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Diverging Attitudes in 2024 Indonesian Election Coverage: *The Jakarta Post* vs. *Independent Observer*

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the utilization of attitudes in editorial articles about the 2024 Indonesian presidential election in *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer*. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study adopts the Appraisal theory by Martin & White, (2005) and Martin & Rose (2007) to analyze and interpret the evaluative language employed in the articles. The data were taken from six editorial articles related to the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, published between October 2023 to March 2024, in *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer* (a Jakarta-based English-language weekly publication known for its political commentary). This study employs textual and discourse analyses to examine the interpersonal language used and its broader social implications. The findings revealed that Appreciation is the most frequent category with 251 items (66%), followed by Judgment with 96 items (25%), and Affect with 33 items (9%). These findings indicate that the appreciation portrays the media's role in subtly guiding the audience's evaluation of political events, allowing for a space where audiences can form their own interpretations while still being subtly influenced by the media's tone. The judgment values used in the media imply that the media contributes to crafting a more competent and trustworthy image of politicians, which can influence the way voters view and assess them. Finally, the negative effect, especially insecurity, illustrates how the media may amplify doubts or fears related to the feasibility of government programs, which could influence public opinion and perception of political candidates. It also highlights the critical need for media literacy and public awareness of how language choices in news discourse can shape democratic participation and affect political engagement. Furthermore, this study serves as a valuable reference for future researchers interested in media discourse analysis, particularly in the context of political journalism.

Keywords: *appraisal system; attitudinal analysis; systemic functional linguistic*

Introduction

As the 2024 Indonesian presidential election unfolded different narratives emerged. Some candidates framed as visionary leaders promising stability and progress, while others cast doubt on their transparency, intentions, or affiliations. These contrasting portrayals reveal how language choices in political coverage can shape public perception, stir emotions, and subtly guide voter judgment.

In today's digital era, people encounter numerous news reports or editorial articles daily through online platforms, radio, television, and other media. Many individuals accept the news or editorial articles at face value without questioning how it is framed. Tang (2024) found that news media employ emotional, moral, and group-based language to influence public perception, particularly during elections. Similarly, Rodrigo-Ginés et al. (2024) argue that media bias significantly impacts democracy, with language serving as a powerful tool for shaping narratives. Both studies emphasize that linguistic choices such as emotional framing and selective reporting can contribute to polarization and reinforce ideological divisions.

When media use emotionally charged or one-sided narratives, they can deepen societal rifts and create echo chambers where individuals are only exposed to viewpoints that confirm their existing beliefs. Over time, this can lead to greater distrust between different political groups and a more divided society. If people are unaware of these subtle influences, they may be misled by distorted narratives, manipulated into adopting certain viewpoints, or even discouraged from participating in democratic processes. This highlights the importance of analyzing how language is used in news reports to promote critical thinking and media literacy, enabling readers to navigate the complex media landscape more effectively. Simply reading headlines is not enough to understand the news. A deeper examination of how journalists use language, frame stories, and construct narratives is essential for critically engaging with the information presented to the public.

An effective way to analyze the language used by news media is through attitudinal analysis within the Appraisal system by Martin and White (2005). This framework examines how language expresses Attitude, focusing on three key categories: Affect (emotions), Judgment (moral evaluations), and Appreciation (aesthetic or value-based assessments). By identifying these linguistic patterns, researchers can uncover how media subtly shape public perception, influence opinions about political events, and reinforce ideological biases. Applying attitudinal analysis helps reveal whether editorial articles present a balanced perspective or favor certain viewpoints, making it a valuable tool for media discourse analysis.

Research has shown that language use and attitude in media play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of events and policies. Dai and Pan (2024) analyzed how China Daily and The New York Times reported on the Roe vs. Wade case, revealing the dominance of effective resources in both media. More broadly,

attitudinal resources in Chinese and Western media have been frequently compared, with studies indicating that judgment tends to dominate over effect and appreciation. Chinese media often employ positive judgment to construct a favorable image of the government and its people (Asad et al., 2021; Jiang, 2022; Wang, 2022).

Such use of positive judgment is particularly evident in COVID-19 related discourse, where Chinese media highlight the government's handling of the crisis and the efforts of medical workers (Liu et al., 2022; Luporini, 2021). In contrast, Western media frequently adopt negative judgment, portraying the Chinese government as ineffective in controlling the outbreak and preventing its global spread (Lei, 2022; Ye, 2021). The prominence of affect and judgment in news reporting suggests that news media do not merely describe events but also reflect underlying ideological perspectives and interests.

The way language and attitude are expressed in media and public discourse also play a role in shaping political perceptions and narratives. Studies on Indonesian political discourse suggests that appraisal resources, particularly judgment and affect, are strategically employed to convey leadership, public sentiment, and media framing. Sekarsari, et al. (2024) analyzed President Joko Widodo's speeches at the 2023 ASEAN Summit in Jakarta, highlighting the prominence of judgment in asserting his leadership and authority. Similarly, public reactions to political figures and decisions, as seen in social media discussions and news reports, reflect a mix of positive and negative attitudes. Burhanudin (2020) found that while affect was predominantly positive, judgment was negative in the Kompas daily Instagram comments regarding the appointment of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama as Pertamina's main commissioner.

Other studies also illustrate how appraisal shapes political discourse. Kholifah (2021) found that journalist sentiment towards the inauguration of the KPK Supervisory Board was overwhelmingly negative, with President Jokowi receiving negative judgment. Khristianto (2020) analyzed political debates on YouTube, showing a dominance of negative judgments towards political figures. Meanwhile, Hendrastuti (2019) examined foreign media coverage of the Ahok religious blasphemy case, revealing a predominantly positive attitude in support of a just and peaceful resolution. Arintowati and Wahyudi (2022) explored netizen responses to Minister of Education and Culture Nadiem Makarim's Instagram posts, noting a balance between positive and negative attitudes. Sukma (2018) analyzed the appraisal system in political campaign slogans for regional head candidates in Bogor, finding that all appraisal tools used were positive.

While numerous studies have examined media discourse and attitudinal analysis, comparative research on Indonesian English-language media remains limited, particularly in the context of significant national events such as the 2024 presidential election. *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer* are both online

news media that publish in English, yet they differ in their political orientations, target readerships, and discursive approaches. Therefore, there is a notable research gap in understanding how these media employ evaluative language to frame the same political event.

The 2024 Indonesian presidential election, held on February 14, was a pivotal political moment. It featured three candidate pairs: Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, and Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka. The campaign period was marked by sharp political polarization, rising voter skepticism, and growing public concern over dynastic politics, particularly due to Gibran's candidacy as the son of President Joko Widodo.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining how two different news media framed the 2024 presidential election through the lens of the Appraisal framework. It focuses on the use of Attitude (Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation) to reveal implicit ideological positions embedded in their editorials. By doing so, the study also contributes to a broader understanding of how language mediates political perception and democratic engagement. To guide this inquiry, the following research questions are proposed:

1. How are attitudinal resources (Affect, Judgment, Appreciation) used in *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer* editorial articles on the 2024 Indonesian presidential election?
2. What ideological perspectives are reflected in the evaluative language used by these two media?

Ultimately, this study not only offers insight into the ideological role of language in Indonesian news media but also underscores the importance of media literacy in interpreting political discourse. A more critical understanding of evaluative language can empower citizens to better navigate political information and engage meaningfully in democratic processes.
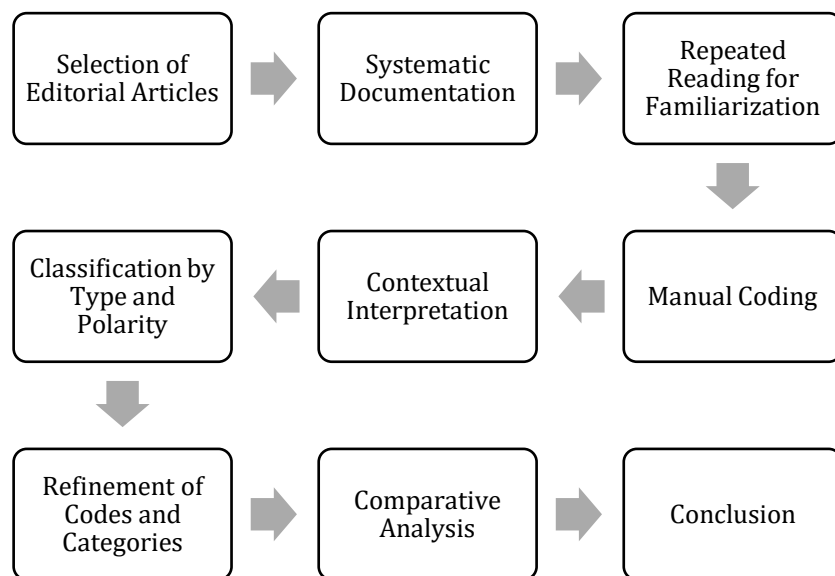

Method

This study employs text analysis and discourse analysis to examine how language constructs social realities, frames narratives, and potentially conveys biases in the context of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. Text analysis focuses on specific language choices and appraisal patterns in the articles, while discourse analysis provides a broader context for understanding how these linguistic patterns contribute to the overall narrative and ideological stance of each media.

The primary data consists of six editorial articles discussing various aspects of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. These articles were published between October 2023 and March 2024, and were sourced from two Indonesian news media that publish in English: *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer*. Editorials were chosen because they explicitly represent the opinions and institutional stance of the media, making them ideal for evaluative and ideological

analysis. To ensure the relevance and focus of the dataset, the selected articles were limited to editorials explicitly discussing the 2024 Indonesian presidential election and containing evaluative language aligned with the Appraisal system. Each article addressed distinct themes such as candidates, campaigns, or public response to avoid redundancy across sources. Systematic documentation is also employed, recording key details such as publication dates, headlines, and authors to maintain an organized and accessible dataset.

The coding process was conducted manually by the researcher using the Attitude subsystem of the Appraisal system, which categorizes evaluative language into Effect, Judgment, and Appreciation. The process began with repeated readings of each article to gain familiarity with the content and to identify segments that contained evaluative expressions. These expressions were then labeled according to their Attitude type and further classified based on polarity, whether positive or negative.

As the analysis progressed, initial codes were refined and grouped based on shared characteristics, allowing for more consistent and meaningful categorization. Each coded instance was also examined within its immediate textual and discursive context to understand its rhetorical function and contribution to the overall narrative of the editorial. A comparative analysis was then carried out to observe patterns and differences in evaluative language use between *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer*.

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│  Editorial   │      │ Documentation│      │ Reading for  │
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│ Refinement of│  ⇨   │ Comparative  │  ⇨   │  Conclusion  │
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The coding process in this study was conducted manually by the researcher as the sole coder. To enhance the validity of the analysis, expert judgment was employed by involving a specialist in discourse analysis to review the coding results. The expert provided feedback on the accuracy of the classification of Attitude based on the Appraisal framework.

The input from the expert was used to refine the categories and ensure that the coding process was consistent and theoretically sound.

In cases where more than one coder is involved, it is important to conduct an inter-coder reliability check to ensure that codes are applied consistently across the data. This is typically done by having each coder independently analyze a portion of the data, then comparing and discussing any differences until consensus is reached. However, since this study involved only one coder, such a reliability check was not applicable.

Results

This study highlights the attitudes expressed in articles from *The Jakarta Post* and the *Independent Observer.* By analyzing the use of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, along with their positive and negative tones, the findings reveal distinct patterns in how each media presents its perspectives. The table below summarizes these findings and shows the frequency and distribution of each attitude type in *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer*.

Table 1. Attitudes in The Jakarta Post and Independent Observer

Source	Attitude	Polarity	Frequency	Percentage
The Jakarta Post	Affect	Positive	6	3.4%
		Negative	13	7.3%
	Judgment	Positive	35	19.6%
		Negative	34	19%
	Appreciation	Positive	53	29.6%
		Negative	38	21.2%
Total			179	100%
Independent Observer	Affect	Positive	9	4.5%
		Negative	5	2.5%
	Judgment	Positive	21	10.4%
		Negative	6	3%
	Appreciation	Positive	102	50.7%
		Negative	58	28.9%
Total			201	100%

In *the Jakarta Post*, Appreciation is the most frequently employed resource, making up over half of the attitudes identified (50.8%), followed by Judgment (38.6%) and Affect (10.7%). *Independent Observer* also heavily relies on Appreciation (79.6%), though to a greater extent than The Jakarta Post, with much lower use of Judgment (13.4%) and Affect (7%). This suggests that both media prioritize value-laden appraisals of events or policies, but with differing emphasis and intensity.

This study analyzed six articles, examining them in three pairs based on the same topic as shown below.

a) MK Decision Regarding Age Limits for Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates

The first pair of articles analyzes the Constitutional Court's controversial ruling on age limits. *The Jakarta Post's* article, "Salvaging the Constitutional Court" (18 October 2023, 641 words), offers a concise yet evaluative perspective. In contrast, *Independent Observer's* "Presidential Candidacy: Beyond the Age Restriction Issue" (8 October 2023, 1,788 words) provides a more extensive discussion. The finding of the analysis is presented in the following table.

Table 2. Frequency of Attitudes in Salvaging the Constitutional Court and Presidential Candidacy

Features	Subtype	Salvaging the Constitutional Court		Presidential Candidacy: Beyond The Age Restriction Issue	
		Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Affect	Un/happiness	1		1	
	In/security	2			1
	Dis/satisfaction		1		1
	Dis/inclination	1			
Total		4	1	1	2
Judgment	Normality			2	
	Capacity	6	3	7	1
	Tenacity		1	1	
	Veracity		3		
	Propriety	1	5	1	3
Total		7	12	11	4
Appreciation	Reaction	10	4	12	12
	Composition	2	2	7	7
	Valuation	8	6	8	7
Total		20	12	27	26

Appreciation is dominant in both texts. *The Jakarta Post* applies it mainly to affirm the Court's institutional legitimacy (20 positives, 12 negative items), while *Independent Observer* offers a more balanced yet intense use (27 positives, 26 negative), suggesting ambivalence toward the legal and political implications.

The following are examples of the Appreciation resources employed in *Salvaging the Constitutional Court* and *Presidential Candidacy*:

(1) It was **able to maintain [REACTION - POSITIVE]** a certain level of public legitimacy as the sole interpreter of the Constitution (The Jakarta Post, 2023).

(2) The regulation was claimed to be **necessary [VALUATION – POSITIVE]** to organize elections for a number of new autonomous regions in Papua and West Papua (Independent Observer, 2023).

Judgment follows, with *The Jakarta Post* leaning toward criticism (12 negatives, 7 positive), highlighting past corruption within the court. *Independent Observer* presents a more affirmative stance (11 positives, 4 negative), focusing on candidates' capability.

The following are examples of the Judgment resources employed in *Salvaging the Constitutional Court* and *Presidential Candidacy*:

(1) At least two Constitutional Court justices, Akil Mochtar and Patrialis Akbar, have been imprisoned for **accepting bribes [PROPRIETY – NEGATIVE]** (The Jakarta Post, 2023).

(2) Gibran Rakabuming Raka, who, according to him, had **led [CAPACITY – POSITIVE]** Surakarta successfully at the age of 35 (Independent Observer, 2023).

Affect is used sparingly. *The Jakarta Post* expresses cautious optimism (4 positives, 1 negative), whereas *Independent Observer* signals restrained emotional engagement (1 positive, 2 negative), reflecting doubt or concern.

The following are examples of the Affect resources employed in *Salvaging the Constitutional Court* and *Presidential Candidacy*:

(1) **We do not believe [SECURITY – POSITIVE]** that the problem lies with Anwar alone (The Jakarta Post, 2023).

(2) According to Almas Tsaqibbirru, in his request, case No. 90/ PUU-XXI/2023, he admitted to **admiring [HAPPINESS – POSITIVE]** the Mayor of Surakarta. (Independent Observer, 2023).

b) Announcement of official candidates for president and vice president for the 2024 election

This article pair addresses the official registration of candidates. *The Jakarta Post's* editorial, "May the Best Win Fairly" (16 November 2023, 733 words), emphasizes democratic values and fair competition. *Independent Observer's* shorter article, "Presidential Election Registration Is Complete" (5 November 2023, 520 words), delivers a more concise and celebratory tone. The finding of the

analysis is presented in the following table.

Table 3, Frequency of Attitudes in *May the Best Win Fairly* and *Presidential Election Registration Is Complete*

Features	Subtype	May the Best Win Fairly		Presidential Election Registration Is Complete	
		Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Affect	Un/happiness			4	
	In/security	1	5		2
	Dis/satisfaction		1		
	Dis/inclination		1	2	
Total		1	7	6	2
Judgment	Normality	1	5	1	
	Capacity	13	2	4	
	Tenacity	2	2	2	
	Veracity	3			
	Propriety	1	11	2	
Total		20	20	9	0
Appreciation	Reaction	5	1	14	6
	Composition			2	2
	Valuation	8	3	7	1
Total		13	4	23	9

Appreciation is prominent in both articles. *The Jakarta Post* includes 13 positive and 4 negative Appreciation items, often highlighting electoral values such as fairness and ethical conduct. *Independent Observer* presents a stronger use (23 positives, 9 negative), particularly through emotional responses and institutional assessments, reflecting optimism about the process.

The following are examples of the Appreciation resources employed in *May the Best Win Fairly* and *Presidential Election Registration Is Complete*:

(1) The election, if it runs equitably, smoothly, and peacefully, is **still up for grabs [VALUATION – POSITIVE]** (The Jakarta Post, 2023).
(2) I hope that we will get a **clear [COMPOSITION – POSITIVE]** winner in a single round, such that the new government can start anew (Independent Observer, 2023).

Judgment in *The Jakarta Post* is balanced, with an equal number of positive and negative items (20 each). Positive Judgment centers on capacity (13 items), while negative items address propriety and fairness. In contrast, *Independent*

Observer shows minimal Judgment (9 positives, 0 negative), mostly affirming candidate competence and the process's credibility.

The following are examples of the Judgment resources employed in *May the Best Win Fairly* and *Presidential Election Registration Is Complete*:

(1) Muhaimin Iskandar; Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD; and Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka; **will compete [TENACITY – POSITIVE]** to replace President Joko "Jokowi "Widodo" and Vice President Ma'ruf Amin (The Jakarta Post, 2023).
(2) So, they can **lead [CAPACITY – POSITIVE]** Indonesia further, advancing to 2029 in poverty eradication, health quality, and education, while preparing Indonesia for our Golden Era in 2045, (Independent Observer, 2023).

Affect appears more frequently in *Independent Observer* (6 positives, 2 negative), where optimism and enthusiasm are emphasized. *The Jakarta Post* expresses only 1 positive and 7 negative Affect items, often signaling concern or insecurity about the fairness of the competition.

The following are examples of the Affect resources employed in *May the Best Win Fairly* and *Presidential Election Registration Is Complete*:

(1) This election is **without a doubt [SECURITY – POSITIVE]** one of the most critical for the country as a fledgling democracy (The Jakarta Post, 2023).
(2) Let us hope we all can control our enthusiasm in campaigning to do it with **joy and, good [HAPPINESS – POSITIVE]** spirit and avoid any conflict (Independent Observer, 2023).

c) Prabowo – Gibram free lunch program

The final article pair covers the proposed free lunch program. *The Jakarta Post's* "No Such Thing as Free Lunch" (28 February 2024, 639 words) critiques the feasibility of the plan. *Independent Observer's* "Free Lunch? What Does That Imply?" (9 March 2024, 980 words) offers broader support for the initiative, with more detailed discussion.

Table 4. Frequency of Attitudes in *No Such Thing as Free Lunch*
and *Free Lunch? What Does That Imply?*

Features	Subtype	No such thing as free lunch		Free lunch? What does that imply?	
		Positive	**Negative**	**Positive**	**Negative**
Affect	Un/happiness	1		2	
	In/security		5		1
	Dis/satisfaction				
	Dis/inclination				
Total		1	5	2	1
Judgment	Normality	1	1		
	Capacity	5	1	1	2
	Tenacity	1			
	Veracity				
	Propriety	1			
Total		8	2	1	2
Appreciation	Reaction	11	14	28	14
	Composition	2	4	7	1
	Valuation	7	4	17	8
Total		20	22	52	23

Appreciation dominates both texts. The Jakarta Post presents a balanced but critical stance (20 positives, 22 negative), using Valuation and Reaction to highlight both potential and pitfalls. Independent Observer uses Appreciation more strongly (52 positives, 23 negative), showing clear rhetorical support for the policy's benefits despite structural concerns.

The following are examples of the Appreciation resources employed in *No Such Thing as Free Lunch* and *Free Lunch? What Does That Imply?*
(1) Yet it is vital to be clear-eyed about the **magnitude [VALUATION – POSITIVE]** of the task (The Jakarta Post, 2023).
(2) Campaign promises to improve the quality of Indonesian human resources **were rife [REACTION – POSITIVE]** during the last election (Independent Observer, 2023).

Judgment appears less frequently. The Jakarta Post contains 10 Judgment items (8 positives, 2 negative), recognizing leadership capacity but raising questions about execution. Independent Observer has only 3 (1 positive, 2 negative), primarily assessing the policy's feasibility.

The following are examples of the Judgment resources employed in *No Such Thing as Free Lunch* and *Free Lunch? What Does That Imply?*

(1) Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka **ran [CAPACITY – POSITIVE]** an electoral campaign that focused heavily on a single issue (The Jakarta Post, 2023).

(2) They **cannot afford [CAPACITY – NEGATIVE]** nutritious food (meat, milk, and eggs) for their daily food intake (Independent Observer, 2023).

Affect is minimal in both articles. The Jakarta Post includes more negative Affect (5 items) than positive (1), signaling skepticism. Independent Observer offers a slightly more positive tone (2 positives, 1 negative), with emotional support for the initiative's intent.

The following are examples of the Affect resources employed in *No Such Thing as Free Lunch* and *Free Lunch? What Does That Imply?*

(1) Of course, what many people are **wondering [INSECURITY – NEGATIVE]** now is not only how the program might be implemented but how it could be funded (The Jakarta Post, 2023).

(2) This program should not benefit dairy farmers from other countries only, as they will definitely **rejoice [HAPPINESS – POSITIVE]** in supplying milk for Indonesia's free-milk-for-students program (Independent Observer, 2023).

To summarize the comparative findings across the three article pairs, the chart below illustrates the overall distribution of Attitude types in *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer*.
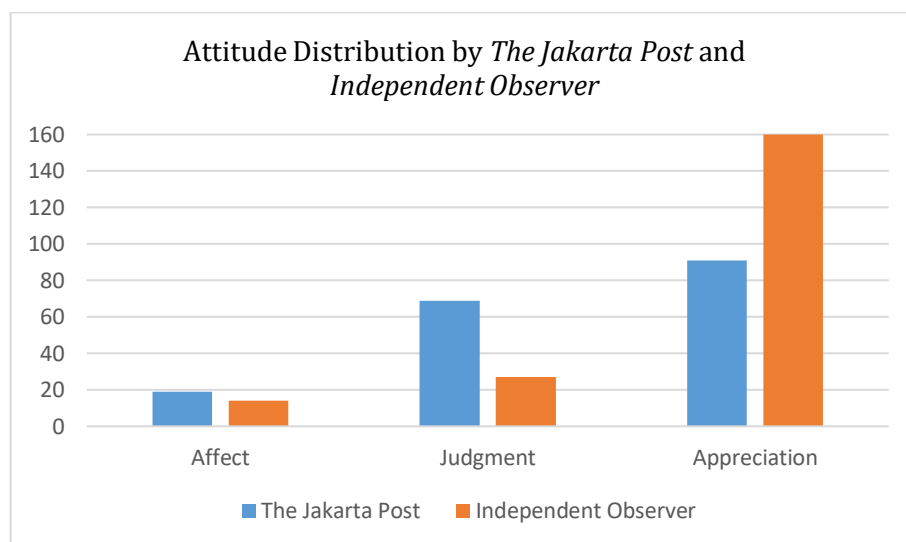
The bar chart presents the total frequency of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation used by *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer* across all three topics. *The Jakarta Post* shows a more evenly distributed evaluative style, while *Independent Observer* strongly favors Appreciation.

Through the analysis of Attitude, this study reveals how The Jakarta Post and Independent Observer reflect contrasting ideological stances through their use of evaluative language in reporting on the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. The Jakarta Post consistently conveys a democratic and moderate ideological position, using optimistic and measured language that emphasizes political stability, transparency, and inclusiveness. Phrases such as "expected to help safeguard the electoral process" and "let us hope we all can control our enthusiasm" reflect trust in the democratic process and a belief in civic responsibility. This media frequently highlights institutional integrity and presents government programs, such as the "Freedom to Learn" initiative, in a positive manner that emphasizes their potential benefits rather than their shortcomings.

On the other hand, Independent Observer adopts a more critical and skeptical tone, positioning itself as a media watchdog that prioritizes oversight and accountability. It often uses sharper and more scrutinizing language, evident in phrases like "protest voiced by a legislator" and "massive logistical setup," which reflect concerns about the transparency and effectiveness of political processes. The media frequently draws attention to potential misuse of power and logistical challenges, particularly in its coverage of the free lunch program, where it focuses more on financial and procedural risks than on the program's intended social impact.

The comparison between The Jakarta Post and Independent Observer highlights not only differences in attitude frequency but also contrasts in tone, evaluative focus, and ideological emphasis. While both media rely heavily on Appreciation to assess political events and policies, Independent Observer uses it more extensively and with greater positivity, reflecting endorsement of initiatives and optimism about political developments. In contrast, The Jakarta Post demonstrates a more balanced distribution of attitude types, combining critical Judgment with cautious Appreciation.

This pattern suggests that The Jakarta Post is more inclined to evaluate actors and institutions based on ethical standards and competence, whereas Independent Observer tends to focus more on valuing outcomes and processes. The limited use of Affect in both media also indicates a preference for rational evaluations over emotional appeals, though *The Jakarta Post* leans slightly more toward expressing concern or skepticism. These differences reflect each media's editorial orientation and help explain how language choices can subtly guide audience perception in different ideological directions.

Discussion

This study found that Appreciation was the most frequently used Attitude type, appearing in 66% (251 items) of the total data. Both *the Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer* focused more on evaluating policies and events than on

individual figures. They highlighted both achievements (17 positive items) and challenges (10 negative items) in the 2024 presidential election. This aligns with Mayo's (2017) findings, where Appreciation was also dominant in Cosmopolitan's election coverage. These evaluations may appear neutral, but they subtly guide the audience's perspective by shaping how political developments are framed.

The second most frequent Attitude was Judgment, making up 25% (96 items) of the data, and mostly positive. Candidates were commonly described as competent and capable. This reflects similar trends in Hasbi's (2024) study of Malaysian election coverage, where positive Judgment helped build trust in political leaders. By highlighting candidates' skills and dedication, the media plays a role in shaping a favorable public image. In contexts where voters rely on media for political insight, these portrayals can strongly influence perceptions.

Affect was used the least, appearing in just 9% (33 items) of the total. When it did appear, it mostly reflected insecurity, especially regarding the free meal program proposed by the Prabowo–Gibran pair. This shows that both media were cautious or skeptical about the policy's feasibility. The pattern mirrors findings by Ansori (2024) in KOMPAS, where similar doubts were expressed about the Free Nutrition Meals Program. Although Affect was rare, its use in negative contexts signals where media shows emotional investment usually in response to policy uncertainty or risk.

The findings also show clear ideological differences between the two media. The Jakarta Post tends to align with democratic values, using moderate, balanced language and emphasizing fairness and stability. This reflects previous research by Wijayanto (2016), which found optimistic, pro-democracy tones in The Jakarta Post's coverage of President Jokowi. While the news media may support government initiatives, Indriyani and Widyastuti (2023) noted it still maintains a critical stance when needed, reflecting editorial neutrality.

On the other hand, Independent Observer shows a more critical tone. It often highlights risks, inefficiencies, and calls for transparency. This suggests a watchdog role, where the media holds political actors accountable. For example, its coverage of the free lunch program focused more on logistical and financial concerns than on social benefits. This tone supports an ideology that favors oversight and skepticism in political reporting.

These patterns likely reflect each media's target audience and editorial goals. The Jakarta Post, with its broader international readership, may prioritize stability and democratic values. It tends to balance praise and criticism to maintain credibility. In contrast, Independent Observer might appeal to readers who value alternative views or political critique, using sharper language to question authority and highlight potential problems.

This contrast also raises important implications for Indonesian democracy. Media plays a key role in shaping public understanding of elections. While The Jakarta Post promotes trust in democratic institutions, Independent Observer

encourages critical thinking about policy and governance. Both approaches are valuable. A healthy democracy needs balanced reporting and active scrutiny. Together, these media help ensure both public confidence and accountability.

However, this study has a few limitations. It only examined six editorials from two Indonesia-based English news media. Therefore, the findings may not represent the broader Indonesian news media landscape, especially news media in Bahasa Indonesia. Finally, for the practical implication, readers and media consumers benefit from understanding how language is used to influence opinion. Awareness of linguistic strategies such as how media evaluates, judges, or stirs emotion can help readers engage more critically with news. For journalists, these findings highlight the importance of careful framing and balance in political coverage, especially during elections, when public trust is crucial.

Conclusion

This study finds that Appreciation is the dominant Attitude type in both *The Jakarta Post* and *Independent Observer*, accounting for 66% (251 items) of the data. These evaluations primarily focus on policies, programs, and political events rather than individual figures or emotional responses. Most appreciative expressions relate to the election itself, with 17 positive items emphasizing its success and 10 negative items addressing its challenges. Judgment, the second most frequent category (25%, 96 items), is predominantly positive and often portrays political actors as competent and ethical, reinforcing favorable public perceptions. Affect appears least frequently (9%, 33 items) and is mostly negative, particularly in expressing insecurity about proposed policies. This pattern suggests that media may contribute to public concern by highlighting risks and uncertainties.

Beyond the Attitude categories, the analysis reveals distinct ideological orientations in language use. *The Jakarta Post* demonstrates alignment with democratic ideals, employing moderate and balanced language that blends appreciation with measured criticism. Its tone suggests an effort to maintain neutrality while promoting stability and inclusiveness. In contrast, *Independent Observer* adopts a more critical and skeptical stance, frequently using sharp evaluative language that prioritizes transparency and accountability, particularly when covering controversial government initiatives.

However, the study is subject to several limitations. It focuses on a small sample of editorials from only two Indonesia-based English news media and does not account for broader contextual factors such as audience reception or the role of social media.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of evaluative strategies in political discourse, future research should examine a wider range of media sources, including national and regional news media in Bahasa Indonesia. It should also consider different text genres such as news reports, opinion columns, and social

media commentary. In addition, incorporating reader interviews, audience surveys, or sentiment analysis could provide deeper insight into how evaluative language is interpreted by the public. Longitudinal studies could also track how evaluative patterns shift across different stages of an election cycle or in response to political controversies.

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