

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Before the researcher will dive into a thorough analysis of the research object, it is important for the researcher to address and identify the background and problems surrounding the topic of research. Therefore, this chapter will introduce the research by elaborating on five key points, which include the: background of the problem, problem identification, significance of research, research question, and research aim.

### **1.1 Background of the Problem**

World renowned philosopher, logician, and mathematician Charles Sanders Peirce once said that, “The entire universe is immersed in signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs” (Noth, 1990 : 41). In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects and all manipulations and by-products of such forms (Chandler, 2007). A way in which signs can be used for the benefit of certain people or groups in power is through the medium of verbal communication, such as speeches, in the context of public speaking.

Through time, speeches have become an important tool for people to inform; to educate; to entertain; but most importantly to persuade; specifically, by people with political power, namely leaders and representatives of groups of people. The powers of persuasion, through verbal communication in the form of speeches, is also the one common tool used amongst powerful people in the world of politics.

Throughout history, political figures varying from Adolf Hitler, to Martin Luther King Jr, to Barack Obama have not only been made (in)famous for their actions but also their words. Specific instances that require and employ the use of speeches by people or groups in power, in order to assert their authority, is according to the context of political speeches. A common theme or “style”, as coined by Block & Negrine (2017), in political speeches that has been used by various leaders throughout history to assert their authority and gain power is populism.

Following Cas Mudde’s (2004) concept of populism as a basic understanding, he argued that populism is a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite". Between the two, Mudde (2004) explains that those who claim themselves to be part of “the pure people”, in a democratic society, argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonte general* (general will) of the people. Consequently, people in power who claim to be a part of the same group, feel obligated to create policies for the betterment of everyone in that said group, but not necessarily for the betterment of everyone in society.

The resurgence of populism in contemporary politics has triggered a global debate on its significance and effect. From the UK to the US, from Venezuela to France, many polities are facing with the same political thunderbolt of populism where the Brexit Campaign, the Presidency of Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen’s nationalist movement, Alexis Tsipras’ aggressive position toward the EU and many other momentous events around the world are named as. The emerging populist actors cultivate a political alternative in the body of a popular identity where it is

promised that feelings, emotions, aspirations, and demands will be satisfied (Cezayirlioğlu, 2017). This populist identity is channeled through what is called by Block and Negrine, “A populist communication style in the construction of identity and political power” (2017); an understanding that centers communication at the heart of populism. To explore populism within the context of communication is fitting, for populist ideas are often channeled through acts of speech, as populist actors use forms of communication (signs) to connect with what Mudde (2004) says to be “the pure people” and simultaneously demonizing “the corrupt elite” or the opposition.

Populist themes in political speeches has been apparent throughout history as a tool to bring forth an agenda that united the supposed general will of the pure people. Examples vary from the likes of Bernie Sanders’ inaugural campaign speech that addressed the “needs of the American people” in 2015 (Klein, 2015), to Rodrigo Duterte’s flare of “Dutertismo” (Miller, 2018; as cited in Reed, 2018) in all his political speeches from the beginning of his campaign to his eventual election as the President of the Philippines, to the rampant existence of anti-Islam sentiment across European countries, such as Germany, that is conveyed through right-wing populist political rhetoric and speeches by their leaders (Kaya and Tecmen, 2018). It has come to the attention of the researcher that the wave of populism in politics and the application of a populist political style through speeches to gain power, has also arrived at the shores of Indonesia’s capital city; as manifested through the inaugural speech of Jakarta’s recent governor, Anies Baswedan.

The speech given by Baswedan during his inauguration as Jakarta's governor addressed a variety of topics that he deems to be of note and concern for his administration and for Indonesia society. However, the speech centered around the general theme of 'unity in diversity'. Baswedan repeatedly mentions the concept of unity amid diversity that transcends socio-cultural factors but also economic and political factors in Indonesia. However, it is important to note that any text is a fabric woven from signs; it is open and interpretable, but it must be viewed as a coherent whole (Eco, 1985; as cited in Guillemette and Cosette, 2006). And viewing Baswedan's speech as a coherent whole, it can be said that at first glance it may seem like a speech that calls for unity in diversity; but if looked upon even further, it is safe to say that Baswedan uses the theme of 'unity in diversity' as the driver for his populist agenda that creates a sense of division than unison.

## **1.2 Problem Identification**

It has been brought by the attention of many that the signs Baswedan used in his inaugural speech contain a generally underlying divisive connotation (Kapoor & Da Costa, 2017) that represents an overall populist agenda at a grand scale, despite its seemingly inclusive exterior. Baswedan frequently uses signs in the form of metaphors, similes, simplifications, repetition, and proverbs as tools to deliver the theme of "unity in diversity" amid social tension in his speech. One specific sign that Baswedan used was the word, *pribumi*, which became the catalyst for great controversy across the nation.

The word *pribumi* has significant connotative weight due to its correlation with Indonesia's colonial past. The general understanding is that the word was used to describe Indigenous Indonesians (Chan, 2017). It is a word that is controversial and the usage of the word in a speech by a newly elected governor of a major city in the world during his inauguration—especially given the socio-political climate of Jakarta at the time—has sparked great nationwide debate (Ramadhani, 2017). The word has such an extensive and controversial weight to it that former President of Indonesia, B.J. Habibie (1998; as cited in Merdeka.com; 2017), officiated through Presidential Instruction Number 26, under the First Clause, that instructs:

*“Kepada:*

- 1. Para Menteri;*
- 2. Para Pimpinan Lembaga Pemerintah Non Departemen;*
- 3. Para Pimpinan Kesekretariatan Lembaga Tertinggi/Tinggi Negara;*
- 4. Para Gubernur Kepala Daerah Tingkat I dan Bupati/Walikota/madya Kepala Daerah Tingkat II;*

*Untuk:*

*PERTAMA:*

*Menghentikan penggunaan istilah pribumi dan non pribumi dalam semua perumusan dan penyelenggaraan kebijakan, perencanaan program, ataupun pelaksanaan kegiatan penyelenggaraan pemerintahan.”*

The former president specifically instructed Ministers, Heads of Non Departmental Government Agencies, The Secretariat of the Supreme/Higher State Institution, The Provincial Governors and Regents/Mayors of the Second Level Regions for them to stop the use of the terms *pribumi* and *non-pribumi* in all policy formulation and implementation, program planning, or implementation of governance activities.

Naturally, there were opposing responses towards Baswedan's inaugural speech. A great portion of the public highlights its divisive connotations and others

defending his usage of the term as merely a technical term to describe the indigenous people of Indonesia, as per the translation of the word *pribumi* in English. Sam Aliano, head of the Young Indonesian Entrepreneurs Society and avid supporter of Baswedan, even claimed that the term *pribumi* is a valid term that is endorsed by the United Nations and is used by the UN to celebrate International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples annually on August 9th (Rahma and Chairunnisa, 2017). Conversely, according to BBC Indonesia's interview (2017) of Sri Budi Eko Wardani, Executive Director of the Center for Political Studies at the University of Indonesia, on the topic of Baswedan's speech, she mentioned that:

"Jakarta ini sudah sangat kota megapolitan yang dibangun dengan keberagaman dan kata pribumi yang diucapkan di situ, orang langsung me-refer (mengacu) ke Pilkada DKI kemarin dengan gubernur yang dikalahkan adalah etnik Tionghoa dan ada segregasi kelompok etnik dan kelompok pribumi yang memang pada masa kolonial digunakan oleh pemerintah penjajah untuk memecah belah, ini seperti tak sensitif dengan konteks pilkada yang baru saja dilalui."

Wardani explained that Jakarta is already a *megapolitan* city that was built with diversity. The usage of *pribumi* in Baswedan's inaugural speech will implicitly suggest the Indonesian people to refer to previous Jakarta Gubernatorial elections, with the candidate who was defeated that happens to be of Chinese ethnicity; an ethnic minority in Indonesia. Wardani also added that the connotation behind the word *pribumi* entailed the history of segregation between ethnic groups and indigenous groups in the colonial period used by the Dutch colonial government to create division. It is as if Baswedan was not sensitive enough with his speech considering the socio-political context of the elections; fully knowing the connotations of the word *pribumi*. Moreover, to clarify the point made by Wardani

on the strategic usage of the term *pribumi* in the speech, Baswedan (2017; transcribed from NET.Z, 2017) said as part of his inaugural speech: “*Jakarta adalah satu dari sedikit tempat di Indonesia yang merasakan hadirnya penjajah dalam kehidupan sehari-hari selama berabad-abad lamanya. Rakyat pribumi ditindas dan dikalahkan oleh kolonialisme. Kini telah merdeka, saatnya kita jadi tuan rumah di negeri sendiri.*” Baswedan said that Jakarta is one of the few places in Indonesia that feels the presence of invaders/colonizers in our everyday lives for centuries. He then added that the *pribumi* people have been oppressed and defeated by colonialism and now free, it is time for the *pribumi* to become hosts of their own country.

Though both sides of the argument present valid points, it cannot be denied that Baswedan’s choice of diction coupled with the usage of various signs in his inaugural speech, considering the current political climate of Jakarta at the time, inevitably suggests a divisive connotation that is used to bring forth a populist agenda. Consequently, creating a notion of further division amongst a country that prides itself for unity in diversity. Or in the context of Mudde’s concept of populism: Baswedan setting himself as a spokesperson for the “pure people” and acting upon their *volonte general*, whilst simultaneously creating a sense of alienation, by prioritizing those whom he associates with the word *pribumi* through his speech; creating an ‘us’ vs ‘them’ binary.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Therefore, reading Baswedan's inaugural speech through the lens of semiotics and against the backdrop of populism, the research aims to answer **the main research question** which reads: **In what ways is populism represented in Anies Baswedan's inaugural speech?**

### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to determine in what ways is populism represented in Anies Baswedan's inaugural speech, using methods of semiotics and supported by theories of communication and populism.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Academically, this research hopes to enrich the field study of political communication. In particular, serving as literature that may contribute to the study scope of populist political communication that uses the lens of semiotics. Since the concept of populism is relatively new in Indonesian social sciences academia, the research hopes to contribute a fresh perspective on the rising political concept.

Practically, it is safe to say that there is a gap that can be filled by this research regarding a semiotic analysis of Anies Baswedan's speech on the background of populism. This research can be relevant and beneficial to the spectrum of literature in communication, political communication and politics at

both a national, regional, and international scale. The research is expected to trigger more studies on the topic of political communication that uses populism as its conceptual foundation; considering the rising nature of populism in the world of politics.

Socially, this research is expected to educate readers about the importance of reading between the lines. Not many people can identify and interpret the possible underlying agenda that is implicit in the specific section Baswedan's speech, when used the word *pribumi* and the speech in its entirety. Especially considering the socio-political context of Jakarta of which coincides with the formulation and delivery of the speech. As mentioned in point 1.1 of this chapter: any text is a fabric woven from signs; it is open and interpretable, but it must be viewed as a coherent whole. Thus, it is important that a study, specifically a semiotic analysis against the backdrop populism, of Anies Baswedan's speech is made.

## **1.6 Organization of the Study**

The study on analyzing Anies Baswedan's inaugural speech, according to the lens of semiotics and against the backdrop of populism, will be elaborated into six key chapters. The first, being the introduction, where the researcher will be discussing and identifying the background of the problem, whilst pointing out the significance and purpose of the research. The second, will identify and thoroughly elaborate on the object of the research and the surrounding environment and/or phenomena, that serves as a foundation for the study. The third, will consist of a literature review that elaborate on the concepts and theories used as a point of

reference for the study and will conclude with a theoretical framework; serving as the state of the art for the study.

The fourth chapter will identify the methodology used in this study from the approach and paradigm, method, data collection, data collection, research accountability, and data analysis. The fifth chapter is the nucleus of the study where the researcher will be doing an elaborate and thorough discussion of the object of research, using the conceptual and theoretical framework as a foundation for analysis. The sixth and final chapter will be a conclusion to the study, along with any critiques and suggestions for the readers.

