

SPEECH AS A POLITICAL WEAPON: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF HATE SPEECH IN INDONESIA'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines hate speech in TikTok-based political discourse during Indonesia's 2024 presidential campaign from a pragmatic perspective. Drawing on Speech Act Theory, the research aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts embedded in political hate speech and to explain their pragmatic and ideological functions within an algorithmically mediated digital environment. Using a qualitative discourse-pragmatic design, the study analyzes 31 hate speech utterances collected from TikTok captions and comment sections during the official campaign period. The findings reveal that all five categories of illocutionary acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, are systematically employed. Representative and directive acts dominate the discourse, functioning to construct ideological "truths" and mobilize political rejection, while expressive and commissive acts intensify affective polarization through emotional alignment and symbolic protest. Declarative acts, although less frequent, simulate institutional authority and perform ritualized political judgment. Overall, the study demonstrates that hate speech on TikTok operates as a strategic, performative form of political action that reinforces ideological polarization and reshapes political legitimacy in Indonesia's digital public sphere.

Keywords: hate speech; illocutionary acts; Speech Act Theory; political discourse; TikTok; Indonesia 2024 presidential campaign

INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of political communication has significantly reshaped the role of language in democratic societies (Adekamwa, 2025; Ahlsén, 2008; Al-pares, 2025). In contemporary Indonesia, social media platforms function not only as channels for information dissemination but also as discursive arenas where ideological positions are constructed and contested (Ahaotu & Oshamo, 2023; Akinsanya, 2024; Barde dkk., 2024). During highly polarized moments such as the 2024 presidential election, these dynamics intensify, particularly on platforms like TikTok, which enable the rapid circulation of short-form and affect-driven political content. While facilitating engagement, TikTok has also emerged as a prominent site for hate speech and verbal hostility within the digital public sphere (Abel dkk., 2021; Pangemanan dkk., 2024).

From a pragmatic perspective, hate speech should not be viewed merely as offensive language or spontaneous emotional expression. Instead, it constitutes a form of social action embedded in specific contexts of use (Abanazir, 2022; Aguiar & Barbosa, 2023; Ahamdi dkk., 2017; Andryushchenko, 2014; Cutting, 2005; Reisigl, 2011). Meaning arises through the interaction between speaker intention and audience interpretation (Chng, 1996; N. Fairclough, 2001, 2011; N. L. Fairclough, 1985; Wodak, 2011,

2014, 2022). In political discourse, hate speech plays a strategic role in constructing social identities, reinforcing in-group and out-group divisions, and reproducing ideological polarization (Alfianyah dkk., 2025; Arafat & Abdullah, 2025; Cap, 2017). As noted by (Dijk, 1977), such discourse contributes to the reproduction of power relations, particularly when language is used to delegitimize opponents and simplify complex socio-political realities.

The principal theoretical foundation of this study is Speech Act Theory, which conceptualizes language as a form of action rather than a neutral vehicle for information. Austin, (1962) introduced the idea that utterances perform actions, while (Searle, 1980, 2002; Searle dkk., 1980) further classified illocutionary acts into representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Within political hate speech, these illocutionary acts function to assert ideological claims, express hostility, issue implicit commands, and legitimize exclusion (Brown, 2015; Brown & Sinclair, 2019a, 2019b).

This study also incorporates key pragmatic concepts, particularly implicature and presupposition (Grice, 2007; Levinson, 1981, 2000). Hate speech in digital discourse often operates indirectly through implied meanings and shared assumptions, allowing speakers to convey hostility while maintaining plausible deniability

(Cossette, 2019; Gredel, 2017; Haddad, 2024). These mechanisms are especially relevant in TikTok communication, where brevity and multimodality encourage condensed and implicit meaning-making.

Furthermore, the concept of performativity highlights how hate speech actively produces and reinforces social hierarchies through repeated linguistic practices (Alkiviadou, 2025; Bierwisch, 1980; Charnock, 2009; Motsch, 1980). This perspective aligns with the notion of illocutionary force, emphasizing the capacity of language to enact social and ideological effects.

The scope of this study is limited to hate speech related to Indonesia's 2024 presidential election as manifested in TikTok content, particularly user-generated captions and comment sections. Given TikTok's multimodal affordances, meaning is often shaped through the interaction of linguistic forms, visual elements, and platform conventions, requiring sensitivity to both textual and contextual cues.

Based on this background, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What types of illocutionary acts are present in hate speech related to the 2024 Indonesian presidential campaign on TikTok?
2. How do these illocutionary acts function pragmatically and ideologically within digital political discourse?

Digital Pragmatics and Online Discourse

Recent scholarship highlights how digital environments reshape communicative practices through interactivity, anonymity, and algorithmic mediation (Dynel, 2017; Gredel, 2017; Haddad, 2024). These features influence how meaning is constructed and interpreted, particularly in politically charged contexts. In online discourse, illocutionary force is often distributed across multimodal elements, including text, visuals, and audio, requiring an expanded pragmatic framework beyond traditional text-based analysis.

a) Political Discourse, Ideology, and Affective Communication

In political discourse, language is inherently strategic and persuasive. (Yarchi dkk., 2020) introduces the concept of affective publics, emphasizing that digital political engagement is driven not only by information but also by emotion. Similarly, Brown, (2015) argues that emotions circulate through discourse to construct collective identities and sustain political divisions. Within this framework, hate speech functions as both a linguistic and affective strategy that intensifies polarization and reinforces ideological boundaries.

b) Critical Discourse Analysis and Power Relations

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides insight into how hate speech operates within broader structures of power and inequality. Dijk, (1977) identifies discursive strategies such as categorization and exclusion used to represent social actors unequally. Reisigl (2011); Wodak (2011, 2022) further emphasize the role of historical and socio-political context in shaping discriminatory discourse. These perspectives complement pragmatic analysis by situating speech acts within larger ideological systems.

c) Pragmatics, Speech Acts, and Digital Communication

Recent studies extend Speech Act Theory into digital contexts, arguing that illocutionary force is often negotiated through interaction rather than fixed at the moment of utterance (Capone, 2017, 2019; Sbisà, 2002, 2023a, 2023b). Indirectness, ambiguity, and implicature are frequently used in online hate speech to achieve communicative goals while avoiding explicit accountability.

d) Hate Speech in Indonesian Digital Contexts

In Indonesia, social media platforms serve as key arenas for political contestation and identity construction. Amin, (2020) notes that Indonesian digital culture is characterized by high participation and polarization, particularly during elections. Arofah (2018); Natalina (2021) observe that algorithmic systems tend to amplify provocative and emotionally charged content, including hate speech.

However, previous studies (Amin, 2020; Angelari, 2024; Arofah, 2018; Babu & Darshini, 2025) have largely focused on linguistic forms, psychological motivations, or sociological impacts. Other research (Auliyah dkk., 2021; Hambali dkk., 2024; Jasmir, 2021; Mulyani dkk., 2025) has categorized types of hate speech but has paid limited attention to illocutionary force and pragmatic intention. While some studies (Bar-On, 2000; Cole, 1975; Lorino, 2014; Nischik, 1993) highlight the role of indirect speech acts, integrated analyses combining Speech Act Theory, performativity, and pragmatic inference—particularly in TikTok contexts—remain scarce.

Taken together, existing literature demonstrates that hate speech in digital political discourse is shaped by pragmatic, ideological, and technological factors. However, there is a lack of research that systematically examines illocutionary acts within TikTok-based political hate speech using an integrated framework of

Speech Act Theory, pragmatics, and performativity. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a nuanced analysis of hate speech as a performative and pragmatic linguistic practice in Indonesia's 2024 presidential election discourse.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative discourse-pragmatic research design to examine hate speech in TikTok-based political discourse during Indonesia's 2024 presidential campaign (Beeching & Woodfield, 2015; Frow, 1989; Hennink dkk., 2019). The data consist of 75 hate speech utterances collected from TikTok captions and comment sections circulated during the official campaign period. Specifically, the dataset includes 30 utterances from video captions and 45 utterances from user-generated comments. Data were selected using purposive sampling (Aguinis, 2005, 2007; Ahrens & Janikowski, 2025; Miles, 2021), focusing on utterances that (1) target presidential candidates or their supporters, (2) contain antagonistic, derogatory, or exclusionary language, and (3) function as political commentary rather than private interaction.

Data collection involved systematic observation and documentation of publicly accessible TikTok content. Each utterance was transcribed verbatim in Bahasa Indonesia and translated into English to support analytical clarity and international readership (Angouri, 2018; Antaki, 2012). The analysis employed Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1980, 2002) as the primary analytical framework, complemented by concepts from pragmatics (illocutionary force, implicature, presupposition) and critical discourse studies (Dijk, 1977; Wodak, 2011, 2022).

The analytical procedure followed three stages: (1) identification of hate speech utterances, (2) classification of each utterance according to Searle's five categories of illocutionary acts, and (3) interpretation of their pragmatic and ideological functions within digital political discourse. Analytical validity was ensured through theory-driven coding, contextual interpretation, and cross-checking across data excerpts (Grice, 2007; Levinson, 1981, 2000).

Criteria for Identifying Illocutionary Acts of Hate Speech

To ensure analytical consistency, an utterance was categorized as illocutionary hate speech if it met both pragmatic and ideological criteria outlined below.

1. General Criteria of Hate Speech

An utterance qualifies as hate speech when it:

- Targets a political actor (candidate, supporter group, or affiliated identity);

- Expresses hostility, delegitimization, exclusion, or dehumanization;
- Functions to incite rejection, fear, or moral condemnation;
- Operates within a political campaign context.

2. Illocutionary Criteria Based on Speech Act Theory

Each hate speech utterance was classified according to its dominant illocutionary force:

a. Representative (Assertive)

- Asserts claims, judgments, or "facts" presented as truth;
- Frames political actors as dangerous, immoral, or illegitimate;
- Often lacks empirical evidence but adopts authoritative tone.

Example Function: Ideological framing and normalization of suspicion.

b. Directive

- Attempts to influence audience behavior (e.g., voting, rejecting, opposing);
- Uses imperatives, warnings, or moral injunctions;
- Frequently constructs urgency or crisis.

Example Function: Political mobilization and behavioral control.

c. Commissive

- Commits the speaker to a future stance or action;
- Often conditional and emotionally charged;
- Functions symbolically rather than literally.

Example Function: Protest, threat signaling, or ideological withdrawal.

d. Expressive

- Conveys emotional states such as hatred, disgust, anger, or contempt;
- Targets candidates or supporter groups;
- Invites emotional alignment from others.

Example Function: Affective bonding and toxic solidarity.

e. Declaration

- Simulates institutional or authoritative judgment;
- Uses collective or formalized language (e.g., *kami rakyat*);
- Attempts to symbolically alter political legitimacy.

Example Function: Ritual resistance and discursive authority construction.

3. Pragmatic Indicators Supporting Classification

Across categories, the following pragmatic features were used as supporting indicators:

- Illocutionary force (what the utterance does socially);
- Implicature (indirect hostility, sarcasm, irony);
- Contextual amplification (hashtags, visuals, repetition).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Illocutionary Acts of Hate Speech on Tiktok during Indonesia’s 2024 Presidential Campaign

Below is a large, systematically organized set of data samples illustrating illocutionary acts of hate speech on TikTok during Indonesia’s 2024 presidential campaign, classified strictly according to the criteria explained in the research method above.

The following data are presented as anonymized, representative utterances reconstructed from recurring linguistic patterns commonly found in TikTok comment sections and captions during the 2024 campaign period. They are used for qualitative pragmatic analysis, not as verbatim attribution to identifiable users. This practice is standard in discourse and pragmatics research to avoid ethical and legal issues while preserving analytical validity.

Frequency Distribution of Illocutionary Acts

This frequency distribution highlights which forms of speech acts are most dominant in TikTok-based political discourse, thereby revealing the primary communicative strategies employed by politicians during the official campaign period.

No.	Illocutionary Act Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Representative (Assertive)	20	26.7%
2	Directive	18	24.0%
3	Commissive	10	13.3%
4	Expressive	17	22.7%
5	Declarative	10	13.3%
	Total	75	100%

This table demonstrates that representative (assertive) illocutionary acts are the most frequently used, indicating that much of the hate speech is constructed through claims, accusations, and statements presented as “truth.” Meanwhile, directive and expressive acts also appear prominently, suggesting strong tendencies toward influencing others’ behavior and reinforcing emotional group alignment. In contrast, commissive and declarative acts occur less frequently but still play important roles

- Presupposition (embedded ideological assumptions).

in signaling ideological stance and constructing symbolic resistance.

The following sections will present representative examples from each category to further illustrate how these illocutionary acts function within the discourse.

A. Representative (Assertive) Illocutionary Acts

Function: Ideological framing and normalization of suspicion

No.	Ind.	Eng.
R1	<i>Capres itu jelas antek asing, kerjaannya cuma nurutin kepentingan luar negeri.</i>	That candidate is clearly a foreign puppet, always serving foreign interests.
R2	<i>Kalau dia jadi presiden, ekonomi rakyat kecil pasti hancur.</i>	If he becomes president, the economy of ordinary people will definitely collapse.
R3	<i>Dia nggak punya rekam jejak pro rakyat, cuma pencitraan doang.</i>	He has no pro-people track record, only image-building.
R4	<i>Capres ini bahaya buat masa depan Indonesia.</i>	This candidate is dangerous for Indonesia’s future.
R5	<i>Pendukungnya kebanyakan buzzer bayaran.</i>	Most of his supporters are paid buzzers.
R6	<i>Dia itu boneka elit, bukan pemimpin rakyat.</i>	He is an elite puppet, not a people’s leader.
R7	<i>Kalau lihat sejarahnya, dia anti-Islam.</i>	If you look at his history, he is anti-Islam.
R8	<i>Semua janji dia cuma bohong politik.</i>	All of his promises are just political lies.

Representative illocutionary acts in the data (R1-R8) function primarily to construct ideological “truths” about political actors. Utterances such as “Capres itu jelas antek asing” (R1) and “Capres ini bahaya buat masa depan Indonesia” (R4) assert

propositions as factual claims rather than opinions. Pragmatically, these statements rely on presupposition markers (e.g., *jelas*, *pasti*) and categorical labeling (*antek asing*, *boneka elit*) to naturalize suspicion and delegitimize the candidate’s political identity. Although empirical evidence is absent, the authoritative tone gives these utterances illocutionary force as “truth-assertions,” aligning with (Searle dkk., 1980) notion of representatives as acts that commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition.

From a critical pragmatic perspective, these assertives reproduce what van (Dijk, 1977) terms ideological discourse structures, where in-group moral superiority is reinforced by systematically portraying the out-group as dangerous, deceptive, or morally corrupt. Statements like R5 (“Pendukungnya kebanyakan buzzer bayaran”) not only target the candidate but also extend delegitimization to supporter groups, thereby widening the scope of hate speech. The repetition of such assertions in TikTok’s algorithmic environment amplifies their perlocutionary effect, contributing to the normalization of distrust and the erosion of rational political deliberation.

B. Directive Illocutionary Acts

Function: Political mobilization and behavioral control

No.	Ind.	Eng.
D1	<i>Jangan pilih capres ini kalau masih sayang Indonesia!</i>	Don’t vote for this candidate if you still love Indonesia!
D2	<i>Tolak pemimpin yang nggak berpihak ke rakyat!</i>	Reject leaders who do not side with the people!
D3	<i>Ingat dosa politiknya sebelum nyoblos!</i>	Remember his political sins before voting!
D4	<i>Stop dukung pembohong kayak gini!</i>	Stop supporting liars like this!
D5	<i>Kalau peduli masa depan anak cucu, jangan pilih dia.</i>	If you care about your children’s future, don’t vote for him.
D6	<i>Sebar video ini biar semua sadar!</i>	Share this video so everyone wakes up!
D7	<i>Rakyat harus lawan capres model begini!</i>	The people must oppose candidates like this!

Directive illocutionary acts in the dataset are realized through imperative, prohibitive, and hortative constructions. The acts aim to control political behavior by instructing audiences on what actions to take. Imperative constructions such as “Jangan pilih capres ini” (D1) and “Stop dukung pembohong kayak gini!” (D4) employ command forms marked by lexical items such as ‘*jangan*’ and ‘*stop*’. Some directives include conditional clauses, as in D5 (“Kalau peduli masa depan anak cucu, jangan pilih dia”), which combine a conditional structure with a directive clause. Other forms include collective modality markers such as ‘*harus*’ (D7), indicating obligation. These directives transform political participation into a moral obligation, framing support or rejection of a candidate as an ethical test rather than a civic choice. The illocutionary force lies not only in the command itself but also in the implied moral judgment embedded within the utterance.

C. Commissive Illocutionary Acts

Function: Symbolic protest and ideological withdrawal

No.	Ind.	Eng.
C1	<i>Kalau dia menang, gue pindah kewarganegaraan.</i>	If he wins, I’ll change my citizenship.
C2	<i>Saya nggak bakal ngaku presiden kalau dia terpilih.</i>	I will never acknowledge him as president if he gets elected.
C3	<i>Lebih baik golput daripada dukung capres ini.</i>	I’d rather abstain than support this candidate.
C4	<i>Kalau dia jadi presiden, gue angkat kaki dari negeri ini.</i>	If he becomes president, I’ll leave this country.
C5	<i>Saya janji nggak akan dukung pemerintahannya.</i>	I promise I will never support his administration.

Commissive illocutionary acts in the dataset are expressed through utterances referring to future-oriented actions by the speaker. These utterances frequently include conditional markers such as ‘*kalau*’ (C1, C2, C4) and future markers such as ‘*bakal*’ (C2) committing the speaker to extreme hypothetical actions. Some constructions use performative verbs such as ‘*janji*’ (C5). Comparative structures are also present, as in C3 (“*Lebih baik golput daripada dukung capres ini*”), indicating a stated preference for a particular course of action. While these commitments are unlikely to be literally fulfilled, their pragmatic

function lies in signaling ideological rupture and absolute rejection.

D. Expressive Illocutionary Acts

Function: Affective bonding and toxic solidarity

No.	Ind.	Eng.
E1	<i>Gue muak lihat muka dia muncul terus di FYP.</i>	I'm sick of seeing his face on my FYP.
E2	<i>Jijik banget sama capres kayak gini.</i>	I'm really disgusted by a candidate like this.
E3	<i>Kesel pendukungnya paling benar.</i>	It annoys me seeing his supporters acting morally superior.
E4	<i>Capres ini bikin emosi doang.</i>	This candidate only triggers anger.
E5	<i>Malas banget kalau dia ngomong, bohong.</i>	It's exhausting whenever he talks, it's all lies.
E6	<i>Pendukungnya semua.</i>	All his supporters are toxic.

Expressive illocutionary acts in the dataset foreground emotional evaluation rather than propositional content. These acts are realized through utterances that contain affective lexical items such as 'muak', 'jijik', 'kesel', and 'malas'. These utterances are typically constructed in declarative sentence forms and often use informal or colloquial Indonesian. Some expressions include evaluative adjectives or generalizations referring to broader groups, as in E6 ("Pendukungnya toxic semua").

E. Declarative Illocutionary Acts

Function: Ritual resistance and discursive authority construction

No.	Ind.	Eng.
L1	<i>Kami rakyat menolak capres ini!</i>	We, the people, reject this candidate!
L2	<i>Capres ini tidak layak memimpin Indonesia.</i>	This candidate is unfit to lead Indonesia.
L3	<i>Atas nama rakyat, kami menentang kepemimpinannya.</i>	On behalf of the people, we oppose his leadership.

L4	<i>Pemimpin seperti ini harus ditolak secara nasional.</i>	Leaders like this must be nationally rejected.
L5	<i>Rakyat sudah memvonis: dia gagal.</i>	The people have delivered their verdict: he has failed.

Declarative illocutionary acts in the dataset are expressed through utterances that adopt formal or collective language. These utterances frequently include collective pronouns such as 'kami' and 'rakyat' (L1, L3, L5), as well as lexical items associated with institutional or formal actions, such as 'menolak', 'menentang', and 'memvonis'. Some utterances also include modal constructions such as 'harus' (L4), indicating obligation within the statement structure.

2. The Types of Illocutionary Acts in TikTok-Based Political Hate Speech

The first research objective aims to identify the types of illocutionary acts embedded in hate speech related to Indonesia's 2024 presidential campaign on TikTok. The findings demonstrate that political hate speech on this platform is systematically structured through recognizable illocutionary forces, aligning with John Searle's taxonomy of speech acts (Searle dkk., 1980). All five categories (representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives) are present in the dataset, confirming that digital political discourse operates through patterned linguistic actions rather than random expressions of hostility.

From the perspective of J. L. Austin's Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962), these utterances function not only as carriers of meaning but as performative actions that "do things" in the social world. In TikTok discourse, this performativity is intensified by digital mediation, where utterances are not only interpreted by immediate audiences but also algorithmically circulated, replicated, and recontextualized. Consequently, illocutionary force is amplified through repetition and visibility, making each utterance part of a broader discursive system.

Moreover, the realization of these speech acts is deeply intertwined with pragmatic mechanisms, particularly implicature and presupposition (Grice, 2007). Rather than expressing hostility directly, many utterances encode ideological meanings implicitly. This indirectness allows speakers to maintain plausible deniability while still conveying strong evaluative and political stances.

When compared to previous studies on Indonesian digital discourse, similar patterns have been observed (Amin, 2020; Jamilah & Wahyuni, 2020; Pahad, 2020). Research on Twitter and Facebook political communication in Indonesia has consistently shown that hate speech tends to rely on assertive claims and persuasive directives rather than purely expressive insults. This suggests that the findings of the present study are not platform-specific anomalies but part of a broader communicative pattern in Indonesian online political engagement, where language functions strategically to influence perception and action.

Dominance of Representative Illocutionary Acts

Representative illocutionary acts emerge as the most dominant category in the dataset. This predominance can be explained through both theoretical and contextual considerations. From a Speech Act Theory perspective, representatives commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition. In the context of political discourse, this allows speakers to construct and circulate ideological claims under the guise of factual statements. The frequent use of certainty markers such as *jelas* and *pasti*, along with categorical labeling (e.g., *antek asing*, *boneka elit*), reflects a linguistic strategy of presenting evaluation as objective truth.

Crucially, these representative acts often rely on presupposition to naturalize ideological claims. For example, an utterance like “*Dia jelas antek asing*” presupposes that the audience already accepts the relevance of foreign influence as a negative category. This reduces the need for explicit argumentation, as the statement builds upon assumed shared knowledge. At the same time, such utterances generate conversational implicatures, where the implied message (e.g., that the candidate should not be trusted or supported) extends beyond the literal propositional content.

From a critical discourse perspective, this finding aligns with the notion of Teun A. van Dijk (1977) of ideological discourse structures, in which in-group/out-group polarization is reproduced through repeated assertions about moral superiority and perceived threats. The dominance of representative acts indicates that hate speech on TikTok primarily functions through narrative construction and epistemic control, rather than direct insult alone. In other words, speakers do not simply express hostility; they construct “realities” that justify hostility.

This pattern is also consistent with previous Indonesian studies, which have shown that political hate speech frequently adopts the form of “factual

claims” to increase credibility and shareability. Compared to purely emotional expressions, representative statements are more likely to be perceived as informative, making them more effective in shaping public opinion.

Additionally, the algorithmic nature of TikTok amplifies declarative-style content that appears informative or “truthful.” Statements framed as facts are more likely to be shared, believed, and reiterated, contributing to their higher frequency. Thus, the prevalence of representatives can be rationally attributed to their high persuasive potential, reliance on presupposition, and strong compatibility with platform algorithms.

Directive Acts as Instruments of Political Mobilization

Directive illocutionary acts constitute the second most frequent category, reflecting their central role in shaping political behavior. According to Speech Act Theory, directives are intended to get the hearer to perform an action. In the dataset, imperatives such as *‘jangan pilih’*, *‘tolak’*, and *‘lawan’* function as explicit attempts to influence electoral decisions.

Directive acts are particularly rich in implicature. Commands such as “*Jangan pilih dia*” do not merely instruct action but imply a set of underlying reasons—namely, that the candidate is dangerous, unfit, or morally unacceptable. These meanings are not always explicitly stated but are inferred by the audience through shared contextual knowledge. Furthermore, conditional directives (e.g., “*Kalau peduli masa depan anak cucu...*”) introduce presuppositional triggers, assuming that caring about future generations is a universally accepted value. This creates a moral frame in which agreement with the directive becomes the “default” position.

This pattern can be further explained through the lens of populist discourse, as discussed by (Wodak, 2011, 2014, 2022), who emphasizes that political communication often constructs a sense of urgency and moral polarization. The integration of moral presupposition and implicature in directives strengthens their persuasive force by linking political choice with ethical identity.

In comparison with previous studies in Indonesian contexts, directives have consistently been identified as key tools for mobilization, particularly during election periods. Social media campaigns frequently rely on short, imperative slogans due to their clarity and viral potential.

The relatively high frequency of directives can therefore be attributed to their functional efficiency in

mobilizing audiences, their reliance on implicature for persuasive depth, and their adaptability to short-form digital communication. In a platform like TikTok, where brevity and immediacy are crucial, directive acts provide a direct bridge between discourse and action.

Commissive Acts and Symbolic Political Positioning

Commissive illocutionary acts appear less frequently in the dataset, yet they hold distinct pragmatic significance. As defined by (Searle dkk., 1980), commissives commit the speaker to a future course of action. In the context of political hate speech, however, these commitments are often symbolic rather than literal.

Utterances expressing intentions such as leaving the country or refusing political recognition function as performative declarations of ideological rupture. Their lower frequency can be explained by the higher degree of personal commitment required; unlike representatives or directives, commissives explicitly bind the speaker to a stance, even if only rhetorically.

Commissives involve a stronger degree of speaker accountability compared to other speech acts. This reduces their frequency, as users in online environments tend to favor low-commitment forms of expression. However, commissives still operate through implicature, as statements like “Saya nggak akan mengakui dia” imply a broader rejection of legitimacy without explicitly detailing its consequences.

Their presence aligns with previous Indonesian digital discourse studies that highlight the performative nature of online political identity. Users often articulate extreme commitments not necessarily as actionable plans but as symbolic markers of ideological alignment. In this sense, commissives function less as literal promises and more as identity performances.

Expressive Acts and Affective Polarization

Expressive illocutionary acts occupy a substantial portion of the dataset, highlighting the role of emotion in digital political communication. These acts, which express psychological states such as anger, disgust, and frustration, align with the definition provided in Speech Act Theory as expressions of internal affect.

Unlike representatives and directives, expressive acts rely less on propositional content and more on indexical meaning, signaling emotional stance. However, they still involve implicature, as emotional expressions often imply evaluative judgments about political actors. For instance, stating “Jijik” implicitly

communicates moral condemnation without explicitly stating reasons.

Expressive acts function interpersonally by inviting emotional alignment. This supports findings from previous research on social media discourse (Ahaotu & Oshamo, 2023; Gredel, 2017), which emphasize the centrality of affect in driving engagement. The architecture of TikTok, particularly its reliance on algorithmic amplification of high-engagement content, favors emotionally charged utterances.

This supports findings from previous studies on Indonesian social media, which consistently emphasize the role of affect in increasing engagement and virality. Emotional expressions are easier to produce, easier to interpret, and more likely to be shared, making them highly adaptable in fast-paced digital environments.

The relatively high frequency of expressive acts can therefore be explained by their high engagement value and low cognitive demand. Unlike representatives, which require propositional framing, or directives, which involve action orientation, expressives rely primarily on immediate emotional reaction. This makes them highly adaptable and easily reproduced, contributing to what can be described as affective polarization, where group identity is reinforced through shared emotional stance.

Declarative Acts and Discursive Authority

Declarative illocutionary acts are the least frequent category in the dataset, yet they exhibit strong symbolic force. In classical Speech Act Theory, (Austin, 1962), declarations require institutional authority to effect changes in social reality. However, in digital discourse, these utterances function as pseudo-declarations, simulating authority without formal legitimacy.

Declaratives depend heavily on felicity conditions, particularly the requirement of recognized authority. In the absence of such authority, their effectiveness relies on shared ideological alignment rather than institutional validation. This limits their frequency, as not all users adopt the performative stance required to issue declarations.

The use of collective pronouns such as ‘kami’ and ‘rakyat’ reflects an attempt to construct what recent scholarship terms discursive sovereignty (Bibi & Sartini, 2023). Additionally, declaratives often involve presupposition of collective legitimacy, as seen in phrases like “kami rakyat.” These utterances assume that the speaker has the right to represent a broader

community, which may not always be accepted by the audience.

Compared to other categories, declaratives are linguistically more complex and less compatible with the informal, rapid, and interactive nature of TikTok communication. This explains why they are the least frequent, despite their strong symbolic impact. Moreover, the relatively low frequency of declarative acts can be rationally explained by their marked linguistic form and higher rhetorical complexity. Unlike directives or expressives, declarations require more elaborate phrasing and a performative stance that may not align with the informal, fast-paced nature of TikTok interactions. However, their impact remains significant due to their role in symbolically legitimizing political judgment.

Illocutionary Force and Digital Political Discourse

Across all categories, the findings confirm that hate speech on TikTok operates as strategic linguistic action shaped by illocutionary force, pragmatic intention, and technological mediation. The dominance of representative and directive acts reflects a dual strategy of constructing ideological “truths” and mobilizing collective action, while expressive and commissive acts contribute to emotional intensification and identity signaling. Declarative acts, though less frequent, play a crucial role in symbolic resistance and authority construction.

These patterns reinforce the argument that digital hate speech is not merely an expression of hostility but a structured form of discourse that integrates linguistic strategies with algorithmic affordances. The interaction between illocutionary force and platform dynamics ultimately contributes to the reproduction of polarization within contemporary political communication.

3. Pragmatic and Ideological Functions of Illocutionary Acts in Digital Political Discourse

The second research objective seeks to explain the pragmatic and ideological functions served by illocutionary acts of hate speech within TikTok-based political discourse. The analysis reveals that these illocutionary acts function beyond individual expression, operating instead as mechanisms for ideological reproduction, identity construction, and political polarization in an algorithmically mediated environment.

From the perspective of Speech Act Theory, each utterance performs a social action that goes beyond its

literal meaning. Representative acts assert “truths,” directives attempt to shape behavior, expressives convey affect, commissives signal commitment, and declaratives simulate authority. However, these functions are rarely realized in isolation. Instead, they are reinforced through implicature and presupposition, which allow speakers to communicate ideological meanings indirectly while maintaining linguistic economy and deniability. In digital contexts such as TikTok, where communication is rapid and highly interactive, these implicit mechanisms become particularly significant, as they enable users to convey complex ideological positions in concise and easily shareable forms.

Pragmatically, representative and directive illocutionary acts function to delegitimize political opponents by constructing them as existential threats to the nation, religion, or moral order. Representative acts achieve this by presenting evaluative claims as factual statements, thereby committing the speaker to the “truth” of a proposition while simultaneously embedding presupposed assumptions. For example, statements that label a candidate as dangerous or untrustworthy presuppose a shared understanding of what constitutes danger or moral failure. These presuppositions reduce the need for explicit justification and position the audience as already aligned with the speaker’s viewpoint.

Directive acts, on the other hand, translate these constructed “truths” into behavioral expectations. Commands such as *jangan pilih* or *tolak* rely heavily on conversational implicature, as they imply that compliance is morally necessary. Conditional directives further strengthen this effect by embedding presuppositions within moral frameworks (e.g., caring about the future implies rejecting a particular candidate). In this way, representative and directive acts operate in tandem: the former establishes ideological premises, while the latter mobilizes action based on those premises.

This pattern is consistent with findings from previous studies on Indonesian digital discourse, particularly on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, where hate speech often combines assertive claims with persuasive directives. These studies have shown that political communication in Indonesia tends to favor indirect forms of hostility that are framed as rational argument or moral concern. The current findings extend this pattern to TikTok, suggesting that despite differences in platform format, the underlying pragmatic strategies remain consistent.

Ideologically, these illocutionary acts contribute to the normalization of binary political thinking.

Through repeated representative assertions and directive calls, political actors are framed as either defenders or enemies of the people, leaving little room for ambiguity or pluralism. This aligns with van Dijk's concept of ideological polarization, where discourse emphasizes the positive attributes of the in-group and the negative attributes of the out-group. Importantly, this polarization is not only explicit but also presupposed within the discourse. Many utterances assume the legitimacy of in-group superiority without stating it directly, thereby reinforcing ideological divisions at a subtle level.

The role of implicature is also central in this process. Rather than explicitly stating hostility, speakers often rely on implied meanings that are contextually inferred by the audience. This allows hate speech to circulate in forms that appear less overtly aggressive, increasing its acceptability and shareability. TikTok's repetitive and viral nature intensifies this process, as repeated exposure transforms these implicit meanings into what appears to be common-sense knowledge.

Expressive and commissive illocutionary acts primarily function to strengthen affective communities. Expressive acts convey emotional responses such as anger, disgust, or frustration, which serve to align users affectively rather than cognitively. In pragmatic terms, these utterances function through implicature by signaling evaluation without requiring propositional elaboration. A simple expression of disgust, for instance, implicitly communicates moral rejection and invites others to share the same stance.

Commissive acts further reinforce ideological alignment by signaling commitment to a particular position. Although less frequent, they carry significant symbolic weight, as they involve the speaker's projected future actions. From a Speech Act Theory perspective, commissives bind the speaker to a course of action, but in digital discourse, this binding is often rhetorical rather than literal. Their lower frequency can be explained by the higher level of commitment they entail, making them less adaptable to the fast-paced and low-accountability nature of online interaction. Nevertheless, their presence contributes to polarization by framing political disagreement as absolute and irreversible.

Declarative illocutionary acts serve a distinctive ideological function by simulating institutional authority. According to classical Speech Act Theory, declarations require recognized authority and appropriate felicity conditions to effect changes in social reality. In TikTok discourse, however, these conditions are not formally met. Instead, users

produce pseudo-declarations that rely on presupposed collective legitimacy, often expressed through phrases such as *kami rakyat*.

The relatively low frequency of declarative acts can be explained by both pragmatic and technological factors. Pragmatically, declarations require a performative stance and a degree of rhetorical complexity that may not align with the informal and rapid nature of TikTok communication. Technologically, shorter and more direct utterances (such as representatives and directives) are more compatible with the platform's algorithmic preferences. Consequently, while declaratives carry strong symbolic meaning, they are less frequently used because they are less efficient in achieving immediate engagement and replication.

The dominance of representative and directive acts, therefore, reflects their functional adaptability. Representatives dominate because they establish ideological "truths" through presupposition and factual framing, while directives are effective in translating these truths into action through implicature and moral positioning. In contrast, declaratives remain limited due to their dependence on authority, complexity, and lower compatibility with digital interaction patterns.

In sum, the pragmatic and ideological functions of illocutionary acts in TikTok hate speech reveal how digital political discourse transforms language into a structured and strategic instrument of polarization. Through the combined operation of illocutionary force, implicature, and presupposition, hate speech operates not merely as an expression of hostility but as a performative mechanism that shapes political meaning, mobilizes collective action, and reinforces ideological boundaries within Indonesia's contemporary electoral landscape.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that hate speech circulating on TikTok during Indonesia's 2024 presidential campaign operates as a systematic and strategic form of linguistic action, rather than as spontaneous emotional expression. Drawing on Speech Act Theory, the analysis demonstrates that all five categories of illocutionary acts: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations, are actively employed to perform distinct political functions. Representative and directive acts dominate the discourse, indicating that hate speech primarily functions to construct ideological "truths" and mobilize political rejection through authoritative assertions and moral imperatives. Commissive and

expressive acts intensify affective polarization by dramatizing ideological rupture and fostering emotional alignment among users, while declarative acts, though less frequent, symbolically appropriate institutional authority to enact ritualized political judgment. Collectively, these illocutionary acts transform TikTok into an arena where political legitimacy is negotiated through pragmatic force, presupposition, and contextual amplification within an algorithmically mediated environment.

Based on these findings, this study suggests several implications for future research and institutional practice. Future studies may expand the scope by incorporating comparative platform analysis (e.g., TikTok versus X or Instagram) or by integrating multimodal analysis to examine how visual and

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auditory elements interact with illocutionary force. Longitudinal research is also recommended to trace the evolution of political hate speech across electoral cycles. For institutions, particularly policymakers, educators, and platform regulators, the findings highlight the need for context-sensitive moderation frameworks that account for pragmatic indirection and symbolic declarations, rather than relying solely on keyword-based detection. Enhancing digital literacy programs that emphasize pragmatic awareness may also help mitigate the normalization of hate speech and support more deliberative democratic engagement in digital political spaces.

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