

## Phonological Errors in President Prabowo's State of the Nation Speech: Implications for the Development of the Official Variety of Indonesian Language

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the forms of phonological errors in President Prabowo Subianto's state speech which was broadcast on the tvOneNews YouTube channel on October 20, 2024. Using a qualitative descriptive methodology, we analyzed speech recordings for 47 minutes and 23 seconds (~8,500 words). The analysis identified three categories of phonological variations: phoneme addition (5 instances), phoneme removal (8 instances), and phoneme change (17 instances). The most dominant forms are phoneme changes, specifically vowel reduction (/a/ → /ə/) and diphthongs simplification (/ai/ → /e/, /au/ → /o/). Statistical analysis using spectral analysis software (Praat v6.1.27) revealed that speech speed (3.2 syllables/second) was the main causal factor for phonological variation, rather than local dialects or nonformal language habits as previously hypothesized in a similar study. These findings are in line with universal psycholinguistic principles regarding vowel reduction in fast speech. The study found that 47% of the variation was a systematic pattern (frequency ≥5 occurrences), indicating stable idiolects rather than random errors. These findings have implications for public speaking training programs at institutions such as LAN (State Administration Institute) and Language Centers, suggesting that formal language development requires attention to phonological aspects, in particular pronunciation accuracy and speech speed management, rather than mere prescriptive normative.

*Keywords: dialectology, phonology, speed of speech, language coaching, presidential speech, phonological variation*

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesian has a strategic role as the official language of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. As the main medium of communication in government, education, and public discourse, the quality of the use of the Indonesian language especially in formal contexts reflects the credibility and authority of political leaders (Amorita et al., 2024). The president's state of the nation speech is the highest formal oral genre that has profound linguistic significance. The transfer of leadership from Joko Widodo to Prabowo Subianto in October 2024 creates an empirical opportunity to examine phonological patterns in formal speech across different speakers, ages, and backgrounds.

Previous research on phonological errors in presidential discourse already exists but is still limited in scope. Muliya et al. (2022) analyzed Joko Widodo's speech at the UN General Assembly, identifying 4 phoneme omissions, 1 phoneme addition, and 20 phoneme changes.

Sari et al. (2023) examined Jokowi's speech at the opening of the 2023 IDX trading. Zulfa and Cahyani (2025) analyze Bahlil Lahadalia's speech at the Golkar party congress. These studies attribute phonological variation mainly to local dialects and non-formal language habits. However, no one has conducted a prosodic analysis or explored the quantitative relationship between speech speed and phonological reduction—a gap we addressed in this investigation.

This study investigates three main research questions: (1) What are the specific forms of phonological variation present in Prabowo's formal presidential speech? (2) What are the fundamental causes of these variations—local dialects, individual idiolects, the effect of speech speed, or other factors? (3) What are the implications of these findings for formal language development programs in Indonesia? Rather than treating phonological variations as 'errors' that require correction, we adopt a more nuanced approach that distinguishes between true errors, regional variants, and psycholinguistically normal phenomena in fast speech.

## METHODS

This study uses a qualitative analytical descriptive methodology combined with quantitative prosodic analysis. This research is based on phonological theory (Kridalaksana, 2008; Ladefoged & Johnson, 2011) and sociolinguistic frameworks (Markhamah, 2023).

**Data Sources and Sample Selection Criteria.** The data comes from President Prabowo Subianto's state of the nation speech which was broadcast on the tvOneNews YouTube channel on October 20, 2024, at 19:00 WIB. Total duration: 47 minutes 23 seconds; approximate word count: ~8.500 words; average speaking speed: 3.2 quarter-words per second; Audio quality: Excellent (>90% clarity, suitable for spectral analysis). The speeches were selected based on: (1) the highest formality register (the context of the state speech), (2) the value of new research (the analysis of Prabowo's speech for the first time), (3) the sufficient duration for distributional analysis, (4) the quality of the technical recording, and (5) the public accessibility on YouTube for reproducibility. Prabowo's background: born in Jakarta in 1951, raised in East Java, educated in formal Indonesian since childhood, multilingual (Indonesian, English, Dutch).

**Phonetic Transcription and Inter-Rater Reliability.** The researcher performed phonetic transcription using International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) notation (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2011) through three phases: (1) Initial transcription of listening to the complete speech 3 times, IPA notation word-for-word; (2) Prosodic analysis using Praat software version 6.1.27 (Boersma & Weenink, 2024) for spectral analysis, duration measurement (in milliseconds), and F0 extraction; (3) Inter-assessor verification of an independent linguist (M.A. Linguistics, 8+ years of experience) retranscribes 30% of speech (segments 1, 8, 15, representing ~14 minutes), with Cohen's Kappa agreement size (target  $\kappa \geq 0.85$ ). Reliability between final raters:  $\kappa = 0.92$  (perfect agreement). All phonemes are compared with KBBI (Badan Bahasa, 2016) and Kridalaksana (2008) as reference standards.

**Causal Analysis Framework.** For each identified phonological variation, we performed a multi-level analysis: (1) Distributional examining positional boundaries (beginning-word, middle-word, end-syllable), frequency (sporadic vs. systematic patterns), and consistency; (2) Prosodic measures the duration of syllables and correlates with the probability of vowel reduction using Pearson correlation; (3) Sociolinguistics contextualizes the speaker's background, dialect exposure, age-related factors; (4) Comparatively analyze parallel speeches

from other speakers (Joko Widodo 2019, Puan Maharani 2024) to determine whether the pattern is idiosyncratic or universal.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings: Phonological Variation Inventory

The analysis identified 30 instances of phonological variation in three categories. Phoneme addition (5 instances, 16.7%): especially geminate consonants ([s&partial; mmua] for /s&partial; front/; [also] for /also/, appears 5 times systematically). Phoneme omission (8 instances, 26.7%): syncope schwa in cluster onset ([slama] for /s&partial; old/; [out] for /k&partial; outer/) and the deletion of /h/ in the final position ([masi] for /still/). Phoneme changes (17 instances, 56.7%): dominant category, consisting mainly of vowel reduction and diphthongization monophthongization.

**Table 1: Phonological Variation Inventory**

| Variation Type       | Frequency | Percentage | Category Stability | Example                            |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Addition of Phonemes | 5         | 16,7%      | Partly Systematic  | [also] (5×), [Gifts]               |
| Phoneme Removal      | 8         | 26,7%      | Mix                | [slama], [out], [m&partial; see]   |
| Phoneme Changes      | 17        | 56,7%      | Partly Systematic  | [&partial; nam], [brother], [part] |

Source: Spectral analysis and verified transcription between raters

### Analysis: Vocal Reduction as the Dominant Phenomenon

Phoneme changes, particularly vowel reduction, represented the most frequent type of variation (56.7%). Detailed analysis reveals a striking distributional pattern: the reduction of the vowel /a/ → /&partial;/ occurs almost exclusively at the position of the final syllables (11 out of 12 cases). On the other hand, /a/ in the position of the initial or middle syllables is always realized accurately ([take] /take/, [gift] /gift/, [understand] /understand/). This pattern is not a random mistake but a systematic phonological process.

The simplification of diphthongs follows similar restrictions: /ai/ → /e/ ([parte] for party, [dame] for peace) and /au/ → /o/ ([sodara] for brother, [walo] for even) are also concentrated on the final syllables. Prosode analysis using Praat spectrograms and duration measurements revealed the fundamental mechanisms behind these variations. When the duration of the syllable-word falls below 100 milliseconds, the probability of vocal reduction increases significantly. The measurement on the word 'create' shows: quarter-1 [m&partial; n] = 120 ms (no reduction), final quarter-4 [k&partial; n] = 60 ms (reduction occurs). Statistical analysis yielded Pearson  $r = -0.78$  ( $p < 0.001$ ), showing a strong negative correlation between syllable-word duration and vocal reduction. These findings are in line with universal psycholinguistic principles: in fast speech, full vowels require greater articulatory effort and duration, while schwa (&partial;) is an economical 'default' vowel with minimal effort.

### Comparative Analysis: Speaking Speed as a Key Causal Factor

**Table 2: Correlation of Speaking Speed with Cross-Speaker Vocal Reduction**

| Speakers      | Speech Context                  | Speaking Speed (suk-words/sec) | Vocal Reduction Rate | Age at the time of the Speech |
|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Prabowo       | State of the Nation Speech 2024 | 3,2                            | 92%                  | 73 years old                  |
| Joko Widodo   | Speech 2019                     | 2,8                            | 65%                  | 63 years old                  |
| Mrs. Maharani | Speech 2024                     | 3,1                            | 58%                  | 50 years                      |

Bambang K. Academic 3,3 88% 85 years old  
 Purwo Lectures 2022  
 Source: Spectral analysis; Pearson correlation (speaking speed vs. vocal reduction)  $r = 0.89$  ( $p < 0.001$ )

Comparative analysis with other speakers demonstrates that the speed of speech, rather than the local dialect or individual background, is the main causal factor. Prabowo's speaking speed of 3.2 syllables per second was the fastest among the speakers analyzed, correlating with the highest rate of vocal reduction (92%). Joko Widodo, who spoke more slowly (2.8 sul/sec), showed a reduction in vocal expression in only 65% of cases. This relationship persists across speakers, resulting in an almost perfect correlation (Pearson  $r = 0.89$ ).

To validate the hypothesis that phoneme reduction is a common phenomenon in high-ranking officials' speeches, this data was compared with the history of President Joko Widodo's state speech. A comparative study of President Joko Widodo's speech at the Annual Session of the People's Consultative Assembly of the Republic of Indonesia on August 16, 2023 and his speech at the UN General Assembly shows the existence of similar phonological errors, especially in terms of phoneme omissions and vowel changes due to the influence of assimilation (Edujavare, 2023; Journal of Sciencetech Research, 2023). If in Joko Widodo, phonological variations are often colored by phonetic interference of regional languages (Javanese) at the segmental level, in Prabowo, variations are more driven by the speed of prosodies and simplification of closed syllables. This proves that phonological "errors" at the presidential level are not a single anomaly, but the reality of the use of a variety of spoken Indonesian in government institutions.

The hypothesis that Prabowo's East Javanese background drives his phonological patterns is not supported: his sociolinguistic profile (Jakarta-born, formal Indonesian language education, elite background) differs substantially from working-class Javanese dialect speakers. Instead, its variation patterns reflect the universal principles of motor control of speech that quickly triggers an automatic vocal reduction mechanism.

#### **Systematic vs. Sporadic Variation: Distinguishing Error from Idiolect**

Frequency analysis revealed an important difference: 47% of the variation was a systematic pattern (occurring  $\geq 5$  times) while 53% were sporadic (1-4 occurrences). Specifically, [also] for 'also' appears 5 times consistently with 100% stability, indicating a stable idiosyncratic feature rather than a random error. Similarly, the addition of the final phoneme /k/ in [jugak], [boniah] (although only 3 instances), suggests a systematic limitation in Prabowo's speech of a tendency to close open syllables with consonants, perhaps reflecting the influence of his personal phonological system. Features like these are stable, systematic, and do not affect the fundamentally different understanding of sporadic errors.

The findings regarding the monophthongization of diphthongs (/ai/  $\rightarrow$  /e/ and /au/  $\rightarrow$  /o/) in this speech are in line with the findings of previous research on the analysis of the pronunciation of diphthongs in Prabowo's post-inauguration speech (JOTIKA, 2024). The consistency of diphthongs simplification in words such as [parte] for 'party' and [sodara] for 'brother' indicates a high level of urban dialectal interference or the sociolinguistic adaptation of the spoken variety that has taken root. Although the Fourth Edition of the Indonesian Standard Grammar (TBBBI) prescriptively prohibits this kind of reduction in official writing (Alwi et al., 2017), the oral phenomenon of government officials often shows this phonological flexibility in order to achieve psychological closeness to the audience (emotive bonding) in addition to the factor of articulation efficiency.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the use of Prabowo rather than /also/ represents an established variant in enlightened Indonesian speech, documented in Tobing's (2015) acceptance study with 68% acceptance among Jakarta's enlightened speakers. This suggests that

the distinction between 'error' (deviation requires correction) and 'acceptable variant' (deviation within an acceptable range) is not absolute but depends on social acceptance and context.

### **Implications for the Development of the Indonesian Language**

These findings challenge a normative perspective that treats all phonological deviations from the KBBI standard as 'errors' that require correction. Instead, they suggest that vocal reduction in fast speech is a universal psycholinguistic phenomenon, not a sign of language incompetence. A president who exhibits schwa reduction in a formal speech is quick to behave like any human speaker in a state of rapid articulation. The policy implication is not to demand absolute phonological uniformity that would be biologically unrealistic, but rather to develop targeted interventions that maintain clarity despite rapid speech.

It suggests three concrete recommendations: First, formal speaking training for public figures should integrate speech speed management as a core competency. Institutions such as LAN (State Administration Agency) and BKN (State Civil Service Agency) must develop 12-hour training modules: Module 1 (2 hours) personal speaking speed diagnosis using Praat; Module 2 (2 hours) of fast speech physiology; Module 3 (4 hours) tempo control techniques (breathing, pacing, strategic pauses); Module 4 (2 hours) of standard pronunciation and acceptable variants; Module 5 (2 hours) practice and record feedback. This approach recognizes that some variation is inevitable and focuses on the maintenance of intelligence rather than demanding impossible perfection.

Second, the Language Center should conduct an acceptance study to determine which variants (such as [jugak], [understand], [sodara]) are widely accepted in the context of enlightened speech. Using a rigorous methodology with 500+ enlightened native speakers assessing the variants on a 7-point scale, the results can inform KBBI Online to distinguish between: (a) standard forms (100% required in formal writing), (b) acceptable variants (common in enlightened speech, can be noted as regional/colloquial), and (c) non-standard forms (not acceptable in formal contexts). This evidence-based approach replaces arbitrary normativity with empirical descriptions.

Third, future research should examine the causal relationship between presidential speech patterns and public language habits. Did public exposure to variants of presidential phonology increase their adoption? This requires pre-post surveys, media exposure analysis, and sociolinguistic experiments before a solid claim to presidential influence can be made.

### **CONCLUSION**

The analysis of President Prabowo's speech identified 30 instances of phonological variation in three categories: phoneme addition (16.7%), phoneme removal (26.7%), and phoneme change (56.7%). The dominant phenomenon of vocal reduction showed systematic distributional limitations (only final syllables) and a strong correlation with speech speed ( $r = -0.78$  for duration,  $r = 0.89$  for cross-speaker comparisons). These findings indicate that phonological variations in formal speech are not the main consequence of dialect, linguistic incompetence, or inadequate language development training, but rather a manifestation of universal psycholinguistic principles that govern rapid speech production.

Importantly, 47% of the variation is a systematic pattern that indicates stable idiolects rather than random errors. The normative distinction between 'error' and 'acceptable variant' is not absolute but rather depends on social acceptance and context. For the development of the Indonesian language, these findings suggest that efforts should focus on speech speed management and evidence-based standardization rather than prescriptive prohibitions on natural speech phenomena. Public speaking training programs should integrate prosodic awareness along with traditional rhetoric and argument structures. Language standardization bodies should adopt an admission methodology to distinguish universal speech patterns from true errors. Future research should examine the causal influence of elite speech patterns on

public language use through longitudinal and experimental design. Ultimately, linguistic analysis must recognize both the prescriptive norms necessary for written formal languages and the descriptive realities of natural spoken language production.

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