatively. Door-to-door visits, hand-to-hand printed leaflet and poster distributions, mass events, and rallies are some popular traditional campaign strategies used by politicians for their self-image and self-branding. However, these traditional campaign strategies only focus on engagement and action (campaign output) and skip awareness and alignment as campaign input. Bike (2012) asserted that an ideal campaign strategy must have the right order: awareness > alignment > engagement > action.

Indeed, "awareness" provides the electorate with information about the candidates. This becomes a forerunner for the electorates to consider their positions, whether or not they have an agreement or alliance with the candidates. When the electorates are aligned with the candidates' self-presentation and self-image, they will spread their positivity. On the contrary, they will ignore their self-presentation and self-image when they are unaligned. "Awareness" and "alignment" determine

the level of the electorates' engagement and increase the impetus to motivate themselves and other people to participate in political actions, such as exercising their right to vote for a candidate. Since the aforementioned traditional campaign strategies do not consider the electorates' awareness and alignment, another modern campaign strategy is investigated in this research to bridge this phenomenon gap. Then, to provoke the electorates' awareness, alignment, engagement, and action, the candidates convey exact, succinct, and persuasive messages in various ways. Since the electorates are often played around by the candidates, their messages need to be studied in more depth. To bridge this phenomenon gap, their messages disseminated through a more modern campaign strategy are linguistically, visually, and spatially analyzed.

Political advertising on social media, as one of the modern campaign strategies, has grown in popularity among politicians. It covers electorates' awareness, alignment, engagement, and action, and it also reaches and influences larger groups of electorates with less physical effort and cost. Direct interaction, real-time information and feedback, and free content upload and creation have made social media and political campaigns inseparable (Kasirye, 2021; Kushin & Kitchener, 2009; Sahoo, 2021; Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008). Posts, images, video content, digital posters, online forums, podcasts, fan pages, and live sessions are some digital campaign tools created by politicians on their social media. Among these digital campaign tools, digital posters are selected in this study since they facilitate phenomena gaps in terms of provoking electorates' awareness and alignment, and increasing electorates' engagement and action. In addition, digital

posters have cost-effectiveness, high visibility, and a lasting impression (Lee & Campbell, 2016; Steffan & Venema, 2020).

Although there is a theory stating that persuasive discourse is a key component of persuasion in a political campaign (Reyes, 2015), this theory does not always work. A persuasive discourse that covers textual materials does not always give an attractive impression to the electorate and provides effective feedback for the politicians. Sometimes, visual components are excellent sources of political information because they are more memorable than textual components and can affect political judgment (Rosenberg, Bohan, McCaffety, & K. Haris, 1986; Stenberg, 2006; Grusell & Nord, 2020; Steffan, 2020). Then, their spatial arrangement can drastically impact how well the receivers (the electorates) comprehend the messages since sequential sections are placed under careful consideration to logically lead the readers' eyes through the messages (Serafini, 2011). To bridge these theoretical gaps, digital posters are selected in this study because they not only display textual components to convey political messages but also present attractive and aesthetic visual components to influence the decision-making process, and incorporate effective and logical spatial components to attract the attention of the electorate and a sense of stability.

In addition, another theory stating that a political image presented in print is more likely to be remembered than online because of its tangibility and appearance effect (Lawson, Lenz, Baker, & Myers, 2010; Stockemer & Praino, 2015) is not quite true. Electorates holding printed posters or seeing large campaign-printed posters on poles and walls in public areas will not see the effort that has gone into printing and delivering them. However, progressive and dynamic

appearance, impressive design, and viral and appealing slogans are more impactful and memorable for the electorates (Sahoo, 2021). To address such a theoretical gap, again, digital posters are selected and investigated in this study. The aforementioned theoretical gaps imply that a current study needs to be conducted. Thus, political digital posters covering persuasive discourse, visually appealing components, and strategic spatial arrangement are proposed in this study.

Digital posters are defined as visual aids displayed on a screen instead of being printed and shared over social networks (Lee & Campbell, 2016; Steffan & Venema, 2020). Dumitrescu (2011) stated that posters generally have three elements; text (message, slogan), image (photographs, illustrations, drawings, graphics, icons, symbols, and logo), and design (typography, layout, color, contrast, shape, hierarchy). Unlike traditional posters, digital posters facilitate their viewers with zooms and transitions which help them bring attention to a specific section and minimize cognitive overload (Kumar, Patel, Vatsya, & Dhillon, 2020; Shin, 2012).

In a political setting, digital posters comprise slogans, politicians' photographs, logos of political parties, and designs. They are used by both political parties and politicians to fulfill persuasive and organizational functions (Aulich & Sylvestrova, 1999; Popova, 2012; Lee & Campbell, 2016). In terms of persuasive function, digital posters are used to reach and persuade mass electorates. Meanwhile, in terms of organizational function, they are used to create a shared identity for partisans and supporters across borderline and elevate politicians' electability ahead of a Presidential Election. In a Presidential Election, digital posters concentrate on politicians, not their political parties (Enly & Skogerbø, 2013; Steffan & Venema, 2020). Although they are posted on political parties' or

official supporters' timelines, politicians (candidates) are highlighted. Accordingly, each element of digital posters presenting politicians' self-images and self-concepts has to be well-considered before being posted to draw the attention of social media users.

Since Instagram is a visual-centric app offering high-resolution displays (Dimitrova & Matthes, 2018; Muñoz & Towner, 2017), it becomes the perfect venue for politicians to showcase their self-images and self-presentation with or without captions in form of digital posters. The excellent visual display of digital posters on Instagram is extremely powerful to instantly grab its users' attention. Thus, the number of voter turnouts can be increased day by day. It has been proven that the visual aesthetics offered by Instagram has made politics look interesting and light (Riedl, Schwemmer, Ziewiecki, & Ross, 2021), encouraged citizens to feel more personally connected to political content (Olof, 2021), and captivated novice voters, as the most participative voters, to engage in the election (Gracia, 2020). Realizing such massive impacts of Instagram, politicians across the globe start using it to affect the decision-making process of Instagram users in the long run.

In Indonesia, Instagram users become potential targets of political campaigns. In August 2022, Napoleon (2022) released that 48.4 % of Indonesians are active Instagram users, most of whom are at productive ages (aged 16-54). Reflecting on Indonesia's 2019 Presidential Election, the voters with productive ages became the most participative (67. 2 % of total voters). In addition, 28. 2 % of them were novice voters (*Badan Pusat Statistik*, 2019). These preliminary data indicated that Instagram becomes a potential platform for politicians in Indonesia

to land political propaganda to cover mass electorates including millennials and Gen X voters as novice voters. Hence, posting politicians' digital posters on Instagram can be one of the effective political propaganda strategies to win Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election.

Although the General Election Commissions (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum*: KPU) has not released official campaign schedules yet, some political parties, such as the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (*Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan:* PDIP), the Party of Functional Groups (*Partai Golongan Karya*: GOLKAR), the National Awakening Party (*Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*: PKB), and the Democratic Party (*Partai Demokrat*: PD), initiated implicit and explicit political campaigns by posting politicians' digital posters on Instagram. Their prospective candidates are linguistically and non-linguistically represented on digital posters to empower them as ideal future leaders.

Realizing that political digital posters contribute to disseminating information to both decided and undecided voters, their variety of modes has a substantial function in communicating the meaning. Linguistic mode, on digital politicians' posters, coexists with other modes (visual and spatial) to communicate a message to the viewers. Those modes are interdependent in meaning-making. Linguistic mode, on digital politicians' posters, refers to written words. It comprises diction, the genre of communication, referential choice, and represented actions—transitivity, verb processes, abstraction, and nominalization (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Then, visual mode refers to the visual components of any portrait, design, image, or photo. It includes attributes, salience (size, tone, focus, color, foregrounding, backgrounding, and overlapping), attitude (gaze and poses), and

social relation (distance and angle) (Bateman, Wildfeuer, & Hippala, 2017; Kress & Leeuwen, 2021; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Moreover, spatial mode covers spatial resources in conveying meanings. Organization of the objects (spacing and position) and arrangement or proximity of the text are some examples of spatial meaning-making (Bateman et al., 2017; Kress & Leeuwen, 2021). As linguistic, visual, and spatial modes on politicians' digital posters can convey meanings for persuasion to the electorates, the interplay of their elements needs to be critically analyzed to reveal politicians' underlying beliefs and ideologies. Thus, multimodal analysis can be an initial and important attempt to explore how politicians achieve their goals in affecting the electorate's decision-making process.

Multimodal analysis is an approach to investigating how the combination of multiple modes makes meaning by interpreting semiotic resources (Bateman et al., 2017; Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). It means that modes presented together need to be interpreted concerning one another and cannot be considered separately. In the political domain, semiotic resources found on politicians' digital posters mean a lot to the electorates. Although they do not have fixed meanings and are open to various interpretations, the highlighting of certain modes' elements and the de-emphasis or concealment of other modes' elements can capture politicians' beliefs, ideologies, and ideas behind their social media campaigns. Thus, the electorates can make a correct decision to vote for the right presidential candidates by considering such modes' elements.

In the past, the electorates' decision-making in Indonesia when voting for a certain presidential candidate was mainly influenced by huge crowds at the rallies rather than getting messages from the various modes and media used by the

candidate. But nowadays, posts in the form of visual or textual content via social media platforms play essential roles in constructing public opinions and mobilizing users (Saraswati, 2018). On Instagram, specifically, its users normally focus on politicians' images such as statues and paintings, portrait photography, posters, leaflets, and advertisements (Grusell & Nord, 2020; Lilleker, Anastasia, & Daniel, 2019) rather than texts. Such a trend can obscure Instagram users' perspectives when evaluating politicians. However, these users' perspectives are influenced by the strategies used by politicians to present themselves. Some politicians prefer to highlight linguistic aspects, some politicians prefer to highlight visual aspects, and the rest prefer to equalize these two aspects on their digital posters. To arrange the elements in space, some digital political posters use different strategies. Some place one element in the Center of the message, and other elements are symmetrically arranged around the Center, some place two opposed elements (written text and image) in a horizontal juxtaposition (Given-New), and the rest place two opposed elements in a vertical conjunction (Ideal-Real). The following preliminary data can show how politicians have different linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies:

Table 1.1
Examples of Digital Political Posters Posted on Instagram

No	Digital Poster	Dominating Aspect	Physical Arrangement
1.		Linguistic	Center-Margins

	Source:@aniesbaswedan_2024		
2.	Source: @gpmn_dpd_dki	Visual	Ideal-Real
3.	Source: @airlangga2024	Linguistic & Visual	Ideal-Real
4.	Source: @pdemokrat	Linguistic & Visual	Given-New

Whichever linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies are employed by politicians in the upcoming Presidential Election, a multimodal analysis will unmask their beliefs, ideologies, and ideas. Hence, the findings of this study are very significant to facilitate Instagram users in Indonesia in evaluating politicians' beliefs, ideologies, and ideas behind their self-presentation and self-branding in the upcoming Presidential Election.

Compared to other platforms, few researchers have done their studies on Instagram. In the area of multimodality, four studies were found. Dobkiewicz (2019) researched the multimodality of 330 posts taken from Trump's 2016 presidential campaign on Instagram. He analyzed narratives in Trump's Instagram by combining semantic analysis and visual grammar. Then, Oyemade and Adeagbo (2019) analyzed memes of the 2019 Nigerian presidential campaign posted on Instagram by considering their textual and visual aspects. Other researchers— Grusell and Nord (2020) analyzed visual images of leaders of Political Parties in Sweden during the 2018 general election posted on Instagram. Next, Susetya and Nurhayati (2020) analyzed photos with more likes of Sandiaga Salahudin Uno as a Vice President candidate before and after the 2019 Indonesia Presidential Election. Those previous studies explicitly revealed that some researchers only considered linguistic mode, visual mode, and the combination of both modes in conveying messages to the electorates. Then, connotators of meaning in linguistic aspects such as the combination of diction, concealment, representation of transitivity, and genre of communication, the connotators of meaning in visual aspects such as attributes, poses, and behaviors, and connotators of meaning in spatial aspect such as physical arrangement have not been analyzed yet. Thus, the political ideas and hidden values of the politicians are still unmasked.

Different from previous studies, this study supplements another mode, namely spatial mode, besides linguistic and visual modes when analyzing digital posters on Instagram. This study also includes linguistic, visual, and spatial connotators of meaning to reveal politicians' ideas and hidden values behind their self-presentations on their digital posters. Thus, the interplay of linguistic, visual,

and spatial modes can be used to describe political phenomena. In other words, compared to other studies, this study is interdisciplinary or even transdisciplinary.

As the digital poster is a new transformation of political campaign tools utilized by politicians in this digital era, analyzing multiple means of meaning-making (linguistically, visually, and spatially) is contributive for the electorate to evaluate the self-presentation and self-branding of the politicians ahead of Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election. It is believed that the combination of the linguistic, visual, and spatial modes' analyses in this study clearly describes and explains politicians' strategies, their realizations, and their rationales presented on their digital posters.

1.2   Problems of the Study

Ahead of Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election, the politicians who wish to run for presidential candidates must have deliberately employed different strategies to influence the electorate's opinions, judgments, and decision-making. As a visual-centric app, Instagram extremely helps politicians share high-definition digital posters. To communicate political messages to the electorate, the interdependence of linguistic, visual, and spatial modes framed on digital posters needs to be analyzed in meaning-making. Concerning such overviews, the problems of the study are formulated as follows:

1. What linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies are employed by the politicians on their digital posters to communicate their political messages and persuade the electorates on Instagram?

2. How are the linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies realized to communicate the politicians' messages and persuade the electorates on Instagram?

3. Why are the linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies employed in the ways they are?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims to:

1. elucidate linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies employed by politicians on their digital posters to communicate their political messages and persuade the electorates on Instagram.

2. elaborate the realization process of linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies of politicians in communicating their messages and persuading the electorates on Instagram.

3. explain the reasons why linguistic, visual, and spatial strategies are employed in the ways they are

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is restricted to national politicians who overtly present their self-image and self-branding as the ideal pre-presidential candidates on digital posters via Instagram ahead of Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election. Static digital posters are analyzed in this study. They may be posted by politicians, official supporters, or political parties on their Instagram feeds, galleries, or albums. Since

politicians' digital posters on Instagram are posted to influence and mobilize potential voters, the number of followers of politicians, official supporters, and political parties and likes on uploaded politicians' digital posters on Instagram are taken into consideration in this study.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study provides the electorates with valuable information and understanding of how meaning is communicated by the politicians (*Ganjar Pranowo, Muhaimin Iskandar, Airlangga Hartarto, Prabowo Subianto*, and *Anies Baswedan*) on their digital posters not only through language such as linguistic features but also through other semiotic modes such as visual and spatial features as their strategies to mobilize potential users on Instagram. A more thorough and systematic analysis of such features in this study, in addition, gives a clear description of how their buried ideas, values, and identities can be revealed. Thus, the political and ideological messages hidden behind their semiotic choices can be clearly understood by the electorates. For other researchers, this study can guide them in terms of how to elucidate the interplay of linguistic, visual, and spatial modes on digital posters to reveal their political strategies in persuading the voters.

Practically, this study is very beneficial for electorates and political parties endorsing politicians. For the electorates, this study will raise their critical awareness to evaluate their self-concept, self-image, and self-branding presented through linguistic, visual, and spatial modes on their digital posters in the pre-Presidential Election. Thus, a careful decision can be taken before voting for them

and the electorates no longer regret voting for the wrong politicians for the upcoming four-year term. For political parties, this study can be a reference for making good, meaningful, and strategic digital posters ahead of the Presidential Election in terms of how to interweave linguistic, visual, and spatial aspects in order to create positive and attractive images with purposeful political messages.