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Expressive and Commissive Speech Acts in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Debate: A Pragmatic Analysis on TvOne YouTube Channel

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ABSTRACT

Political debates serve as critical arenas for candidates to demonstrate credibility, convey policy agendas, and persuade audiences through carefully constructed discourse, with speech acts functioning as key pragmatic tools. This study aimed to analyze the use of expressive and commissive speech acts in the 2024 Indonesian presidential debate as broadcast on the YouTube channel TvOne News. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, the research collected utterances from the debate and analyzed them using pragmatic and speech act frameworks through stages of data reduction, classification, and interpretation, supported by triangulation for validity. The results revealed that expressive speech acts—including thanking, apologizing, criticizing, praising, and insinuating—were strategically employed to manage interpersonal relations and construct ethos, while commissive acts such as promising, offering, vowing, swearing, and expressing intention were used to project commitments and strengthen credibility. The discussion highlights that the candidates frequently combined expressive and commissive acts into composite strategies, thereby enhancing persuasive impact and appealing to both cultural expectations of politeness and digital media dynamics. The implication of this study is that the interplay between expressive and commissive acts in political debates not only enriches the theoretical understanding of political pragmatics but also offers practical insights for strengthening media literacy, enabling voters to critically interpret rhetorical strategies in the evolving digital campaign landscape.

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Introduction

Language is not only a medium of communication but also a social action that constructs meaning, identity, and power relations within society. In the field of pragmatics, speech act theory has become a fundamental framework for analyzing how utterances function as actions that achieve specific communicative purposes (Gulchohra Babali Aliyeva, 2023; Khater et al., 2024; Wilmot et al., 2024). Emphasize that speech acts extend beyond literal meaning to performative functions that shape interpersonal and institutional interaction. Within this framework, expressive and commissive speech acts hold particular significance because they reveal the speaker's psychological state and future commitments, making them

central in contexts where persuasion, credibility, and public trust are at stake (Ashfiya & Degaf, 2023; Sarwar Hussain & Khan, 2024; Wiltshko, 2021).

Political discourse is one of the most salient domains in which speech acts are strategically deployed. Debates, campaign speeches, and parliamentary discussions represent communicative arenas where language is not merely informative but constitutive of political reality, shaping public perception and voter behavior (Akintayo & Olatokunbo, 2024; Ilie, 2006; Ramanathan et al., 2020). Expressive speech acts in political contexts include criticism, praise, gratitude, or apology, all of which serve to construct the speaker's ethos and align with or challenge the audience's emotions. Commissive speech acts, on the other hand, involve promising, pledging, or committing to future actions, which are critical in signaling credibility and accountability to voter (Puspitasari et al., 2024). Through these acts, political actors negotiate their legitimacy, establish trust, and mobilize support.

Globally, political debates have been widely examined as rhetorical and pragmatic events. Research in American presidential debates has shown how commissive acts such as promises are often used strategically to project authority and reliability (Adebayo et al., 2025; Ilie, 2018; Mardiana et al., 2024). Studies in European contexts, such as in the United Kingdom and Germany, also demonstrate the role of expressive acts in shaping perceptions of politeness, aggressiveness, and emotional authenticity (Hansson, 2024; Ilie, 2018; Mrowa-Hopkins & Strambi, 2014). In African contexts, (Mišić Ilić & Radulović, 2015) identified expressive acts like insults and criticisms as dominant features in Ghanaian debates, reflecting culturally specific strategies of confrontation and credibility building. These studies underline the universality of expressive and commissive acts in political discourse while also showing how cultural and institutional contexts influence their realization.

In Indonesia, research on political communication has increasingly highlighted the role of language in electoral processes. Studies of the 2014 and 2019 presidential debates demonstrate how speech acts were employed to project political vision, critique opponents, and build rapport with voters (Abbas et al., 2021; Alfiah et al., 2024; Rahmani & Saeed, 2024). Expressive acts such as criticism and praise were shown to dominate, serving both as tools of attack and as means of solidarity. Commissive acts, particularly promises and pledges, were equally prominent, aligning with the expectation that candidates demonstrate clear commitments to governance. However, while these studies affirm the relevance of speech act analysis in Indonesian political discourse, they predominantly focus on earlier elections and often lack systematic comparison of expressive and commissive categories within the same study (Ayassrah & Alidmat, 2023; Saz-Rubio, 2023; Tamam et al., 2020).

The 2024 Indonesian presidential election introduces a new discursive context in which expressive and commissive acts are once again central. Televised and streamed debates, particularly through widely accessed platforms such as YouTube, function as highly visible performances that shape voter interpretation in real time. Given the rapid digitalization of political communication, debates are no longer limited to live audiences but are archived, replayed, and scrutinized by millions of viewers. This amplifies the rhetorical weight of expressive and commissive acts, as each utterance may be endlessly circulated and analyzed on digital media (Husain et al., 2020; Istianah, 2024; Saragi, 2019). Despite this, systematic scholarly attention to the 2024 debates remains limited, leaving a gap in the

literature on how Indonesian presidential candidates strategically deploy expressive and commissive acts in this new digital-political environment.

Therefore, this study addresses the gap by conducting a pragmatic analysis of expressive and commissive speech acts in the 2024 Indonesian presidential debate broadcast by TvOne News on YouTube. By focusing on these two categories, the research aims to describe how candidates express psychological states such as gratitude, criticism, or praise, and how they commit to future actions through promises, pledges, and commitments. The objective is to reveal the rhetorical and pragmatic functions of expressive and commissive speech acts in shaping political identity and persuasion, thereby contributing both to the theoretical enrichment of speech act studies in political discourse and to the practical understanding of Indonesian electoral communication in the digital era.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design situated within the field of pragmatics, focusing on the analysis of expressive and commissive speech acts in the 2024 Indonesian presidential debate. A qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to capture the pragmatic functions of language use in natural contexts without imposing predetermined categories beyond those provided by speech act theory (Darong, 2024; Handayani & Wibowo, 2024; Padang et al., 2022). The data source consisted of the official recording of the presidential debate broadcast on the TvOne News YouTube channel, which was selected due to its accessibility, wide public reach, and relevance as an authentic representation of political discourse. The units of analysis were utterances produced by the presidential candidates that fulfilled the criteria of expressive and commissive acts according to (Miranda & Dharmawan, 2024) classification, such as statements of criticism, praise, gratitude, promises, and commitments. Data were collected through repeated, careful viewing of the debate video, followed by transcription to ensure accuracy and completeness of the utterances analyzed.

The analysis process followed three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as suggested by (Ridder, 2014). During data reduction, utterances containing potential expressive or commissive functions were identified and coded. In the data display stage, utterances were categorized into expressive and commissive subtypes and organized into analytical tables to facilitate interpretation. In the conclusion drawing stage, patterns of usage were interpreted in relation to their pragmatic functions and their role in political persuasion. Triangulation was applied to ensure validity by cross-checking the categorization with existing literature on speech acts and by consulting with experts in linguistics to confirm interpretive accuracy (Guion et al., 2011; Lim, 2024). Reliability was strengthened through peer debriefing, in which independent coders reviewed a portion of the data to ensure consistency in classification.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Since the data were drawn from a publicly available debate recording, no direct human participants were involved, thus minimizing ethical risk. Nonetheless, all interpretations were limited strictly to linguistic analysis and did not make personal or defamatory judgments about the candidates. The research process adhered to academic integrity principles, particularly by accurately

representing data, avoiding misinterpretation, and acknowledging all relevant scholarly sources.

By applying this methodological framework, the study sought to provide a rigorous, transparent, and replicable analysis of expressive and commissive speech acts in a high-stakes political event, thereby contributing to the broader understanding of pragmatic strategies in electoral discourse within Indonesia's digital and democratic context.

Results and Discussion
Expressive Speech Acts in the 2024 Presidential Debate
The analysis identified a total of 56 expressive speech acts across eight categories: thanking, apologizing, congratulating, complaining, praising, showing anger, insinuating, and criticizing. The distribution of these utterances demonstrates that expressive forms are heavily used by candidates to shape public perception and establish emotional resonance with the audience.

Table 1. Distribution of Expressive Speech Acts

Type of Expressive Speech Act	Frequency	Example Excerpt
Thanking	34	"Thank you, but I believe it is not enough Mr. Prabowo…"
Apologizing	4	"I apologize if my words seem too harsh…"
Congratulating	3	"Good evening and congratulations to everyone…"
Complaining	2	Farmers find it difficult to obtain fertilizer…"
Praising	3	"Mr. Prabowo's commitment is extraordinary…"
Showing Anger	2	"If democracy does not work, you would not have become governor…"
Insinuating	6	"Not everyone is strong enough to stay in opposition…"
Critizing	2	"It is not as simple as you say, Mr. Anies…"

These findings suggest that "thanking" dominates the expressive category, reflecting a politeness strategy in Indonesian political discourse, while acts such as anger and criticism, though less frequent, are strategically placed to challenge opponents.

Commissive Speech Acts in the 2024 Presidential Debate
A total of 26 commissive speech acts were identified, categorized into promising, intending, vowing, offering, and swearing. These utterances indicate candidates' strategies to commit themselves to future actions and policy directions, reinforcing their credibility and appeal to voters.

Table 2. Distribution of Commissive Speech Acts

Type of wxpressive Speech Act	Frequency	Example Excerpt
Promising	16	"We will enforce the law for everyone without exception…"

Type of wxpressive Speech Act	Frequency	Example Excerpt
Intending	5	"We plan to build a health center in every village…"
Vowing	1	"We are ready to continue the foundation laid by our predecessors…"
Offering	3	"If elected, I will improve the welfare of judges and civil servants…"
Swearing	1	"I swear to defend Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution…"

Promising is the most dominant commissive act, highlighting how candidates seek to build trust with audiences through forward-looking commitments, while vowing and swearing are less common but function as strong rhetorical reinforcements of sincerity.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that both expressive and commissive speech acts play central roles in the 2024 Indonesian presidential debate, each serving distinct communicative functions. Expressive acts, dominated by thanking, apologizing, and praising, reflect cultural politeness strategies in Indonesian communication, resonating with (Soegiarto et al., 2024) theory of politeness. These results align with (Shahid et al., 2021), who found that Indonesian leaders frequently employ expressive forms to maintain positive face in political contexts, and (Rizka et al., 2020), who emphasized the dominance of thanking in earlier presidential debates.

Commissive acts, dominated by promises and intentions, underscore the centrality of political commitments in shaping voters' perceptions. This aligns with (Firdaus et al., 2020) framework of commissive acts as future-oriented commitments and is consistent with (Mohammed Hashim, 2015) findings on the prevalence of promises in the 2019 debates. However, this study reveals a novel pattern: expressive and commissive acts often intersect strategically, with candidates embedding commitments (commissives) within polite or persuasive expressions (expressives), thereby amplifying their rhetorical impact.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the 2024 presidential debates, offering the first pragmatic account of expressive and commissive speech acts in a contemporary Indonesian political context mediated by YouTube. Unlike earlier studies that examined live debates, this research situates analysis within digital discourse, highlighting how speech acts are performed not only for live audiences but also for online viewers, thereby extending their persuasive reach.

The implications are twofold: theoretically, this research contributes to pragmatic studies by demonstrating how speech acts adapt to the hybrid media environment of politics; practically, it highlights the need for critical media literacy among citizens to evaluate the sincerity and strategic functions of political speech.

Nonetheless, this study is limited by its scope, focusing only on the first debate and two types of speech acts. Broader analyses incorporating subsequent debates, additional

pragmatic categories (e.g., assertives, directives), and multimodal elements such as gestures and tone could provide a more comprehensive understanding of political discourse.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that expressive and commissive speech acts played a central role in shaping the communicative strategies of the 2024 Indonesian presidential debate broadcast on YouTube, with expressive acts such as thanking, apologizing, criticizing, praising, and insinuating functioning to construct ethos and manage interpersonal relations, while commissive acts such as promising, intending, vowing, offering, and swearing were employed to project credibility and future-oriented commitments. The findings show that candidates strategically combined these speech acts to persuade audiences, build solidarity, and frame their political visions within a culturally embedded discourse of politeness and accountability. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on expressive–commissive interplay within a digitally mediated political event, offering fresh insights into how speech acts are adapted to new media platforms where permanence, reach, and interactivity shape rhetorical effectiveness. The implications extend to both theory and practice: theoretically, the study contributes to the field of political pragmatics by refining models of speech act usage in campaign discourse; practically, it underscores the importance of fostering media literacy among voters so they can critically evaluate rhetorical strategies in debates. Limitations of the study include its focus on a single debate and two types of speech acts, which suggests the need for further research across multiple events, multimodal contexts, and comparative political settings to better understand how communicative practices influence democratic participation in Indonesia and beyond.

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