



***RHETORICAL STRATEGIES:
THE ANALYSIS OF THE LETTER FROM SUNAK TO PRABOWO***

Evi Saputra¹, Carla Maretha², Eryon³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Muhammadiyah Lampung

Pos-el: hestizarifa@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study analyzes the rhetorical strategies in the letter of UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to Prabowo Subianto, the newly elected President of Indonesia, following the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Elections. The letter highlights the longstanding diplomatic relations between the UK and Indonesia as a formal communication to strengthen bilateral ties and foster future collaboration. Sunak effectively conveys a message of goodwill, strategic partnership, and cooperation through rhetorical devices, modes, and appeals. The research employs a qualitative content analysis method to examine the rhetorical elements in the letter, identifying how Sunak utilizes language to align with broader political goals. The study reveals the significance of political rhetoric in shaping international diplomacy, offering insights into the intricate communication strategies that underlie diplomatic correspondence.

Keywords: *Prabowo, Sunak, rhetorical devices, rhetorical modes, rhetorical appeals*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis strategi retorika dalam surat Perdana Menteri Inggris, Rishi Sunak, kepada Prabowo Subianto, Presiden terpilih Indonesia, setelah Pemilihan Presiden Indonesia 2024. Surat tersebut menyoroti hubungan diplomatik yang telah lama terjalin antara Inggris dan Indonesia sebagai bentuk komunikasi formal untuk memperkuat hubungan bilateral dan mendorong kolaborasi di masa depan. Sunak secara efektif menyampaikan pesan tentang niat baik, kemitraan strategis, dan kerja sama melalui perangkat, mode, dan daya tarik retorika. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode analisis konten kualitatif untuk mengkaji elemen retorika dalam surat tersebut, dengan mengidentifikasi bagaimana Sunak memanfaatkan bahasa agar selaras dengan tujuan politik yang lebih luas. Penelitian ini mengungkap pentingnya retorika politik dalam membentuk diplomasi internasional, serta memberikan wawasan tentang strategi komunikasi rumit yang mendasari korespondensi diplomatik.

Kata kunci: *Prabowo, Sunak, rhetorical devices, rhetorical modes, rhetorical appeals*

INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric is the basis of effective communication and includes the art and science of language to persuade, inform, and influence audiences (Herrick, 2020). Rhetoric explores the strategic selection and use of arguments, appeals, and narratives to achieve specific objectives (Martin, 2015). It seeks to comprehend the communication intentions, strategies, and broader implications.

Political leaders use rhetoric to convey policies, ideologies, and goals. They use language to persuade, inform, and influence various stakeholders. Rhetorical

strategies are the techniques used to convince the audience of their purpose and consist of rhetorical devices, modes, and appeals (Al Momani, 2014).

Firstly, rhetorical devices are a way to create meaning and support their purpose to impact the audience (Miller & Toman, 2016). It includes specific word choices, poetic language, references to other works, or stylistic choices (StudySmarter, 2024). The categories of devices are allusions, diction, syntax, and literary techniques.

Secondly, rhetorical modes are the different patterns or structures for organizing writing. Rhetorical modes describe the structure of the entire essay or portions of the essay (Brewer, 2017). Rhetorical modes determine the purpose of communication from the chosen structure, such as explaining an idea or arguing for a particular policy. Rhetorical modes include descriptive, expository, narrative, and argumentative.

Thirdly, rhetorical appeals are the different methods for persuading the audience. The rhetorical appeals relate to logic, values, and emotions aimed to persuade arguments and technically consist of ethos, kairos, logos, and pathos (Drew, 2023).

The intricacies of political rhetoric provide the goals and messages to political figures. It assists in decoding their communication strategies in the political sphere (Ponton, 2020). Political figures utilize political rhetoric in various contexts, such as speeches, interviews, and official letters.

Diplomatic correspondence, including letters between heads of state or government officials, serves as a formal channel for expressing national positions, negotiating terms, and fostering bilateral relations (McConnell et al., 2012). The rhetoric in these communications reveals the priorities, values, and strategies.

In this vein, the letter from Rishi Sunak to Prabowo Subianto, the newly elected President of Indonesia, presents a valuable text for analysis (Detik.com, 2024). The letter extends to congratulate Prabowo on his election victory and outline the future trajectory of UK-Indonesia relations, highlighting essential areas of cooperation and mutual interest.

The UK and Indonesia have a diplomatic relationship that spans over seven decades, characterized by cooperation in various fields of trade, security, and environmental sustainability. The upcoming 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two nations underscores the enduring partnership, providing context for the letter, which aims to strengthen and build upon these established ties.

Indonesia holds significant strategic importance for the UK as the fourth most populous country in the world and the largest economy in Southeast Asia. Conversely, the UK remains a crucial ally for Indonesia with its historical ties to Southeast Asia and its role in global governance. The election of Prabowo Subianto, a prominent political figure in Indonesia, represents a pivotal moment in the political landscape, offering new opportunities and challenges for bilateral relations.

Despite the significance of political rhetoric in international diplomacy, there is a need for a comprehensive analysis of the language used to achieve specific political and strategic objectives. This research aims to address this gap by examining the rhetorical strategies employed by Rishi Sunak in his letter to Prabowo Subianto.

The study explores how Sunak uses language to reflect broader political goals and contributes to shaping the bilateral relationship between the UK and Indonesia. The study reveals the meaning and implications of communication. Moreover, this study aims to contribute to a broader understanding of political rhetoric in

contemporary diplomacy and to appreciate the complexity and intricacies of political discourse at the highest level.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Rhetorical devices serve as powerful tools in shaping meaning and reinforcing the purpose of a text, particularly in its ability to influence an audience (Herrick, 2020). These devices encompass techniques such as strategic word choices, poetic language, intertextual references, and distinctive stylistic elements (Sariaslan, 2024). By employing these methods, writers and speakers can evoke deeper engagement and resonance from their audience (Carpenter, 2015).

Categories of rhetorical devices are allusions, diction, syntax, and other literary techniques that enhance the expressiveness and impact of the communication (Thwala *et al.*, 2018). In addition to rhetorical devices, rhetorical modes are essential in organizing writing coherently and purposefully (Williams, 2014).

These modes refer to the different patterns or frameworks employed to structure both the entirety of a text and its sections. Rhetorical modes are closely tied to the overall purpose of the communication, guiding how to develop ideas and arguments presented. Depending on the chosen mode, the text may aim to describe, explain, or argue a particular viewpoint. The primary rhetorical modes include description, exposition, narration, and argumentation, each serving a distinct communicative function.

The rhetorical modes shape the writing structure and align with the specific objectives of the author (Hyland, 2014). For example, a descriptive mode aims to vividly illustrate a concept, while an argumentative mode focuses on persuading the reader toward a particular stance. These organizational choices are critical in determining how effectively the text fulfills its purpose, whether to inform, persuade, or evoke an emotional response. Therefore, rhetorical modes provide a clear direction for constructing meaning within a given framework (Pujante, 2017).

Alongside devices and modes, rhetorical appeals are crucial in persuasion. These appeals are methods to influence the audience by targeting their logic, values, or emotions. The appeals, grounded in classical rhetoric, consist of *ethos* (credibility), *logos* (logic), *pathos* (emotion), and *kairos* (timeliness) (Fraley, 2017). Each of these appeals taps into different aspects of the audience's perception, making them fundamental in constructing convincing arguments or reinforcing a message's credibility and emotional weight.

Rhetorical devices, modes, and appeals collectively form the foundation of effective communication (Bitzer, 2020). While devices enhance the expressiveness and richness of the text, modes organize the content for clarity and purpose, and appeals work to persuade and connect with the audience. These rhetorical elements are essential in crafting messages that convey information and resonate with and influence the audience.

RESEARCH METHOD

Metode memuat informasi mengenai macam atau sifat penelitian, data dan sumber data, teknik pengumpulan data, instrumen pengumpulan data, prosedur pengumpulan data, dan metode analisis data. Penelitian kuantitatif perlu mencantumkan teknik pengujian hipotesis yang relevan.

This research applies qualitative design, focusing on content analysis of the letter to identify and interpret the rhetorical elements of the strategies. The technique used to collect data in this research is a documentation study, collecting data from written documents (Aini *et al.*, 2018).

The data source for this research is the letter from Sunak to Prabowo regarding his success in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election. The primary data are the words in the letter processed using coding and content analysis techniques to facilitate access and further analysis.

The secondary data are relevant literature on political rhetoric, diplomatic communication, and UK-Indonesia relations in academic articles, books, policy papers, and news reports to provide context and support the analysis. The rhetorical analysis of the letter examines each of these different rhetorical strategies to determine how the strategies work to support the purpose of the text.

The process of analyzing these rhetorical strategies is identifying the primary rhetorical mode of the text to understand its main objective, whether it aims to describe, explain, narrate, or persuade; discovering additional rhetorical modes present in the text; examining the rhetorical appeals that bolster the argument; and evaluating the rhetorical devices employed, such as brief sentences or parallelism to underscore the main point, powerful diction to reinforce their intent, and the use of literary techniques to emphasize the central idea.

DISCUSSION

1. Rhetorical Modes

The primary mode in a letter from Sunak to Prabowo is expository with elements of description and argumentation. The exposition explains the purpose of the communication is to congratulate Prabowo on the success of the Indonesian Presidential Elections.

It also provides historical context by mentioning the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the UK and highlights achievements made through the UK-Indonesia Roadmap. Additionally, it conveys that Sunak intends and anticipates future cooperation, expressing a strong desire to develop a strategic partnership over the years. The exposition further explains specific initiatives, giving clear information about ongoing projects, such as cooperation on key issues like climate change through the Just Energy Transition Partnership.

The description highlights the successes of past collaborations, expressing delight at the achievements made together. Argumentation emphasizes the tangible achievements through the UK-Indonesia Roadmap and suggests mutual benefits, indicating a forward-looking perspective toward developing a partnership over the years ahead.

In the opening paragraph, Rishi Sunak begins with, "I would like to offer my sincere congratulations on your success in the Indonesian Presidential Elections this week." This initial statement sets the context for the letter by explaining his purpose and congratulating Prabowo on his electoral victory (Houston, 2014). The word "sincere" adds an emotional appeal, enhancing the message with genuine goodwill and respect (Hannon, 2012).

Sunak provides historical context by mentioning, "This year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the UK." This statement

informs Prabowo of the long-standing and stable relationship between the two countries. He continues, "I am delighted that we have already achieved much together through the UK-Indonesia Roadmap," using descriptive language to highlight the successes of past collaborations and create a positive image of the partnership (Rochma, 2020).

Sunak argues that the partnership has been beneficial and should continue emphasizing these achievements. Sunak expresses his intent and anticipation of future cooperation by stating, "I look forward very much to developing a strong partnership with you over the years ahead." This statement conveys his expectation of continued collaboration. It also argues for the importance of a robust future partnership, suggesting that such cooperation will be mutually beneficial.

Sunak explains specific initiatives through the statement "The UK will also continue to work closely with Indonesia on key issues like climate change through the Just Energy Transition Partnership". This provides information about ongoing projects and educates Prabowo on the areas where both countries already collaborated. Sunak uses logical appeal, presenting concrete examples of cooperation that underline the practical benefits by mentioning the Just Energy Transition Partnership (Mahmoud, 2023).

Sunak mentions "I am committed to deepening the UK-Indonesia trading relationship and have supported Indonesia's application to join the OECD" to inform Prabowo that the UK supports Indonesia in international goals.

This exposition provides the stance and intentions of the UK. Sunak explains that joining the OECD is essential for economic development. He uses logical reasoning to make a rational case for why this support is important (Bitzer, 2020). Sunak shows credibility and positions the UK as a supportive and reliable partner by supporting Indonesia in international goals.

2. Rhetorical Devices

The rhetorical devices used by Sunak in his diplomatic message to Prabowo focus on various devices: allusions, diction, syntax, and literary techniques. The letter incorporates historical and political allusions. A historical allusion references the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the UK. His commitment to support Indonesia in joining the OECD expresses the political allusion. Sunak uses formal and respectful language, addressing Prabowo as "Your Excellency Pak Prabowo." He employs optimistic language, expressing delight at the achievements through the UK-Indonesia Roadmap. Additionally, Sunak emphasizes commitment and collaboration, stating his commitment to deepening the trading relationship.

The letter utilizes complex sentences for detail and emphasis, outlining hopes for a strategic partnership with economic prosperity and security. The parallel structure expresses clarity and rhythm, repeating commitments to deepen the trading relationship and support Indonesia in OECD application.

Anaphora emphasizes evidence in the repeated commitment statements. Sunak employs metaphor for conceptual understanding, hoping to grow the bilateral relationship into a "genuine Strategic Partnership." Positive imagery and emotional appeal are used, with a forward-looking vision of developing a partnership over the years ahead.

The letter utilizes allusions to enrich its meaning and underscore important themes (Albashir and Alfaki, 2015). A historical allusion is found in the statement, "This year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the UK," which refers to the long history of diplomatic relations between the two countries and invokes a sense of continuity and established partnership.

A political allusion exists in the statement, "I am committed to deepening the UK- Indonesia trading relationship and have supported Indonesia's application to join the OECD." This reference to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) suggests Indonesia's growing importance globally and highlights the significance of their economic collaboration.

The diction reflects careful word choices and their connotations, establishing a formal and respectful tone and conveying positive and collaborative sentiments (Mwiinga, 2021). The greeting, "Your Excellency Pak Prabowo," employs formal titles and the honorific "Pak" (Indonesian for Mr.), setting a tone appropriate for diplomatic correspondence.

Optimistic language is evident in the statement, "I am delighted that we have already achieved much together through the UK-Indonesia Roadmap," where words like "delighted" and "achieved" convey a hopeful outlook on the partnership between the two countries. Additionally, the phrase "I am committed to deepening the UK-Indonesia trading relationship" shows a strong dedication to fostering the bilateral relationship, with "committed" indicating a firm resolve and "deepening" implying a desire for more extensive collaboration.

Syntax refers to words and phrases arranged to create well-formed sentences. Sunak utilizes complex sentences and parallel structures to enhance the communication of detailed information and key points (Hou, 2020). For instance, a complex sentence provides detail and emphasis: "I hope we will grow our bilateral relationship further into a genuine Strategic Partnership, with economic prosperity and security at its heart, including working together to maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific." This structure allows Sunak to highlight critical aspects, such as economic prosperity, security, and the importance of maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

A parallel structure is employed for clarity and rhythm (Candra and Kuntjara, 2022). In the sentence, "We have so many areas of shared collaboration. I am committed to deepening the UK-Indonesia trading relationship and have supported Indonesia's application to join the OECD," the parallelism in "deepening the UK-Indonesia trading relationship and have supported Indonesia's application" enhances the clarity of the message and creates a rhythmic flow, making it more engaging and easy to follow.

Literary technique refers to specific methods to convey messages in an impactful way (Arianto and Septriani, 2023). In the letter, several techniques enhance the effectiveness of the communication. Anaphora is used for emphasis, as seen in the sentence, "I am committed to deepening the UK-Indonesia trading relationship and have supported Indonesia's application to join the OECD. The UK will also continue to work closely with Indonesia on key issues like climate change through the Just Energy Transition Partnership." The repetition of "I am committed" and "The UK will also continue" underscores Sunak's dedication and highlights the ongoing collaborative efforts between the UK and Indonesia.

A metaphor employs conceptual understanding: "I hope we will grow our bilateral relationship further into a genuine Strategic Partnership." This metaphor likens the relationship to a living entity that can develop and strengthen over time, making the concept more relatable and vivid (Bhat,2024). Positive imagery expresses emotional appeal. The phrase "I look forward very much to developing a strong partnership with you over the years ahead" creates a sense of anticipation and optimism about future cooperation, evoking positive emotions and reinforcing the hopeful tone of the letter (Mahmoudi and Meghezli, 2022).

3. Rhetorical Appeals

The letter from Rishi Sunak to PrabowoSubianto is an intricate piece of diplomatic communication that carefully weaves together rhetorical strategies to communicate his message effectively. By using the four classical modes of persuasion—ethos (credibility), kairos (timeliness), logos (logic), and pathos (emotion)—Sunak creates a well-rounded, impactful message. His purpose is clear: to strengthen the relationship between the United Kingdom and Indonesia, offering congratulations on the electoral success of Prabowo while paving the way for future collaboration. Sunak uses each of these rhetorical devices to craft a letter that is both persuasive and respectful.

The first strategy Sunak employs is ethos, which refers to the appeal to credibility and ethics. From the outset, Sunak establishes himself as a respectful and credible figure. He addresses Prabowo as "Your Excellency Pak Prabowo," a formal yet culturally sensitive greeting that reflects a deep understanding of Indonesian customs and an awareness of diplomatic etiquette. "Pak," a common honorific in Indonesia that conveys respect, is particularly telling. It shows that Sunak is not merely speaking as a detached foreign leader but as someone who values and understands the importance of cultural respect in international diplomacy.

The phrase "Your Excellency" further solidifies the tone of respect. This formal title acknowledges newly acquired status as the elected leader of Indonesia, offering a gesture that enhances his credibility. Acknowledging the electoral success strengthens this ethos by establishing Sunak as a courteous and respectful leader. Through this respectful address, Sunak fosters goodwill in diplomatic exchanges where personal relationships often influence broader political decisions. By adopting culturally appropriate language and demonstrating an understanding of the context, Sunak elevates his credibility and fosters a connection based on mutual respect.

Sunak continues to strengthen his credibility by referencing the historical relationship between Indonesia and the United Kingdom. "This year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the UK," he writes, highlighting the long-standing relationship between the two countries. This reference to a shared history is a subtle reminder that the bond between these nations has deep roots. It positions Sunak as knowledgeable about the diplomatic efforts that have sustained this relationship and invested in further nurturing these ties. By situating himself within this historical context, Sunak taps into the idea that his role is to congratulate Prabowo on his recent success and to ensure that the relationship continues to flourish.

Another rhetorical strategy in the letter is kairos. The concept of kairos refers to the right or appropriate moment to deliver a message, and Sunak is choosing this

moment to write to Prabowo. The electoral victory represents a significant turning point in Indonesian politics, and Sunak seizes the opportunity to congratulate Prabowo and emphasize the importance of the ongoing diplomatic relationship. The timing is crucial in reinforcing that this new era in Indonesian leadership is the perfect moment to reaffirm the partnership between the UK and Indonesia.

Delivering his message in the political transition opens doors to new collaboration possibilities. By recognizing victory early, Sunak offers congratulations but also signals a proactive approach to continuing diplomatic engagement. It is an excellent example of *kairos* in action; the letter arrives at a moment of celebration and optimism, allowing us to capitalize on this positive energy and frame the future relationship as one of shared opportunities.

The mention of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations is also an element of *kairos*. This anniversary is not just a marker of the past but a significant moment for reflecting on the future. Sunak clears that this moment is pivotal by aligning his message with this milestone. It adds weight to his appeal and underscores the idea that the UK- Indonesia relationship is on solid ground, with room to grow stronger. By situating his letter within the context of both the electoral victory and the anniversary of diplomatic relations, Sunak shows that he is aware of the importance of timing in crafting effective diplomatic messages.

Alongside *ethos* and *kairos*, Sunak uses *logos*, or logical reasoning, to make a strong case for continued collaboration between the UK and Indonesia. His arguments inform factual achievements and future aspirations, making the letter an expression of goodwill and a reasoned proposal for partnership.

Sunak highlights existing achievements in the bilateral relationship, such as the UK- Indonesia Roadmap. By referencing past accomplishments, he reminds Prabowo that the two nations have laid the groundwork for successful collaboration. This logical appeal strengthens the argument that the relationship between the UK and Indonesia has been mutually beneficial and should continue to develop. The roadmap, a tangible example of previous collaboration, proves that the two countries can work together effectively.

Furthermore, Sunak introduces specific future goals to give his message direction and purpose. He expresses the hope for the bilateral relationship to grow into a strategic partnership, a forward-thinking aspiration that signals the commitment to long-term cooperation. It is a logical appeal because it frames the relationship in terms of past successes but as an evolving, dynamic partnership that held great potential for both nations. His vision for a strategic partnership includes collaboration on climate change and support for Indonesia in OECD application, showing that the UK is ready to engage with Indonesia on critical global matters. These logical appeals strengthen the letter's overall message by outlining clear, achievable goals for future collaboration.

Sunak ensures his message is polite, respectful, and grounded in concrete evidence, future-oriented planning, specific examples, and well-reasoned arguments. This approach gives the letter a sense of substance and direction, allowing it to go beyond mere diplomatic formalities.

Sunak uses *pathos*, or emotional appeal, to evoke a sense of optimism and unity. He conveys genuine delight at Prabowo's success and what Indonesia has made in recent years. This expression of joy is not merely a formal nicety but an emotional connection to strengthen the bond between the two leaders.

The emotional appeal provides the optimistic future portrayed by Sunak. He writes about his hope for a strong partnership between the UK and Indonesia, framing the relationship as one of shared opportunity and growth. This optimism is infectious and helps to create a sense of possibility around the idea of continued collaboration. Sunak also emphasizes the achievements of the two nations together. He instilled a sense of pride in the partnership while looking ahead to further accomplishments. By focusing on these positive emotions, Sunak encourages Prabowo to feel that the UK- Indonesia relationship is not just a matter of political necessity but a source of mutual pride and potential.

The pathos in the letter is subtle but effective. Sunak does not rely on overly emotional language but uses a tone of warmth and sincerity to create a sense of camaraderie. The closing lines in the letter leave the reader with a positive impression, expressing further congratulations and commitment to collaboration. Sunak ends on a high note, ensuring that the emotional appeal reinforces the message of goodwill and optimism throughout the letter.

By combining these four rhetorical strategies—ethos, kairos, logos, and pathos— Sunak crafts a letter that is not only diplomatically sound but also persuasive and impactful. His use of ethos establishes him as a credible, respectful leader; his awareness of kairos ensures delivering the message at the right time; his reliance on logos makes his case for future collaboration logically sound, and his appeal to pathos creates an emotional connection that fosters goodwill.

This balanced blend of rhetorical devices ensures that the letter achieves its purpose: to reinforce the UK-Indonesia relationship, congratulate Prabowo on his electoral success, and set the stage for future collaboration. The letter is persuasive, respectful, and forward-thinking, strengthening diplomatic ties while looking ahead to shared opportunities for both nations. Sunak communicates his message effectively and impactfully. He carefully considers the rhetorical strategies and sets the tone for a renewed and strengthened partnership between the United Kingdom and Indonesia.

CLOSING

The letter of Rishi Sunak to Prabowo Subianto exemplifies diplomatic communication, blending ethos, kairos, logos, and pathos to convey a compelling message. Sunak congratulates Prabowo on his election victory and emphasizes that the UK desires to strengthen its relationship with Indonesia. His authoritative voice (ethos) highlights the credibility of the UK as a key ally, while the timing (kairos) capitalizes on the Indonesian political transition. Sunak presents a logical case (logos) for expanding cooperation, citing mutual benefits across economic, political, and cultural areas. He also evokes optimism and unity (pathos), praising Prabowo for his leadership and potential for future success. The structure of the letter, combining exposition and argumentation, reinforces the message of collaboration and shared goals.

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