

# OFF RECORDS STRATEGIES USED IN BILLBOARD CAMPAIGN: AN ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTICS PHENOMENA

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**Abstract:** In 2024, Indonesia held a general election. It included the presidential and legislative candidate elections. The peaceful and successful implementation of the campaign can support the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely by achieving good health and well-being as well as decent work and good economic growth. The candidates used billboards as campaign media to reach society. The billboards contain picture, slogan or promises in order to get the voters. Some of the legislative candidates used implicit message in delivering their statements. This research aims to analyse the off-record strategies on billboards of prospective presidential and legislative members. The research uses qualitative method which explain linguistic phenomena by examining linguistic and non-linguistic context in the data. The result shows that there are five off record strategies which are found. They are giving hints to make message clear, giving association clue to make subtle suggestion, be incomplete to make assumed understanding, overstate for exaggerating importance and metaphor to make analogical comparison. Giving association and metaphor are the two data which appear most.

**Keywords:** Off record strategies, billboard, legislative candidate.

**Abstrak:** Pada tahun 2024, Indonesia menyelenggarakan pemilihan umum yaitu pemilihan presiden dan calon anggota legislatif. Pelaksanaan kampanye yang damai dan sukses dapat mendukung terwujudnya tujuan pembangunan berkelanjutan, yaitu dengan tercapainya kesehatan, kesejahteraan dan pekerjaan yang layak serta pertumbuhan ekonomi yang baik. Para calon anggota legislatif dan calon Presiden menggunakan baliho sebagai media kampanye kepada masyarakat. Baliho tersebut memuat gambar, slogan atau janji-janji untuk menarik perhatian pemilih. Beberapa calon legislatif menggunakan pesan tersirat (implicit) dalam menyampaikan pernyataannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi off-record pada baliho calon anggota legislatif dan calon presiden. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif yang menjelaskan fenomena kebahasaan dengan mengkaji konteks linguistik dan non-linguistik dalam data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa terdapat lima strategi off record yang ditemukan yaitu giving hints untuk memperjelas pesan, giving association untuk memberikan saran yang halus, be incomplete untuk membuat asumsi pemahaman, overstate untuk melebih-lebihkan kepentingan, dan metafora untuk membuat perbandingan analogis. Giving association dan metafora merupakan dua data yang paling banyak muncul.

**Kata Kunci:** Strategi off record, billboard, calon legislatif.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The legislative elections are a crucial moment for residents to determine the direction of development and policies in their areas for the next five years and it is one of the manifestations of democracy at the local level that allows people

to directly elect their member of legislative councils. Banyumas Regency is one of the regions that holds this democracy party. The 2024 Banyumas legislative election attracted attention because of a number of significant changes compared to the previous election, especially in terms of technical implementation which is the

result of adaptation to the post-pandemic situation (Bramantyo et al., 2023).

The election was held on February 14, 2024, nevertheless the preparations had been carried out in advance. Legislative candidates have begun a campaign to promote themselves to potential voters in hopes of winning a ticket to the council. One of the campaign methods that many legislative candidates take is to use a campaign billboard by displaying their photos along with important information related to the candidate's identity. Billboards, which are campaign media, generally have similar content in the form of promises given by candidates if they win this fight. The aim of this research is to analyse the off records strategies that are used in legislative and president candidate billboards.

These promises are realized in various ways or strategies. Promise is a speech acts that shows speakers' commitment or act in the future to the hearers. Some of these promises are realized explicitly (Sesmiyati et al., 2021); (Son & Afriana, 2023), and (Wiyanto & Juliani, 2023) and some are conveyed implicitly or vaguely (Santoso & Nurfitriah, 2023); (Njuki & Ileri, 2021), (Suarni et al., 2023), and (Ramadhanti & Andriani, 2024). This vague strategy in pragmatic studies falls into the category of off records (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 211). Aeni et al. (2022) and Santos et al. (2023) are the researchers who analyze off records strategies of Brown and Levinson in the interaction of teacher and student in classroom. Other researchers who apply politeness theory are Alduaij et al. (2024) who examines the communication between doctor and patient in Kuwait. While Alqahtani (2024) defines the difference of politeness

strategies between spoken Saudi and British English. Another research has also been done by Mott et al. (2024) who explore linguistic politeness strategies of robot in responding human communication. Then, Nikpoo & Allami (2024) and Singh et al. (2024) also studied the difference of politeness strategies across gender.

Previous studies on campaign communication have mostly focused on explicit political messaging or promises, e.g., Sesmiyati et al. (2021) ; Son & Afriana (2023); Wiyanto & Juliani (2023). While there have been discussions about implicit messaging or vague strategies, these studies rarely delve into the specific use of off-record politeness strategies in political campaigns, especially in the context of legislative elections in Indonesia. Moreover, few studies explore how these strategies are influenced by local cultural norms and voter perceptions. This research fills this gap by focusing specifically on how off-record strategies are employed in the legislative campaign billboards of Banyumas Regency candidates, providing a deeper understanding of how implicit communication can shape voter engagement and perceptions in local electoral contexts.

The off record strategy has been widely used in research, but this study uses different data. The data in this study were the speech and context on the billboard of prospective legislative members (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The candidate billboards contain picture, photo, symbol and also slogans that usually have implicit meaning, which is a meaning beyond the word and the sentence. This reason leads the researchers to do the research in analysing those

billboards with pragmatics perspective as the linguistic tool.

## 2. METHOD

The research employed a qualitative approach. It explores linguistic phenomena by emphasizing an in-depth analysis enriched with both linguistic and non-linguistic contexts (Stake, 2010). These contexts are utilized to interpret the text and images displayed on the billboards of the prospective legislative members.

The research data are text and images found on billboards of legislative and president candidates that are used to promote themselves. As the data only include delivering a vague promotion; it does not market directly Text and images that explicitly ask voters to vote for one of the legislative candidates were excluded.

Data collection was carried out at the end of 2023 and early 2024 because the regional elections were held in February 2024. It was done by photographing campaign billboards along protocol roads in Banyumas Regency, Central Java Province. The overall amounts of the data taken were 58 data. Then, those data were classified into Brown and Levinson's off records strategies.

## 3. RESULT

The results show that there are five off record strategies used in prospective legislative billboards. They are giving hits, giving

association clue, be incomplete, overstate, and metaphors (Brown & Levinson, 1987b).

Off-record strategy	Text	Translated
<b>Giving hints</b>	<i>Diejek, difitnah, dijelekin, ....senyumin aja</i>	Mocked, slandered, vilified, .... just smile
	<i>Tuanku ya rakyat</i>	My master is the people
<b>Giving association clue</b>	<i>Grandmaster</i>	Grandmaster
	<i>Putera Ibu Risma</i>	The son of Mrs. Risma
<b>Be incomplete</b>	<i>Nusantara Memanggil</i>	Nusantara calls
	<i>Hampir 15 tahun melayani dengan sepenuh hati untuk saudara kita yang membutuhkan.</i>	Nearly 15 years of wholehearted service to our brothers and sisters in need.
	<i>Kelihatannya setelah ini, jatahnya pak Prabowo</i>	It seems that after this, Mr. Prabowo's allotment
<b>Overstate</b>	<i>Saya memberikan bukti bukan janji</i>	I gave evidence, not promise
	<i>Lawan kezaliman, tegakkan keadilan</i>	Fight tyranny, uphold justice
<b>Metaphors</b>	<i>PKS pelayan rakyat</i>	PKS (the) servant of the people
	<i>Kader harus menjadi agen aspirasi rakyat</i>	Nasdem cadres must become agents of people's aspirations
	<i>PKS Pembela Rakyat</i>	PKS (the) defenders of the people

**Table 1. Off Records Strategies**

### 3.1. Giving hints

Giving hint happens when the speaker say something which is not explicitly relevant so that the hearer has to interpret it (Brown & Levinson, 1987a).

3.1.1 *Diejek, difitnah, dijelekin....senyumin aja*  
(Mocked, slandered, vilified, .... just smile)

The sentence *Diejek, difitnah, dijelekin....senyumin aja* includes giving hints because it implies a certain message without explicitly stating it. According to Brown & Levinson (1987a), giving hints is thus an off record strategy where the speaker expects the hearer to understand the message properly. In this case, instead of explicitly stating that the legislative candidate is often ridiculed, slandered, or demonized by others, this sentence only gives hints that let the reader infer for themselves that the candidate has experienced these things. The sentence conveys the message indirectly through a brief statement along with the attitude shown in the photo.

By implying that the candidate remains calm and positive despite negative attacks, this poster builds an image of the candidate as someone who is strong, patient and optimistic. Readers may see these as good leadership qualities. Moreover, the reader needs to interpret the candidate's smile as a response to the negative attacks. This message is not stated directly, but is implied in the context of the sentences and images. This can attract sympathy and support from voters.

3.1.2 *Tuanku ya rakyat* (My master is my people)

The sentence "Tuanku ya rakyat" on the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off-record strategy of giving hints because it conveys an implicit message, rather than explicitly. The word *tuan* is addressee term for a man. However, in this context, the word *tuanku*

means someone with higher authority or the master without explicitly refers to man or woman. According to Santoso & Nurfitri (2023), giving hints is when the speaker hopes the interlocutor will be able to understand what they are saying. In this poster, instead of explicitly saying "I will serve the people" or "The people are the most important to me," this sentence conveys this implicitly by using the term "*tuanku*" which usually refers to someone who is respected and has superior interlocutor position (Nordin et al., 2024).

The function of giving hints in this case is to show respect and humility. By using the term "*tuanku*," the candidate shows respect and humility to the people. In addition, the impact of the use of giving hints in this sentence is that readers will feel more sympathetic towards candidates who show respect and humility.

### 3.2. Giving association clue

Giving association clue is a similar type of implicature caused by relevance violations happens when something related to the action of the hearer should be associated based on past experiences between speaker and hearer regardless of their past interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987a).

3.2.1 Grandmaster

The sentence "Grandmaster" in the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off record strategy of giving association clues because the use of the word "grandmaster" relies on the reader's knowledge. This strategy relies on the reader's prior knowledge that Utut Adianto, the candidate on the poster, is a famous chess grandmaster. This is in accordance with Basyar

(2022) and Yanti's (2017) statement that the association strategy involves the speaker bringing up a topic related to the listener's experience or shared knowledge. By using the term "grandmaster," this poster capitalizes on the association that already exists in the reader's mind without the need to explain further. With his title, the candidate is trying to portray that he has high strategic skills, intelligence, and dedication, which are positive qualities for a leader. The sentence "Grandmaster" in the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off record strategy of giving association clues because the use of the word "grandmaster" relies on the reader's knowledge. This strategy relies on the reader's prior knowledge that Utut Adianto (the candidate on the poster) is a famous chess grandmaster. This is in accordance with Basyar (2022) statement that said the association strategy involves the speaker bringing up a topic related to the listener's experience or shared knowledge. By using the term "grandmaster," this poster capitalizes on the association that already exists in the reader's mind without the need to explain further. With his title, the candidate is trying to portray that he has high strategic skills, intelligence, and dedication, which are positive qualities for a leader.

The function of using association clues is to create a positive image efficiently. The use of the word "grandmaster" is an efficient way to create a positive image of the candidate without the need for lengthy explanations. It utilizes strong associations that already exist to build the desired image. In addition, the impact of using association clues is that readers will recognize them quickly.

### 3.2.2 *Putera Ibu Risma* (Son of Mrs. Risma)

The phrase "*Putera Ibu Risma*" on the legislative election poster is categorized as an off record strategy giving association clues because the use of this phrase relies on the reader's knowledge of who Ibu Risma is and her relationship with the candidate in the poster. Santoso & Nurfitria (2023) states that association strategy is when the speaker says something because s/he and the listener have shared information or experiences in the past. The phrase "son of Mrs. Risma" specifically refers to the family relationship between the candidate and Mrs. Risma, who is a well-known figure. Mrs. Risma, Tri Rismaharini, is widely known as the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and former Mayor of Surabaya. In addition to associating the candidate to Mrs. Risma, by using this phrase the poster is capitalizing on the positive associations that already exist in the reader's mind regarding Mrs. Risma. The phrase evokes associations with the positive qualities attached to Mrs. Risma, such as dedication, integrity, and success in public service. It gives the impression that the child may have the same qualities because of their family relationship.

The function of using association clues in this poster is to increase trust. The association with Mrs. Risma's name increases credibility and trust in his son, Fuad Bernardi. Readers who respect Mrs. Risma's will tend to view Fuad Bernardi positively because of their family relationship. Association clues can also give impact to the readers. This strategy makes the reader easily remember the candidate. Thus, if they already recognize and remember the

candidate, readers will tend to vote for the candidate.

### 3.2.3 *Nusantara memanggil* (Nusantara is calling)

The phrase “*Nusantara Memanggil*” on the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off-record strategy of giving association clues because this phrase relies on the reader’s understanding and association with the concept of “*nusantara*” and the implications of the call. Nusantara is a term that refers to the Indonesian archipelago, often used to describe the entirety of the Indonesian nation and culture historically and geographically. The use of this word evokes a sense of nationhood, unity and national identity. This strategy relies on the reader’s knowledge of the concept of “*nusantara*” and a sense of nationalism. By using the phrase, the poster taps into feelings of national pride and responsibility that readers may have.

The function of using association in this sentence is to evoke a sense of nationalism. It gives the impression that the candidate is championing the interests of the entire nation and invites the public to participate in the larger task of national interest. In addition, the use of the association clue makes the readers think about responsibility. Readers may associate candidates with great responsibility and commitment to the national interest, as the use of this phrase emphasizes the importance of action and contribution to the nation.

### 3.3. Be incomplete

Be incomplete is the violation of Quantity Maxim as of the manner maxim. It is related to the elliptical utterances that are legitimated by

many conversational context (Brown & Levinson, 1987a).

### 3.3.1 *Hampir 15 tahun melayani dengan sepenuh hati untuk saudara kita yang membutuhkan* (Almost 15 years of serving wholeheartedly for our fellow in need)

The sentence “*Hampir 15 tahun melayani dengan sepenuh hati untuk saudara kita yang membutuhkan*” on the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off record strategy of stating incompletely because the information conveyed is not entirely clear. Incomplete strategy is when the speaker assumes that the hearer will understand and interpret the message even if the sentence is incomplete (Njuki & Ireri, 2021). In this case, the sentence does not mention who has served for almost 15 years. The subject, perhaps the candidate himself, is not explicitly mentioned, making the information incomplete. However, the candidate hopes the reader can get the message.

The function of using incomplete strategy in this poster is to build a sense of humility. By not mentioning himself directly, the candidate appears humble and focused on the act of serving rather than on himself. Moreover, using this strategy in this sentence poster can increase engagement. Since the sentence is incomplete, the reader needs to infer who is being referred to, which can increase their engagement and attention to the message.

3.3.2 *Kelihatannya setelah ini, jatahnya pak Prabowo* (It seems that after this, it's Prabowo's turn)

The sentence “*Kelihatannya setelah ini, jatahnya pak Prabowo*” on the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off-record strategy of stating incompletely because it requires interpretation from the reader. In using the incomplete strategy, the speaker conveys utterances whose intentions are still hanging. This sentence does not provide the full context of what is meant by “after this” or how the “turn” is obtained. The reader must interpret what is meant. “Turn” can refer to many things such as victory in an election, a certain position, or a certain expected outcome.

The function of using incomplete strategy in this poster is for active interpretation. Sentences using incomplete strategy encourage readers to actively interpret the message, which can increase their engagement and attention to the message. In addition, the impact of using this strategy in this sentence is that the reader's curiosity will be increased. The reader may feel compelled to find out more about the situation in question and the context behind the statement.

3.3.3 *Wis wayahe* (It is the time)

The sentence “*Wis wayahe*” on the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off record strategy of being incomplete because of the unclear object and subject. According (Njuki & Ireri, 2021), an incomplete strategy occurs when the speaker does not complete the utterance, leaving the meaning unclear. The sentence “it is the time” does not explicitly state what is meant by “it is the time.” The subject or object of the action signalled by the word “it's time” is not

explained. This statement implies that something needs to be done or achieved, but it does not clearly articulate what that action or change is.

The function of using incomplete strategy in this sentence is to arouse curiosity. The reader will feel curious and want to know more about what is meant by “it is the time.” This can make the reader more interested in finding out more information or listening to a more complete message from the candidate. Thus, the impact of using incomplete strategy in this sentence is that the reader becomes critical thinking. Readers may be encouraged to think critically about what is meant by “it is the time” and how it relates to the current political situation or needs of society.

### 3.4. Overstate

Overstate means exaggerating or choosing a point of view that is higher than the reality. The implicature often lie far beyond the statement (Brown & Levinson, 1987a).

3.4.1 *Saya memberikan bukti bukan janji* (I provide proof, not promises)

The sentence “*Saya memberikan bukti bukan janji*” on the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off record strategy of overstate strategy because it conveys the message in a hyperbolic way. According to Suarni et al. (2023), overstate strategy making things far more crucial than they are. The sentence uses an exaggerated contrast between two concepts, “proof” and “promises,” to emphasize the reliability and superiority of the candidate. This contrast can be seen as exaggerating the candidate's superiority. By implying that providing evidence is the only way to be taken seriously, the candidate makes the claim that he

or she is far superior and trustworthy to his or her competitors. This is a form of off-record strategy that overstates because it assumes that the other candidate does not provide evidence and only promises.

Overstate helps to highlight the candidate's advantages over others and builds people's trust. By stating that he or she provides evidence, the candidate seeks to build trust in the eyes of voters, emphasizing that he or she can provide tangible actions that can be seen and measured. Overstate strategy can also give an impact on readers. Readers may feel more confident with candidates who claim to be able to provide real evidence rather than just promises.

#### 3.4.2 *Lawan kezaliman, tegakkan keadilan*

Fight injustice, uphold justice

The sentence "*Lawan kezaliman, tegakkan keadilan*" on the legislative election poster can be categorized as an off-record strategy of overstate strategy because it exaggerates conditions and actions. Suarni et al. (2023) states that overstating strategy uses excessive rhetoric. The word "fight" implies active and intense confrontation or resistance. The word "injustice" is a very strong term that refers to actions or conditions that are extremely unfair and cruel. This statement exaggerates the existing conditions by using the word "injustice," which may not always be in line with the actual situation. This gives a very negative picture of the status quo. Meanwhile, the phrase "uphold justice" implies a serious and structured effort to ensure that justice is done, which could include major reforms. It is phrased in a way that suggests the urgency and large scale of the changes required.

In this case, overstate serves to evoke emotions. The use of words like "fight" and "injustice" evokes emotions such as anger or dissatisfaction with existing conditions. In addition, the use of overstate in election posters can attract the reader's attention. This strong and emotional statement grabs the reader's attention because of its dramatic and exaggerated nature. It makes the message more striking and catches the attention of voters.

### 3.5. Metaphors

Metaphor is figurative language whose meaning cannot be interpreted literally. It can be the comparison between one thing to other which have similar ground or characteristic. There are 3 data which can be categorized as metaphor.

#### 3.5.1 *PKS pelayan rakyat* (PKS is servant of the people)

The sentence "*PKS pelayan rakyat*" on the legislative election poster can be categorized as a metaphorical off record strategy because it uses the word "servant" as a metaphor to describe the role and function of PKS. According to Vica et al. (2023) metaphor strategy occurs when utterances contain analogical claims in which the speaker compares two or more items with the same value. In this case, "servant" refers to someone who serves others in a work context, such as a waiter in a restaurant or household. However, in this sentence, "servant" is used in a figurative or metaphorical sense to describe PKS's role as a political party that serves the interests of the people. By calling PKS a "servant of the people," this sentence uses metaphor to emphasize that the party is committed to direct



engagement and service to the community. This implies that the party prioritizes the interests of the people above their own.

The function of using metaphors in this sentence is to make the message easier to understand. By using the word “servant,” the message conveyed becomes clearer and more direct about PKS’s commitment to serving the people. Equating the role of the party with servants makes it easier for voters to understand and remember the duties and functions of the party. In addition, the impact of the use of metaphor in this sentence is that it can increase the reader’s trust. Readers may feel more trusting of PKS because this shows a commitment to the public interest.

### 3.5.2 *Kader Nasdem harus menjadi agen aspirasi rakyat* (Nasdem cadres must become agents of people's aspirations)

The sentence “*Kader Nasdem harus menjadi agen aspirasi rakyat*” on the legislative election poster can be categorized as a metaphorical off record strategy because of the use of the word “agent” which has a figurative meaning in this context. Literally, “agent” usually refers to a person or company that acts as an intermediary or representative in various contexts, such as a real estate agent or insurance agent. However, in this sentence, “agent” is used in a figurative or metaphorical sense to describe the role of Nasdem cadres as representatives or spokespersons for the aspirations of the people. By referring to the cadres as “agents of the people’s aspirations,” this sentence uses metaphor to emphasize that the cadres are actively involved in listening to, voicing, and fighting for the interests of the people. This is in accordance with

Santoso & Nurfitri (2023) statement that metaphor strategy incorporates the transfer of message through a beautiful linguistic style for a phrase.

The function of using metaphors in this sentence is to increase support. The word “agent” usually has positive connotations, such as proactive, representative, and influential, which can trigger positive emotions and sympathy from readers. Thus, the impact of using metaphors in this sentence is to increase the emotional connection with the reader. Using the term “agent” makes voters feel that the cadre is actively fighting for their aspirations.

### 3.5.3 *PKS Pembela Rakyat* (PKS Defenders of the People)

The sentence “*PKS Pembela Rakyat*” (PKS Defenders of the People) on the legislative election poster is categorized as a metaphorical off record strategy because of the use of the word “defender” which has a figurative meaning. Daar et al. (2023) states that metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase represents one type of item or action. Literally, “defender” refers to someone who fights or protects others. However, in this sentence, the word “defender” is used to describe that PKS acts as a protector and fighter for the people. This creates an image that the party is active in fighting for the rights and interests of the people.

The function of using metaphors in this sentence is to build a positive image. The metaphor helps build PKS’s image as a party dedicated to protecting and fighting for people’s rights. In addition, the impact of using metaphors is to increase people’s trust. Readers may feel more trust in a party that describes themselves as

defenders of the people as this shows a commitment to protecting and fighting for the public interest. Voters will feel that the party is genuinely concerned about and working for their interests.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This research analysed the billboard campaign in legislative candidate elections. The researcher only examined the off record data. These data are the statements which are stated implicitly through the message in the billboards. The results shows that there are five off records strategies found. They are giving hint (an off record strategy where the speaker expects the hearer to understand the message properly), giving association (the strategy involves the speaker bringing up a topic related to the listener's experience, be incomplete (an off record strategy of stating incompletely because the information conveyed is not entirely clear), overstate (it conveys the message in a hyperbolic way) and metaphor (the speaker compares two or more items with the same value). The data that appear most are the off record strategy of giving associations and metaphors.

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