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From Political Speech to Critical Literacy: Pedagogical Insights from a Faircloughian Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract:
Political speech is increasingly encountered by students through short-form and networked digital media, yet language education often treats public texts primarily as sources of information rather than as sites where power, identity, and responsibility are linguistically constructed. This study analysed two Indonesian political speeches concerning the proposed formation of Sumbawa Island Province to identify pedagogical insights for critical literacy. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework, the analysis integrates textual features, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. Four themes emerged: (1) modality as a marker of commitment and accountability; (2) metaphor as a mechanism of naturalization; (3) lexical classification as a resource for constructing regional hierarchies and othering; and (4) audience interjection as a moment of resistance and negotiated meaning. The contrast between the high-certainty statement *'Saya yakin ...*' and the later *'Kami doakan saja ...'*, the recurring *'pindah kamar'* metaphor, and the audience challenge *'Atur bos!'* show how authentic political discourse can make otherwise abstract linguistic concepts visible to learners. The paper argues that political speech can function as productive material for critical language awareness when pedagogy moves from identifying forms to interrogating positioning, context, silenced alternatives, and audience uptake. The study does not claim classroom effects; rather, it offers a theoretically grounded pedagogical framework for future classroom-based investigation in English and literacy education.

Keywords: Critical Literacy; Critical Language Awareness; Critical Discourse Analysis; Political Speech; Digital Literacy

Introduction

Political discourse is now part of everyday literacy. Learners encounter speeches, campaign clips, government statements, memes, reposted fragments, and audience reactions through social media feeds long before such texts enter formal classrooms. This shift matters for education because political language does more than transmit propositions. It selects categories, assigns agency, calibrates certainty, constructs identities, and normalizes particular interpretations of social reality. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has long treated discourse as social practice and has shown that vocabulary, grammar, metaphor, modality, and text organization can participate in the reproduction or contestation of power (Dijk, 2008; Fairclough, 1996; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). For language and literacy education, this means that learning to read public discourse critically involves asking not only what a text says, but also how it positions speakers and audiences, what assumptions it presupposes, whose interests are foregrounded, and which alternatives are made less visible.

This orientation aligns with critical literacy and critical language awareness (CLA). Critical literacy conceptualizes reading as an interpretive and social practice in which texts are examined in relation to power, representation, and unequal social arrangements. CLA similarly asks learners to connect linguistic form with the social histories and power relations that make particular language choices consequential. Recent scholarship has renewed interest in these traditions because contemporary communication is increasingly digital, multimodal, and politically saturated. Shepard-Carey and Gopalakrishnan (2023), for example, show that structured CLA activities can support future educators in identifying and questioning language ideologies, while Zhang-Wu and Tian (2023) demonstrate how teacher candidates can develop emerging awareness of linguistic hierarchies and social justice through critically oriented coursework. Liang and Yu (2024) likewise report both the promise and practical difficulty of implementing CLA in university EFL contexts, especially when examination pressures, learner expectations, and limited teaching resources constrain pedagogical choices.

The educational need becomes more urgent in digital environments. Critical digital literacy cannot be reduced to technical proficiency because online meaning is shaped by platform norms, social relations, circulation practices, and competing claims to authority. Context-sensitive research on digital literacy emphasizes that users interpret and share texts through socially situated understandings of audience, credibility, and communicative norms (Tagg & Seargeant, 2021). Systematic reviews similarly show that digital and media literacy are increasingly treated as curricular competencies tied to informed participation, evaluation of information, and civic judgment (Audrin & Audrin, 2022; Eyal & Te'eni-Harari, 2024; Rojas-Estrada et al., 2024). In classroom studies, critical media literacy has enabled students to interrogate representation, amplify marginalized voices, and question how media texts frame social issues (Alford, 2023; Gill & Stewart, 2024; O'Donnell, 2024). These findings suggest that language education should engage authentic public discourse not merely for comprehension practice, but also for systematic analysis of how language organizes social meanings.

However, several gaps remain. First, much recent CLA research concentrates on language variation, multilingualism, teacher identity, textbook ideology, or policy discourse rather than on authentic political speeches as pedagogical texts (Mahalingappa et al., 2025; Shepard-Carey & Gopalakrishnan, 2023; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023). Second, critical media literacy research frequently emphasizes source evaluation, multimodality, misinformation, or media production, while providing less fine-grained attention to

grammatical and rhetorical features such as modality, transitivity, presupposition, metaphor, and pronoun choice (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024; McGowan-Kirsch & Quinlivan, 2024). Third, studies applying Fairclough's model in education demonstrate the value of connecting micro-textual choices to institutional and ideological contexts, yet there remains a need for concrete pedagogical models showing how a small corpus of political speech can be translated into classroom-oriented critical reading moves. Recent CDA research in language teacher education confirms that representations of regions and identities can be shaped by meso-level institutional discourses and macro-level ideologies, reinforcing the educational relevance of such analysis (Keleş et al., 2024).

The present study addresses this gap by re-framing an existing CDA corpus as a pedagogical resource. The corpus consists of two speeches by the same Indonesian political figure concerning the proposed formation of Sumbawa Island Province, delivered in different institutional positions and circulated through digital platforms. Rather than asking whether students improve after an intervention, the paper asks a prior pedagogical question: what kinds of critical literacy practices can be derived from a systematic analysis of authentic political discourse? Accordingly, the study aims to identify linguistically and discursively salient patterns in the two speeches and to explain how those patterns can inform critical literacy and critical language awareness in English and literacy education. The contribution is therefore analytic and pedagogical, not experimental. It demonstrates how CDA findings can be transformed into teachable questions about commitment, agency, categorization, naturalization, resistance, and platformed circulation without claiming student learning outcomes that were not measured.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis design using Fairclough's three-dimensional framework: text, discursive practice, and sociocultural practice. The dataset was drawn from two publicly available speeches concerning the proposed formation of Sumbawa Island Province. The first was a political rally speech preserved on YouTube; the second was a later speech delivered in a pesantren setting and circulated through TikTok and Facebook. Both recordings had previously been manually transcribed verbatim. The paired corpus was selected because the same speaker addressed the same regional political project from different institutional positions, allowing close comparison of changes in linguistic commitment, self-positioning, and audience relations.

At the textual level, analysis focused on lexical choices, modality, transitivity, nominalization, presupposition, metaphor, speech acts, pronouns, conditionals, negation, and comparative structures. At the level of discursive practice, attention was given to production setting, distribution channels, and audience consumption, including applause, laughter, interjections, and selected social-media responses. At the social-practice level, textual patterns were interpreted in relation to regional identity, center-periphery relations, institutional authority, and political legitimation. For the present article, the original CDA findings were re-organized through a pedagogical lens. Salient excerpts were selected when they (a) displayed a clear linguistic feature, (b) connected that feature to a socially consequential interpretation, and (c) could support a teachable critical-literacy question. The resulting themes should therefore be understood as pedagogical recontextualizations of discourse-analytic findings, not as evidence of classroom effectiveness. Interpretive caution was maintained by distinguishing observable linguistic

patterns from broader ideological interpretations and by considering plausible alternative readings of the excerpts.

Results and Discussion

Findings

The re-analysis produced four interrelated themes. Together they show how political speech can be used to move students from surface comprehension toward analysis of linguistic commitment, representation, institutional positioning, and contested meaning. Table 1 summarizes the themes and representative excerpts.

Table 1. CDA themes, representative excerpts, and pedagogical focus

Theme	Representative excerpt	CDA focus	Critical-literacy question
Modality and accountability	"Saya yakin ... dalam 5 tahun ... masuk dalam 10 besar" → "Kami doakan saja berjalan dengan cepat."	Epistemic/commissive commitment, agency	How does a change in modality redistribute responsibility?
Metaphor and naturalization	"Saya ini pindah kamar"; "Di kamar legislatif saya nggak punya bos ... sekarang ... kamar eksekutif. Punya bos."	Metaphor, relational process, naturalization	What political choices become presented as natural or inevitable?
Lexical classification and othering	"Orang-orang Lombok lebih rumit ..."; "Kita hanya menang dari Papua."	Evaluation, comparison, classification	How do word choices build an in-group/out-group hierarchy?
Audience resistance and containment	Audience: "Atur bos!" / "Ngeri negara ini!" Speaker: "Ah, ini perlu disadari oleh teman-teman."	Consumption, counter-discourse, positioning	When does an audience challenge a frame, and how is dissent managed?

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Modality as a Marker of Commitment and Accountability

One of the clearest pedagogical contrasts concerns modality. In the earlier speech, the speaker states, *"Saya yakin dalam 5 tahun, insyaallah Sumbawa ... bisa masuk dalam 10 besar"* (I am certain that within five years, God willing, Sumbawa can enter the top ten). The clause combines the high-commitment expression *saya yakin* (I am certain) with a measurable future horizon and the modal possibility *bisa* (can). Although *insyaallah* introduces religious hedging, the utterance still functions as a strong promise-like commitment. In the later speech, however, the formulation becomes *"Kami doakan saja berjalan dengan cepat"* (We just pray that it proceeds quickly). Here the shift from *saya* to kami diffuses individual responsibility, while *doakan* (pray for) and *saja* (just) lower the degree of personal agency.

For critical literacy, the value of this contrast lies in making grammatical modality socially consequential. Students can be invited to identify modal verbs, evaluative expressions, pronouns, and temporal commitments before asking what these choices do to the speaker's accountability. The pedagogical move is important because conventional grammar teaching can treat modality as a decontextualized system of probability or obligation. CDA instead treats modality as interpersonal positioning: speakers display degrees of certainty, obligation, affinity, and responsibility through grammar. A critical reading task can therefore ask learners to rewrite the same political proposition with

stronger and weaker modality, compare the implied speaker commitment, and discuss which version makes future accountability easier or harder to assign.

Metaphor as a Mechanism of Naturalization

A second theme centers on the repeated metaphor *pindah kamar* (moving rooms). The speaker explains his institutional transition through a domestic spatial analogy: *"Saya ini pindah kamar"* (I have moved rooms), followed by *"Di kamar legislatif saya nggak punya bos"* (In the legislative room I had no boss) and *"Sekarang ini saya pindah ke kamar eksekutif. Punya bos"* (Now I have moved to the executive room. I have a boss). The metaphor compresses a complex shift in institutional authority, political responsibility, and strategic communication into the familiar act of moving between rooms in a house. In this representation, behavior appears to follow automatically from the room one occupies.

The pedagogical insight is that metaphor should not be taught only as ornament. Political metaphors organize causality and common sense by making one domain understandable through another. Learners can identify the source domain (rooms in a house) and target domain (legislative and executive institutions), then test what the mapping highlights and what it hides. The metaphor highlights differences in role and hierarchy but can obscure the continuing agency of political actors within institutions. This creates a productive critical-literacy question: when a metaphor makes an explanation feel obvious, which alternative explanations become less thinkable? Such analysis develops the capacity to notice naturalization, a central CDA concept referring to historically contingent social arrangements presented as normal, inevitable, or merely practical.

Lexical Classification, Regional Hierarchies, and Othering

The third theme concerns lexical classification. In the earlier rally speech, the speaker states that *"orang-orang Lombok lebih rumit, kulturnya agraris, tidak suka keluar kampungnya ... suka nerima nasib"* (Lombok people are more complicated; their culture is agrarian; they do not like leaving their villages ... they tend to accept their fate). He also repeatedly uses Papua as the lowest comparison point in a development ranking, including *"Kita hanya menang dari Papua"* (We only beat Papua). These formulations do not merely describe regions; they package large and internally diverse populations into simplified evaluative categories. The lexical pattern creates an implicit hierarchy in which some groups are represented as dynamic, advanced, or developmentally promising while others become reference points for stagnation or backwardness.

This theme offers a direct bridge to critical language awareness because it enables students to examine how seemingly ordinary adjectives, verbs, comparisons, and group labels can construct social categories. A conventional reading lesson might ask what the speaker says about Lombok or Papua. A critical lesson asks how the description is linguistically built, what evidence is provided, whose perspective is absent, and how the same social reality could be represented differently. Learners can also distinguish between a verifiable claim and an essentializing generalization. This is particularly important in multicultural and multilingual education, where unexamined classification can reproduce stereotypes while appearing to be common-sense description.

Audience Resistance as Evidence that Meaning Is Negotiated

The fourth theme moves beyond the speech text to discursive consumption. During the later speech, the speaker explains that one cannot "*sembarang ngomong karena ada bos*" (speak carelessly because there is a boss). An audience member interjects, "Atur bos!" (Act like the boss you are!), and another voice adds, *"Ngeri negara ini!"* (This country is scary!). The speaker responds, *"Ah, ini perlu disadari oleh teman-teman"* (Ah, this needs

to be understood by friends). The exchange is analytically important because it shows that audiences are not passive recipients. The interjection contests the speaker's framing of institutional constraint and implies that political agency remains available. The response then repositions the objection as a problem of audience understanding rather than as an alternative political interpretation.

For pedagogy, this moment demonstrates why critical literacy should include reception and dialogue, not only textual decoding. Students can compare the speaker's frame with the audience's counter-frame and identify how authority is negotiated turn by turn. They can ask whether the response addresses the substance of the challenge or reframes the challenger. Such analysis can also be extended to social-media comments, reposting practices, and platform context. The educational point is not to tell learners which political position to adopt, but to equip them to identify competing framings, evaluate evidence, and recognize how institutional authority shapes whose interpretation is treated as knowledgeable or legitimate.

Discussion

The four themes suggest that CDA can provide a disciplined bridge between language analysis and critical literacy. This bridge matters because criticality in language education is sometimes reduced either to generic critical-thinking questions or to broad discussions of controversial topics. A Faircloughian approach makes the critical process more linguistically accountable. Learners begin with observable textual evidence; pronouns, modals, verbs, metaphors, comparisons, passives, presuppositions; and then move outward to questions of production, circulation, audience uptake, and social consequence. This sequence is compatible with recent arguments that criticality in the language classroom involves both analytic skill and a disposition to question how discourse sustains or challenges unequal relations (Teo, 2024).

The modality findings are especially relevant to critical language awareness. Shepard-Carey and Gopalakrishnan (2023) show that CLA tasks can help future educators identify and critique language ideologies, while Mahalingappa et al. (2025) demonstrate that explicit critical content can alter preservice teachers' perceptions of language, identity, and advocacy. In the present corpus, modality offers a concrete entry point because grammatical form is visibly tied to stance and responsibility. Instead of treating modal expressions as isolated grammar items, teachers can ask learners to place alternative formulations on a continuum from high to low commitment, justify their ranking using linguistic evidence, and discuss the consequences for accountability. This form-function-context sequence also responds to Liang and Yu's (2024) observation that teachers may value CLA but need usable materials and practical procedures. Authentic political excerpts can supply such material when handled with careful scaffolding and political neutrality.

The metaphor findings extend this approach from grammar to conceptual framing. Critical literacy research has repeatedly emphasized that texts invite readers into particular versions of reality rather than transparently reflecting the world. The *pindah kamar* metaphor is pedagogically useful precisely because it is easy to understand but ideologically consequential: it turns institutional relations into domestic spatial common sense. Students can be taught to identify what a metaphor foregrounds, backgrounds, and presupposes, then generate alternative metaphors and compare their implications. Such work resonates with critical media literacy, where the goal is not merely to detect false

information but to understand how representation itself organizes attention, identity, and judgment (Gill & Stewart, 2024; Wright et al., 2023).

The lexical-classification theme also connects strongly with studies of critical literacy in culturally diverse classrooms. Alford (Alford, 2023) shows the importance of linking school-based critical media practices with learners' culturally and linguistically diverse lives, while studies of CLA in multilingual and teacher-education settings stress that language carries social histories and hierarchies rather than functioning as a neutral code (Krogager Andersen, 2024; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023). The Lombok and Papua excerpts make this principle tangible. Learners can trace how an evaluative hierarchy is built through repeated labels and comparisons, investigate whether evidence is supplied for generalized cultural claims, and rewrite the passage from alternative perspectives. The exercise is not designed to replace one stereotype with another; its purpose is to expose how categorization works and to make room for complexity, counter-evidence, and marginalized voices.

The audience-resistance theme adds a further layer that is often missing from text-centered literacy instruction. Fairclough's model treats production and consumption as part of the discursive event, and contemporary digital literacy research similarly emphasizes that meaning is shaped by social context, circulation, and audience interaction. Audrin and Audrin (2022) identify critical evaluation and contextual understanding as core dimensions of digital literacy, while Rojas-Estrada et al. (2024) show that media and information literacy is increasingly linked to informed and engaged citizenship. The exchange 'Atur bos!' demonstrates that even a short interruption can function as a counter-frame. Students can therefore analyze not only the original speech but also applause, laughter, comments, captions, reposting, and platform-specific cues. This broadens literacy from the interpretation of a stable text to the study of a moving communicative event.

Digital political discourse further requires pedagogical caution. Research on misinformation and media literacy shows that educational interventions must avoid simplistic binaries in which students are told what to believe rather than taught how to evaluate claims and evidence (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024; Eyal & Te'eni-Harari, 2024; McGowan-Kirsch & Quinlivan, 2024). Political speech is particularly sensitive because a teacher's framing can easily be perceived as partisan instruction. A defensible critical-literacy pedagogy should therefore focus on transparent analytic procedures that can be applied across ideological positions. The same questions; What is the modality? Who is assigned agency? What is presupposed? What evidence supports the classification? Which voices are absent? How does the audience respond?; should be usable for different speakers and political viewpoints. Critical literacy is strongest when it enlarges students' interpretive agency rather than substituting the teacher's political judgment for their own.

Based on the findings, this paper proposes a four-move pedagogical sequence. The first move is decode: learners identify salient linguistic forms without yet assigning ideological meaning. The second is interrogate: learners ask how those forms position people, responsibility, certainty, and social groups. The third is contextualize: learners connect the text to production setting, institutional role, platform, and audience. The fourth is reframe: learners compare counter-readings, rewrite selected clauses, and evaluate alternative representations using evidence. This sequence is consistent with recent CLA work emphasizing reflexivity, dialogue, and agency (Shepard-Carey & Gopalakrishnan, 2023; Zhang-Wu & Tian, 2023) and with critical media literacy studies

that foreground active interpretation and counter-representation (Gill & Stewart, 2024; O'Donnell, 2024).

The proposed sequence is intentionally modest. It does not assume that exposure to CDA automatically produces critical citizens, nor does it treat political speech analysis as an intrinsically emancipatory activity. Enslin (2022) notes that critical literacy enactment is shaped by teacher identity, institutional constraints, and context; Liang and Yu (2024) likewise identify assessment pressure, learner expectations, and resource limitations as barriers to CLA pedagogy. Political materials can also trigger polarization or reproduce harmful stereotypes if presented without contextualization. Therefore, teacher preparation, careful text selection, explicit norms of evidence, and opportunities for multiple interpretations are necessary conditions for responsible use. The present paper offers an analytic framework that should be tested empirically rather than treated as a proven intervention.

A final contribution concerns the relationship between linguistic detail and civic education. Media literacy is often framed around source credibility, fact-checking, or misinformation detection, all of which are important. Yet political persuasion can remain influential even when individual factual statements are not demonstrably false, because discourse works through framing, presupposition, metaphor, evaluation, and selective agency. Broda and Strömbäck's (2024) review of misinformation research underscores the complexity of contemporary information disorders, while Wright et al. (2023) argue for a form of critical media literacy that addresses the broader structures and power relations of media. CDA complements these approaches by giving students a vocabulary for analyzing how apparently ordinary language choices participate in political meaning-making. In this sense, critical literacy education benefits from moving beyond the question 'Is this true?' to include 'How is this version of reality linguistically constructed, and what would change if it were framed differently?'

Conclusion

This study re-analyzed two political speeches through Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model to identify pedagogical insights for critical literacy. Four patterns were particularly productive: modality revealed shifts in commitment and accountability; the pindah kamar metaphor naturalized institutional constraint; lexical classifications constructed regional hierarchies and othering; and audience interjections demonstrated that political meaning is negotiated rather than passively received. These findings show that authentic political discourse can make language-power relations visible at a level concrete enough for teaching.

The educational implication is a four-move critical-literacy sequence: decode linguistic form, interrogate its positioning effects, contextualize the discourse event, and reframe the text through alternative evidence-based representations. Such a sequence can integrate grammar, discourse analysis, digital literacy, and civic judgment without requiring teachers to prescribe a political conclusion. Its purpose is to strengthen learners' capacity to inspect how certainty, agency, identity, and legitimacy are constructed in public language.

The study has important limitations. It uses a small corpus of two speeches, does not include classroom observation or student learning data, and draws pedagogical implications from discourse analysis rather than from an intervention. Consequently, the proposed framework should be treated as a theoretically grounded hypothesis for teaching, not as evidence of effectiveness. Future research should test the sequence in

English language and literacy classrooms, compare responses across age groups and proficiency levels, and examine whether students transfer the analytic moves from political speech to news, social media, textbooks, and other public texts. Classroom-based studies should also investigate how teachers maintain political neutrality while still enabling rigorous discussion of power and ideology. Within these limits, the analysis supports a central proposition: critical literacy becomes more teachable when abstract questions about power are anchored in observable linguistic evidence and connected systematically to context, circulation, and audience response.

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