



An Analysis of Logical Fallacy on Prabowo Subianto's Argumentation during 2019 Indonesia Presidential Debate

Analisis Kesalahan Logis pada Argumentasi Prabowo Subianto selama Debat Presiden Indonesia 2019

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Abstract

There have been a considerable number of studies of fallacy concerning with presidential debates in Western countries particularly on American presidential debates. However, the study is still rarely concerned with presidential debates in Eastern countries particularly Indonesia. Therefore, this study attempted to find the types of logical fallacies on Indonesian presidential debates committed especially by one of the presidential candidates, Prabowo Subianto, during 2019 Indonesian presidential debates. The data are utterances containing logical fallacies and the source of the data is the transcripts of four debate videos. The theory of fallacy classification by Damer (2009) was employed in this research. There were thirteen types of fallacies found in this research. The most dominant one was the fallacy of *false alternatives* with the percentage of 31.25%, and followed by the fallacy of *drawing the wrong conclusion* and *appeal to irrelevant authority* with the percentage of 15.62% and 9.37% respectively.

Keywords: *logical fallacy, argumentation, presidential debate*

Abstrak

Telah ada sejumlah penelitian tentang kesalahan logis yang terkait dengan debat presiden di negara-negara barat terutama pada debat presiden Amerika. Tetapi, penelitian tersebut masih jarang terkait dengan debat presiden di negara-negara timur terutama Indonesia. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini mencoba menemukan tipe-tipe kesalahan logis yang dibuat terutama oleh salah seorang calon presiden, Prabowo Subianto selama debat presiden Indonesia 2019. Data penelitian adalah ujaran yang mengandung kesalahan logis dan sumber data adalah transkrip dari empat video debat. Teori klasifikasi kesalahan logis oleh Damer (2009) digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Ada tiga belas tipe kesalahan logis yang ditemukan di penelitian ini. Yang paling dominan adalah *false alternatives* dengan persentase sebesar 31.25%,

dan diikuti oleh *drawing the wrong conclusion* dan *appeal to irrelevant authority* dengan persentase sebesar 15.62 dan 9.37 secara berurutan.

Kata kunci: *logical fallacy, argumentation, presidential debate*

A. INTRODUCTION

Linguistics has relationships with a lot of other disciplines which are referred to macro-linguistics. One of those disciplines is logic. It is the correlation between logic and meaning that makes logic interesting from a linguistic perspective (Gamut, 1991 p. 5). He added that the contribution of logic to linguistics is not only restricted to provide precise descriptions of the meanings of the grammatical conjunctions, negation, expression quantification and so on. It also offers semantic interpretations of syntactic operations when examining what arguments are valid on the basis of the meanings of the grammatical conjunctions and negation. Similarly, Lawyer (n.d.) states that logic is all about the relationships of meanings which are called propositions. In order to understand how language works, it is important to find its logical structure.

More specifically, Gamut (1991) regards logic as the science of reasoning. Reasoning has a variety of applications and one of them is argumentation. One area in which argumentation becomes the main focus is presidential debate. Presidential debates become the moments for the candidates to deliver their vision and mission as well as to encourage citizens to vote for them. Therefore, it is imperative for them to say something with adequate reasons or strong arguments. Otherwise, their saying is questionable or might be unacceptable. An argument consists of premise(s) and conclusion(s). Once the premises fail to support or inadequately support its conclusions, the arguments of that sort are categorized as (logical) fallacy (Warman & Hamzah, 2019).

Language is also related with argument because language is used to formulate an argument. The tricky use of language can be manipulative or deceptive, and the thoughtless use of language can cause misperception and dispute (Copi et al., 2014). The result of such use of language is fallacy. Zhou (2018) argues that fallacies in political discourse are deceptive tricks that people include in their arguments which seem credible, yet they are actually used to fool the audience. The fallacy might occur both intentionally and unintentionally, yet both ways could cause a serious problem especially in presidential debate because it can influence and deceive people's perception toward what the politicians say.

Several studies on logical fallacies have been conducted in some areas such as argumentative writing, federal court and politics. In politics, there are some kinds of studies regarding logical fallacies which have been conducted (Hayon, 2005; Khan et al., 2016; Melakopides, 2018; Zhou, 2018). Hayon (2005) studied the types of fallacies in political statements by presenting actual cases as illustrations. He found that many political statements contain the fallacy of composition which is shifting the distributing understanding to collective understanding. Khan et al. (2016) conducted a comparative research to investigate the manipulation of informal fallacies and their relevance as identity markers. They specifically only analyzed two types of fallacies; appeal to force and appeal to pity. The result of their research studies indicated that informal fallacies can be regarded as identity markers from political associations. Zhou (2018) examined the use of logical fallacies in political statements. While there are numerous types of fallacies, he only focused on 18 common ones and found several fallacies in each type.

Still in politics, but particularly in presidential debates, there has also been a research about logical fallacies which was conducted by Santoso (2017). She examined the fallacies in the arguments of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in the first U.S. presidential debate and found six common types of fallacies; straw person, *ad hominem*, hasty generalization, false cause, slippery slope and *ad populum*.

Based on the previous studies that have been conducted, the researcher tried to conduct a research related to the topic, but in different area, which is in 2019 Indonesia presidential debate. The debates in each country could be different one another because it can be influenced by a lot of factors (Isolatus, 2011). His research found that a Finnish presidential debate is different in many ways from an American presidential debate. In addition, Warman and Hamzah (2019) said that there are many studies of fallacy concerning with presidential debates in Western countries as mentioned above and particularly on American presidential debates (see Santoso, 2017; Zhou, 2018; Hameed, 2018), but the research is still rarely concerned with presidential debates in Eastern countries particularly Indonesia. That is probably because presidential debate in Indonesia was held only twice, in 2014 and in 2019. Thus, this research attempted to analyze and find out the types of logical fallacies produced by one of the presidential candidates, Prabowo Subianto, in 2019 Indonesia's presidential debates.

To provide answer for the research question, there are two main theories that are reviewed related to argumentation and fallacy as follows:

Argumentation and Arguments

The terms 'argumentation' and 'argument' may look similar, but they are actually different. In general, an argument is a series of assumptions together with a conclusion that can be drawn by one or more reasoning steps. Meanwhile, argumentation is the process by which arguments and counterarguments are constructed and managed (Besnard and Hunter, 2008 p. 2-3). Therefore, it can be inferred that arguments are the instruments used in argumentation.

More specifically, the term 'argumentation' is defined by scholars in a variety of ways, yet the widely accepted one according to Schwarz and Asterhan (2008) is the definition by van Eemeren et al (2002) which states that "argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reason aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge" (p. 5). According to Besnard and Hunter (2008), there are some kinds of argumentation and one of them is persuasional argumentation which aims at persuading the audience to do something by using objective information, subjective information and hypothetical information (including possibly fallacious information), for example a political speech (p. 11). Since presidential debate is a kind of political speech; therefore, it belongs to persuasional argumentation.

Furthermore, arguments are the central point to any types of debates. An argument is made up of propositions that consist of premises and conclusions (Walton, 2006; Schwarz & Asterhan, 2008; Besnard & Hunter, 2008; Damer 2009; Tindale, 2015). A proposition is different from a statement in which it has two defining characteristics (Walton, 2006, p. 9). First, it is something that can be true or false. Second, it is typically contained in a sentence that makes an assertion, but there is a difference between a proposition and a sentence. Two sentences may have the same proposition. For example:

“‘Snow is white’ and ‘Schnee ist weiss’, the one in English, the other in German, are different sentences, but both (we can presume) express the same proposition.”

(Walton, 2006 p. 10)

In addition, ambiguous sentence cannot be considered as a proposition because it does not have the property, by itself, of being true or false. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between a sentence and a proposition. A proposition is contained in a sentence, but it is not the same as the sentence. It represents the meaning contained in a sentence, particularly the sentence that contains an assertion (Walton, 2006 p. 10). Furthermore, premises are propositions that provide reasons or evidence to support a conclusion while conclusion is a claim that is made based on the support of the premises (Damer, 2009 p. 13).

Fallacy Classification Theory by Damer (2009)

Some scholars have proposed theory of fallacy classification (see Hamblin, 1970; Tindale, 2007; Walton, 2008; Damer, 2009; Mayfield, 2014; Copi et al., 2014). Hamblin (1970) just introduced formal fallacies without categorizing them. Thus, it would be practically difficult to use it. While there are many categories and types of fallacies, Tindale (2007) only introduced two categories of fallacies. They are fallacies of diversion and fallacies of structure. Each category has six and five types respectively. Similarly, Walton (2008) and Mayfield (2014) also categorized fallacies into two and there are less than twenty types of fallacies in the two categories. Furthermore, Copi et al. (2014) introduced four categories of fallacies namely (1) fallacies of relevance (2) fallacies of defective induction (3) fallacies of presumption and (4) fallacies of ambiguity. There are totally 19 types from the four categories. However, it seems insufficient since the most commonly occurred fallacy (*ad hominem*) is not included. Lastly, Damer (2009) introduced more complex types of fallacies and more comprehensive explanations of each fallacy with at least three realistic and practical examples given and its clear description. There are totally sixty types of fallacies which are grouped into five categories. They are fallacies that violate 1) structural criterion, 2) relevance criterion, 3) acceptability criterion, 4) sufficiency criterion and 5) rebuttal criterion.

Since there are sixty types of fallacy, it is impractical to explain them all in detail. Therefore, only the general overview of the fallacies based on the five categories are discussed here (see Damer, 2009 for more details). The first one is fallacy that violates structural criterion. This fallacy occurs when there is structural flaw which prevents its conclusion from following the premises (Damer, 2009: 62). Types of fallacy included in this category are *arguing in a circle*, *question-begging language*, *complex question*, *question-begging definition*, *incompatible premises*, *contradiction between premise and conclusion*, *denying the antecedent*, *affirming the consequent*, *false conversion*, *undistributed middleterm*, and *illicit distribution of an end term*.

The second one is fallacy that violates relevance criterion. An arguer commits this fallacy if s/he includes irrelevant premises or factors to support the conclusions of his/her arguments (Damer, 2009: 92). There are totally ten types of fallacy in this category namely *genetic fallacy*, *rationalization*, *drawing the wrong conclusion*, *using the wrong reason*, *appeal to irrelevant authority*, *appeal to common opinion*, *appeal to force or threat*, *appeal to tradition*, *appeal to self-interest and manipulation of emotions*.

The third one is fallacy that violates acceptability criterion. According to Damer (2009:34-35), there are seven criteria of acceptability standard and if one of those is violated, types of fallacy of this category have been committed. The seven criteria are as follow:

1. a claim that is a matter of undisputed common knowledge
2. A claim that is confirmed by one's personal experience or observation
3. A claim that is adequately defended in the context of the argument or at least is capable of being adequately defended by some other accessible source
4. An uncontroverted eyewitness testimony
5. An uncontroverted claim from a relevant authority
6. the conclusion of another good argument
7. a relatively minor claim that seems to be a reasonable assumption in the context of the argument

Sixteen types of fallacy are included in this category namely *equivocation, ambiguity, misleading accent, illicit contrast, argument by innuendo, misuse of a vague expression, distinction without a difference, fallacy of the continuum, fallacy of division, false alternatives, is-ought to fallacy, wishful thinking, misuse of a principle, fallacy of the mean and faulty analogy.*

The fourth one is fallacy that violates sufficiency criterion. An arguer is deemed to commit this fallacy once s/he draws conclusions based on premises that are insufficient in number, kind and weight to establish the truth of the conclusion (Damer, 2009: 160). Fourteen types of fallacy belong to this category. They are *insufficient sample, unrepresentative data, arguing from ignorance, contrary-to-fact hypothesis, fallacy of popular wisdom, special pleading, omission of key evidence, confusion of a necessary with a sufficient condition, causal oversimplification, post hoc fallacy, neglect of a common cause, domino fallacy and gambler's fallacy.*

The last one is fallacy that violates rebuttal criterion. This fallacy is committed if arguers do not include anticipated serious criticisms that can attack their argument (Damer, 2009: 193). Types of fallacy in this category are *denying the counterevidence, ignoring the counterevidence, abusive ad hominem, poisoning the well, two-wrong fallacy, attacking a straw man, trivial objections, red herring, resort to humor or ridicule.*

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The type of this research is descriptive research with qualitative approach. According to Igwenagu (2016, p. 6), descriptive research involves studying a specific situation to ascertain whether any general theories may arise out of it. Meanwhile, qualitative approach is concerned with qualitative phenomenon, for example phenomena relating to or involving quality or type (Kothari, 2004, p.3). That is in line with this research because this research is also concerned with studying a specific situation (2019 Indonesia presidential debates) and is related with the qualitative phenomena because this research is concerned with the *quality* of arguments and the *type* of fallacies.

The source of data of this research is four video transcripts of Indonesia presidential debates 2019. The data are utterances which contain logical fallacies uttered by Prabowo Subianto during the presidential debates. In analyzing the data, the researcher did the following procedures; (1) classifying the utterances from both candidates that belong to the common types of logical fallacy based on the theory of fallacy classification by Damer (2009), (2) listing the data into the tables based on its

types to show its frequency and percentage, (3) analyzing the data by comparing the frequency of logical fallacies made by the two candidates in order to see the types mostly used by Joko Widodo and Prabowo Subianto as well as to know the differences and similarities between them, (4) drawing the conclusion based on the findings.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, it was found that Prabowo Subianto made a number of fallacies that belong to the five categories. There are thirteen types of fallacies out of sixty types that were found in his arguments. The frequency and percentage of the thirteen types can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Types of fallacies made by Prabowo Subianto

Categories of fallacies	No	Types of fallacies	F	%
fallacies that violate the structural criterion	1	arguing in a circle	1	3.12%
	2	incompatible premise	2	6.25%
fallacies that violate the relevance criterion	3	genetic fallacy	2	6.25%
	4	drawing the wrong conclusion	5	15.62%
	5	appeal to irrelevant authority	3	9.37%
	6	appeal to force or threat	1	3.12%
	7	manipulation of emotions	1	3.12%
fallacies that violate the acceptability criterion	8	fallacy of composition	2	6.25%
	9	false alternatives	10	31.25%
fallacies that violate the sufficiency criterion	10	confusion of a necessary with a sufficient condition	1	3.12%
	11	causal oversimpification	1	3.12%
fallacies that violate the rebuttal criterion	12	red herring	2	6.25%
	13	Resort to humor or ridicule	1	3.12%
Total			32	100%

From the five categories, the second category, fallacies that violate the relevant criterion appeared with most types of fallacies. There are five types out of ten that were found. They are (1) *genetic fallacy*, (2) *drawing the wrong conclusion*, (3) *appeal to irrelevant authority*, (4) *appeal to force or threat* and (5) *manipulation of emotions*. Then, in the rest categories (fallacies that violate the structural criterion, fallacies that violate the acceptability criterion, fallacies that violate the sufficiency criterion and fallacies that violate the rebuttal criterion), there were only two types in each category found.

In relation with the types, there are totally 32 occurrences found in all of the thirteen types. Fallacy of *false alternatives* was the most frequently occurred type with the frequency of 10 occurrences. This type of fallacy was not commonly found in presidential debates or political discourse (see Santoso, 2017; Zhou, 2018; Hameed, 2018). According to (Damer, 2009, p. 143), the fallacy of *false alternatives* is committed if an arguer harshly restricts the number of proposed alternative responses to a problem and assumes the suggested alternatives must be true. Therefore, the dominant use of *false alternatives* fallacy signifies that Prabowo tends

to oversimplify a problem or give a limited number of alternative responses to the problem.

The second highest frequency went to the fallacy of *drawing the wrong conclusion* with total occurrences of 5. Then, it is followed by the fallacy of *appeal to irrelevant authority* that came up with 3 occurrences. The less frequency of fallacies with only 2 occurrences went to four types of fallacies. They are *incompatible premise*, *genetic fallacy*, *fallacy of composition* and *red herring*. Furthermore, there are six types of fallacies that only appeared once in each. They are *arguing in a circle*, *appeal to force or threat*, *manipulation of emotions*, *confusion of a necessary with a sufficient condition*, *causal oversimplification* and *resort to humor or ridicule*.

, The finding of this research shows that *ad hominem* fallacy, found by the previous researches (particularly on the U.S presidential debates) as the most common fallacies committed by both presidential candidates (see Santoso, 2017; Zhou, 2018; Hameed, 2018), is not always common particularly in Indonesia presidential debates since the fallacy was not committed at all by Prabowo. Similarly, the fallacy of *false alternatives*, found by the previous researches as the uncommon one, is common found in this research. Even, it becomes the most dominant one. That might be because the debates in each country could be different one another since there are many factors contribute to it just like what Isolatus (2011) found in his research.

Below are the analyses of the three dominant fallacies. One example of each type is discussed below.

False Alternatives

There may be many ways or alternatives that must be used in order to completely address or solve a problem and hence it is inadequate just to use one or some of them. Therefore, if an arguer restricts the number of proposed alternative responses to a problem or situation and assuming that one of the alternatives must be the right one, s/he has committed the fallacy of false alternatives (Damer, 2009 p.143). There were some fallacies of this type found in this research as follow:

Inilah yang kita lakukan, yaitu memperbaiki sistem menyediakan sistem (online single submission) sehingga peluang untuk terjadinya korupsi itu betul tidak ada. Ada transparansi disitu, ada keterbukaan di situ, ada management pengawasan yang ketat di situ, ada management controlling yang baik di situ.

[This is what we do, that is fixing the system, providing the system (online single submission) so that the chance of committing corruption is totally gone. There is transparency in it, there is openness in it, there is strict supervising management in it, there is good controlling management in it.]

The standard form of this argument looks like this:

Since there is transparency, openness, strict supervising management, good controlling management in the system that is being fixed and provided.

And the system is the only proposed alternative to remove the chance of committing corruption, (implicit premise)

Therefore, the system can totally remove the chance of committing corruption. (conclusion)

It is probably acceptable if the arguer claims that the system can reduce the chance of committing corruption, but not for totally removing the chance. There are many ways one can do corruption even if there has been a good system like what he said. That is because of the weak implementation of regulations, cooperation in committing the corruption, the great power that the top leaders have, bribery,

nepotism and the others. That is why there are still a lot of corruption cases that happen in Indonesia. Therefore, repairing the system would not totally remove the chance of committing corruption, but surely it can decrease the chance.

Drawing the wrong conclusion

If an arguer draws a conclusion other than the one supported by the one supported by the evidence or reason presented in the argument, he simply commits the fallacy of *drawing the wrong conclusion* (Damer, 2009 p. 97). Even though the arguer might have provided some reasons or evidence, they cannot be accounted because they do not support the conclusion or have little or no bearing on the truth of the stated statement. There were some fallacies of this type found in the arguments of the two candidates.

Saya ingat ada yang mengatakan bahwa “strong will do what they can and the weak must suffer”. Yang kuat akan berbuat sekehendaknya yang lemah harus menderita. Karena itu, saya menilai pertahanan indonesia terlalu lemah, jauh dari yang diharapkan.

[I remembered someone saying that “the strong will do what they can and the weak must suffer”. “The powerful will do what they want, the weak must suffer”. Because of that, I assess that the defense of Indonesia is too weak, far from what is expected.]

The structure of the argument in standard form appears like this:

Since someone said that “The powerful will do what they want, the weak must suffer”, (premise)

Therefore, I assess that the defense of Indonesia is too weak, far from what is expected. (conclusion)

From the argument above, it is clear that there is no reason which shows the correlation between what the person said (the powerful will do what they want, the weak must suffer) and the conclusion that the defense of Indonesia is too weak and far from what is expected. Even if there might be implicit meanings inserted in the premise that are correlated with the conclusion, he should have explained and made it clear so that the listeners do not get confused. Therefore, the arguer seems to have drawn the wrong conclusion.

Appeal to irrelevant authority

An arguer during a debate might attempt to support a claim by using certain appeals as reasons or evidence. It is fine if he appeals to the judgment of relevant authorities or someone who is expert in a particular field and not biased. However, if he appeals to the judgment of someone who is not an authority, the judgment of an unidentified authority, or the judgment of an authority who is likely to be biased, he commits the fallacy of *appeal to irrelevant authority* (Damer, 2009, p. 102). An authority is someone who has the knowledge related to the claim and is free from any prejudices or conflicts of interest that might prevent him providing valid judgments. This is an example of this type found in this study.

Kita tidak dihormati oleh komunitas wartawan asing di jakarta .They always say “Indonesia is a nation of great potential and will always be a nation of great potential”. indonesia negara yang akan punya, yang punya potensi besar dan selalu akan punya potensi besar itu ejekan mereka kepada kita. Jadi kalau kita mau jadi nice guy mediator (dalam menangani kasus diskriminasi di Myanmar), monggo.

[We are not respected by the community of foreign reporters in Jakarta. They always say “Indonesia is a nation of great potential and will always be a nation of great potential”. Indonesia is a nation of great potential and will always be a nation of great potential. Thus, if we want to be nice guys mediators (in addressing discrimination case in Myanmar), go ahead.]

In standard form, the argument looks like this:

Since some foreign reporters said “They always say Indonesia is a nation of great potential and will always be a nation of great potential”, (premise)

Therefore, if we want to be nice guy mediators (in addressing discrimination case in Myanmar), go ahead. (conclusion)

Foreign reporters are those who are stationed in other countries to seek for news in the countries and report it. Their expertise lies on the ability to seek and report news. They might only know some issues or information about any events that they have reported. It might be of their reach to know about the other country’s potential. Even though they know, they are not supposed to be the one to whom the arguer relied on because they are not an authority in the field. Therefore, the arguer has committed the fallacy of appeal to irrelevant authority.

D. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was revealed that presidential debate in each country is different particularly with regard to the types of logical fallacy found, as suggested earlier. *Straw man* and *Ad hominem* fallacy were among the most frequent fallacies committed by both American presidential candidates of 2016 presidential election, as found by the previous studies. However, these two types were not committed at all by the Indonesian presidential candidate during the debates. Instead, the fallacies that he committed were the uncommon ones. They were fallacy of *false alternatives* as the most dominant one, and *drawing the wrong conclusion* and *appeal to irrelevant authority* as the second and third dominant one respectively. Therefore, it can be inferred that logical fallacies are common and often committed by presidential candidates, yet the types of fallacy committed are not always similar or the same. Further studies on how to help people identify logical fallacies are highly recommended since this study is only limited to the types of logical fallacies.

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