MEDIA FRAMING OF INDONESIA'S EDUCATION BUDGET: CDA OF ETHICS IN AI-SUPPORTED EDUCATION

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Abstract

This study investigates how Indonesian media frame the discourse in education related to national budget priorities, particularly in AI-supported education. Few studies have analyzed the media frame related to national budget priorities, particularly in AI-supported education. The aim is to reveal the ideological meanings, power relations, and assumptions embedded in the media of the field. The study employs Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis to answer the problem. The data consist of a news article from a reputable Indonesian online media. The finding indicates that media framing plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of budget allocation. It is also concerning that political actors are discursively positioned as protectors of certain programs in Indonesia, whereas education policy is depoliticized and treated as a matter of common administration. Otherwise, education faces many challenges, but it has a priority to improve human cognitive development resources, particularly in the AI era. This study highlights the media's influential role in constructing budget priority discourses. It contributes to a deeper understanding of how public policy debates are mediated through language and discourse in the Indonesian context, which affects the development of language education.

Keywords: AI-supported education, CDA, Education budget

INTRODUCTION

National budget allocation in Indonesia has become a central public issue in recent centuries. It has increased since the government cut the education fund for the MBG (makan bergizi gratis) program. The education sector budget has continued its growth trend since 2022, when it reached only Rp480.3 trillion, with the highest peak occurring in 2025, marking a 21.3% surge (Petriella, 2025). Those matters also connect to education policy and technological development. Budget priorities are debated as governments seek to balance economic growth, technological innovation, and human resource development. Therefore, the existence of

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has further intensified these debates in the education field, especially since language education is a key driver of cognitive development and global competitiveness in the digital era.

Education is no longer viewed as a formality but as an investment. Education shapes the human brain in terms of competitiveness, social mobility, and long-term development. This perspective is supported by some scholars. It is stated that investment in education contributes to productivity and competitiveness by developing high-quality human capital, which is essential for economic growth and innovation (Alhumami, 2025). In the context of the AI era, language education itself plays an important role in accessing digital technologies, knowledge production, and international communication. Consequently, how education, particularly AI-supported language education, is represented and prioritized in public discourse warrants critical examination.

Talking about language, media, and framing has the power to shape public understanding of some issues, besides being channels of information. According to Li, F. (2024), framing strategies in media texts are not neutral since they help construct meaning, emphasize perspectives, and shape reader interpretations. Moreover, the word choice of certain linguistic features in media publishers significantly influences how readers form opinions (Khaer, Ilmiawan, & Aba, 2024). Through framing processes, the media selectively emphasize certain aspects to influence audiences' point of view. In discussions of national budgets, media framing, or how languages are constructed can legitimize specific policy choices, normalize political agendas, and build ideological meanings related to governance and development in each Indonesian program.

Previous studies have demonstrated that all media have a discourse. The discourse often reflects and reproduces power relations between political actors and public institutions (Fairclough, 1995; Richardson, 2007). Certain policy areas may be discursively constructed as

biased or non-biased. For political actors and public institutions, the areas may be urgent, strategic, or protective in nature. Meanwhile, other policy areas are forced to be neutral, technical, or non-political in the eyes of society. Within budget discourse, this process can lead to the depoliticization of education policy. It will be framed as a routine administrative issue rather than a political priority. Thus, this discursive process becomes particularly visible in our budget debates.

Language education occupies a particularly strategic yet contested position in educational discourse. It has been fundamental to human cognitive development since babies were born. It will develop into critical thinking when humans need to learn. As a result, it becomes a global phenomenon in a public, national, or international context, especially in an era dominated by AI-supported and digital communication. It was confirmed by Fitria (2025) that language education plays a central role in connecting individuals and institutions worldwide, especially as digital and AI environments intensify cross-border communication. Despite its significance, language education is frequently framed as secondary or administrative in budget discussions. It is sometimes compared to other government programs that are portrayed as nationally strategic or politically beneficial and protective.

Existing research on media framing and education policy has largely focused on general issues such as curriculum reform and classroom management. Classroom practice and broad interest shape public understandings of educational change (Stack & Boler, 2007). However, limited attention has been given to education budget politics, media discourse, and AI-supported intersection in terms of language education in the Indonesian context. Moreover, this current study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to uncover the ideological assumptions and power relations in media of national budget priorities that remain scarce. This gap indicates the need for a more systematic examination of how language education is discursively positioned within national budget debates.

Given this gap, this study aims to investigate how Indonesian online media frames national budget priorities related to language education supported by AI. Employing Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis, this study analyzes textual analysis, discursive practices, and social practice, especially in socio-political contexts. The discussion will be chosen from a selected news article from a reputable Indonesian online media outlet. By revealing the ideological meanings, power relations, and budget assumptions, this study helps explain how public policy debates are shaped through language and how the debates influence the development and budget prioritization of language education in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) serving as the primary analytical framework. A qualitative technique is ideal for investigating how meanings, ideologies, ethical assumptions, and power relationships are produced through language in media texts about education budgeting and AI-supported language education (Creswell, 2014). The analysis is guided by Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model, which conceptualises discourse as a social practice that operates at the textual, discursive, and social levels (Fairclough, 1995, 2010).

The data consists of a selected article published by a reputable Indonesian online media outlet that analyzes national education budget priorities and educational policy in light of technological or AI-based developments. The media text is viewed as a discursive practice that both reflects and changes public perceptions of educational ethics and policy agendas (van Dijk, 2001). Data were collected through document analysis, which involved reading and interpreting selected media texts to identify key themes, linguistic choices, and framing methods (Bowen, 2009).

The analysis investigates linguistic features, social actor representations, and evaluative language to examine how education budgeting and AI-supported language education are framed. These findings are then interpreted in broader sociopolitical and ethical contexts to reveal the underlying ideologies and power relationships contained in the discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). To ensure credibility, the analysis is based on recognised CDA theory and supported by transparent documentation of the procedures used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

These findings indicate that the media plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of the 2026 national education budget, particularly as the government is currently focusing on the Free Meals program, also known as Makan Bergizi Gratis (MBG). Meanwhile, education is not included among the main national priorities, as explained at an event: The first cluster, the main priority, includes the Free Meals program, food security, energy security, housing, and defense and security. The second cluster, education and health, are supporting priority. Last, the program synchronization group includes pro-growth, pro-employment, and pro-foreign exchange (CNN, 2025). To analyze how the media represent these issues, Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is employed. This approach includes examining textual analysis, discursive practices, and social practices, particularly in relation to AI-supported education.

Data	Quotation	Linguistic Strategy	Ideological Meaning
Resmi! MBG Dapat Rp 335 T	"*Resmi MBG dapat Rp 335 T dari APBN 2026*"	Authority marker (*resmi*), passive construction.	Legitimizes the decision as final and unquestionable.

dari APBN 2026, Ambil Jatah Anggaran Pendidikan Rp 223 T [detik Edu 2025]	"*Ambil jatah anggaran pendidikan*"	Metaphor of competition (*jatah*), material process.	Education is constructed as a resource that can be taken.
	"*jumlah anggaran pendidikan disedot hingga Rp 223 triliun untuk program MBG*"	Metaphor "disedot" = sucked/drained, intensifier "hingga."	Constructs MBG as consuming and dominating education resources; suggests that education is being sacrificed.
	"*angka untuk MBG jauh lebih banyak dari alokasi untuk program beasiswa anak-anak sekolah hingga kuliah*"	Comparative structure "lebih banyak dari", quantification.	Frames MBG as more important than scholarships; naturalizes inequality between welfare programs and education support.
	"*anggaran yang disedot MBG juga jauh lebih tinggi dari alokasi untuk guru non-PNS, ASN daerah, dan dosen*"	Repetition of the metaphor "disedot", comparison, and listing of groups.	Highlights marginalization of educators, building an ideology that teachers are less prioritized than political programs.

	non-PNS"		
	"*(Menkeu) Purbaya, menyampaikan pendapatnya ke Presiden Prabowo untuk mengecek penyerapan anggaran yang belum optimal*"	Elite actor foregrounding, bureaucratic-technical language.	Shows power centered on political elites; presents budget issues as technical, not political.
	"*MBG diprediksi membutuhkan tambahan anggaran Rp 50 triliun*"	Modality "diprediksi", future projection, statistics.	Normalizes the continuous expansion of MBG, constructs it as unavoidable and necessary.
[44 Persen Anggaran Pendidikan 2026 Dialokasikan untuk MBG Rp 335 triliun | tempo.co](#)	"*44 persen anggaran pendidikan dialokasikan untuk MBG*"	Quantification, statistics.	Makes MBG appear important, large-scale, and justified.
	"*Dialokasikan*"	Passive voice, a technocratic term.	Hides political responsibility behind technical language.

	"*Prabowo mengklaim alokasi pendidikannya merupakan yang terbesar sepanjang sejarah Indonesia.*"	Authority claim, superlative "*terbesar sepanjang sejarah…*"	Constructs the leader as successful and progressive; legitimizes current policy as historically exceptional.
[Tempo, 2025]	"*44,2 persen dari total anggara pendidikan itu dialokasikan untuk program makan bergizi gratis atau MBG yakni sebanyak Rp 335 triliun.*"	Quantification, precision with statistics.	Uses numbers to naturalize and justify large allocations as rational and necessary.
	"*Anggaran pendidikan untuk kelompok siswa dan mahasiswa disalurkan melalui berbagai program, salah satunya MBG.*"	Inclusion strategy, generalization.	Normalizes MBG as part of "education support," blurring the boundary between welfare and education.
Biaya MBG Capai Rp1,2 Triliun per	"*Capai Rp 1.2 triliun per hari.*"	Intensification through numbers.	Emphasizes magnitude to legitimize the program.

Hari pada 2026, Dapat Sumbangan dari Anggaran Pendidikan? [medcom.id, 2026]	*"Dapat sumbangan dari anggaran pendidikan?"*	Interrogative modality.	Suggests conflict while avoiding direct criticism.
	"Koordinator Nasional Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia (JPPI) mengatakan anggaran MBG akan menyedot anggaran pendidikan."	Expert voice, metaphor "menyedot".	Constructs MBG as threatening education, positions civil society as a counter-discourse to government.
	"Ironisnya, 69 persen dananya hasil jarah anggaran pendidikan."	Evaluative adverb "ironically", strong metaphor "looted".	Frames the policy as morally problematic and unjust.
	"Sebesar 44,2 persen atau Rp335 triliun dipakai untuk program MBG."	Quantification, factual tone.	Presents the domination of MBG through numerical authority.
	"Biasanya kita hanya	Future projection,	Normalizes the continuous

menyebarkannya di Jawa, tapi nantinya kita sebar ke seluruh Indonesia dan tahun depan anggarannya akan menjadi Rp300 triliun."	expansion narrative.	growth of MBG as necessary and inevitable.
"*MBG sangat erat pengaruhnya terhadap dunia pendidikan.*"	Intensifier "sangat erat", relational process.	Legitimizes MBG as central to education, not external to it.

Textual Analysis

The textual analysis employed specific lexical and grammatical patterns regarding the 2026 national education budget and the Free Meals program, or called MBG. Several evaluative terms, including "main priority," "officially," "reach," and "MBG" constructions, suggest an urgent and justified approach. Meanwhile, education is portrayed in contrast, using technical and neutral terms such as "adjustment," "allocation," and "reallocation." The use of passive voice obscures the political role of "education budget allocated" and "funds transferred to MBG." Furthermore, "The Ministry of Finance determines..." as a state institution is presented as an active subject. Meanwhile, educational actors are objects influenced by decisions.

This analysis aligns with Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which emphasizes interpersonal meaning and ideational metafunctions. The roles of the participants and the use of material processes such as "allocating," "determining," and "transferring" highlight

who holds power in the discourse. These grammatical and lexical choices can influence how reality is perceived because they carry ideological weight (Fowler, 1991). Therefore, the language used in both media and statements from relevant parties demonstrates a lack of neutrality; instead, it is structured to legitimize political authority.

This discussion highlights the implications of budget prioritization in AI-supported education context. An opinion towards MBG is discursively constructed as an urgent national priority, while education is framed as a matter of technical "adjustment" and "reallocation,". This is matter since they downplays role in preparing future generations for an AI-driven society. In the contemporary era, AI-supported education is no longer optional but central to curriculum development, assessment systems, and equitable access to learning. The decrease of the educational budget is a short-term political orientation that risks long-term human capital development. As AI grows, positioning education as secondary to MBG becomes problematic, as it may limit Indonesia's capacity to develop digitally competent and globally competitive human resources.

Discursive Practice

This discourse is produced largely by relying on political elites, such as government officials, ministers, and political leaders. Meanwhile, the actor of educators, such as lecturers, teachers, students, and researchers, is largely invisible. This is demonstrated by the frequent citations of statements by state officials, while not presenting the perspectives of academics. The media also discusses this issue repeatedly, particularly those related to nutrition, public welfare, and national development. Meanwhile, the field of education, specifically the readiness of AI to support educational progress, appears to be submerged in mainstream discussion.

In its distribution, this discussion appears in various media outlets, both online and in print. This discourse has reached a wide audience, drawing increased attention to the

increasingly concerning state of education due to the emergence of a new priority program, the MBG. However, the elite consistently manages to package this issue with statements that appear to support educational progress through other programs.

In line with Fairclough (1989), who stated that discourse is not neutral and can be packaged as a means of power struggle, Gramsci (1971) also argued that dominant groups exert greater control by making the world perceive them as "common sense." Hegemonic discourse, in its production, prioritizes the voices of elites. Elite control over discourse explains that the rulers have control over public communication, namely by shaping public attitudes and knowledge according to their wishes.

Social Practice

In social practice, political and ideological conditions are reflected in the discourse surrounding broader contexts, such as welfare, image politics, and short-term legitimacy. The budget and efforts of the MBG program are framed as symbols of the rulers' concern for the people. In contrast, education, which is a long-term investment in enhancing human cognitive skills, especially in the AI era, is treated as a supporting program. Furthermore, the government's decision to cut the education budget obscures inequality and conceals underlying conflicts. This issue is often viewed as a technical matter rather than one that upholds values and promotes integration for the nation's future.

Althusser's (1971) concept of ideology highlights that media naturally produce dominant ideologies, which aligns with Bourdieu's (1991) idea that language shapes what is considered legitimate, or symbolic power. Additionally, Fairclough (1992) argues that social reality is constructed through discourse. In this instance, the government's preference for other programs over education is particularly significant in the context of the challenges posed by the use of AI.

Talking about AI, this discursive positioning carries significant implications for future

social and educational development. AI-driven societies increasingly rely on the use of language, critical literacy, and cognitive flexibility to participate in global communication. With that being said in the textual analysis toward education compare to MBG, the framing risks reproducing structural inequalities, as access to AI-related becomes unevenly distributed. From a social practice perspective, this reflects a broader ideological tension between short-term political legitimacy and sustainable development in the AI era. Whereas discourse naturalizes budgetary decisions, ultimately undermining the nation's capacity to adapt to technological transformation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates how language and strategic framing in the media have influenced public perception of the 2026 education budget. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional model analysis, the findings reveal that in the textual analysis, the media employs statistical data, evaluative language, and passive sentence constructions to legitimize the MBG program and present education as a flexible, technical sector. In terms of discursive practice, the voices of political elites are predominant, while educational stakeholders, particularly in the context of AI-supported education, are largely overlooked. Last, in the social practice, the analysis highlights that the dominant discourse focuses on welfare programs as a means of achieving short-term legitimacy, while failing to recognize education as a vital long-term investment in human cognitive development.

This study indicates that the use of technical language in education policy often depoliticizes issues by obscuring the political power and interests behind the term "*penyesuaian*." Consequently, public discourse does not adequately address educational progress or the ethical challenges related to the use of AI in education. Furthermore, the media not only reflects reality but also shapes social reality, placing education as a secondary concern compared to other politically attractive programs.

This study suggests that the media should take a more critical approach when reporting on education budgets. It is essential to include the perspectives of teachers and students to ensure that the political elite does not dominate the conversation. These voices are especially important from those who have a deep understanding of the conditions on the ground, particularly regarding the role of AI as either a support or a challenge in education. Moreover, future research should expand the scope of analysis by incorporating a wider range of sources and expert opinions to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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