

# Illocutionary Acts In The 1<sup>st</sup> 2023 Indonesian Presidential Candidate Debate By Prabowo Subianto: A Pragmatic Analysis

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## Abstract

This study investigates the illocutionary acts used by Prabowo Subianto during the first 2023 Indonesian presidential candidate debate. By conducting a pragmatic analysis, the research identifies and categorizes the types, functions, and strategies of Prabowo's speech acts, offering a comprehensive understanding of his communication approach and rhetorical effectiveness. Utilizing a qualitative-descriptive method, the debate was transcribed and analyzed to uncover the various illocutionary acts. The results reveal that Prabowo frequently uses assertives, directives, commissives, and expressives, each serving functions such as competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive purposes. . In total, there are 30 data collected from the data source. The collected data were then classified based on 10 assertives, 4 directives, 6 commissives, 5 expressives, and 5 declarations. This study underscores the importance of understanding pragmatic elements in political communication, illustrating how Prabowo's assertive and often provocative statements aim to persuade, inform, and engage the audience, thereby influencing voter perceptions and decision-making. Through this analysis, the research provides a deeper insight into the role of illocutionary acts in political discourse and their impact on electoral outcomes, highlighting Prabowo's adept use of language to achieve his communicative goals.

**Keywords:** *Illocutionary acts, Presidential Debate, Pragmatic Analysis, Political Communication, Speech acts*

## Introduction

Debate is a formal discussion on a particular topic in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward (Oxford University Press, 2024). The significance of debate lies in its ability to elucidate differing perspectives and facilitate critical thinking. Debates have long played a vital role in shaping public perceptions during elections. They give candidates a platform to articulate their policies and demonstrate their communication abilities. According to Tannen (1998: 13), debates are significant settings where language reflects and reinforces power dynamics and social hierarchies. How a candidate structures their arguments and delivers their message can significantly affect voters' views.

Debates often grab public attention, starting off in a calm and orderly manner before sometimes escalating into more heated and passionate exchanges. These discussions feature a spectrum of interactions, from initial, relatively relaxed conversations to intense confrontations as candidates express differing opinions and make persuasive arguments (Miller, 2004, pp. 45-46).

In addition, their impact is also influenced by the context in which they occur. The dynamics of political debates can vary greatly depending on the political culture and

media environment of the region. For instance, in countries like Indonesia, the structure and presentation of debates are shaped by specific cultural and political factors, which in turn affect how the debates are perceived and interpreted by the public (Smith & Johnson, 2015, pp. 78-80). These contextual elements include the prevailing media narratives, societal attitudes towards political figures, and historical precedents, all of which contribute to shaping the public's response.

In the context of the Indonesian presidential race, the General Elections Commission (KPU) organizes debates to provide a platform for candidates to present their policies and engage with their opponents. The first presidential debate of 2023 featured by one of the prominent candidates, it is Prabowo Subianto, against the other participants, Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo.

Prabowo Subianto, a former military general and seasoned politician, is known for his bold and brash communication style. His speeches often convey a sense of decisiveness and authority, which resonates with a segment of the electorate. This communication approach is not merely a display of personal charisma but is deeply rooted in the study of pragmatics, specifically in the realm of illocutionary acts. Pragmatics, according to Yule (1996), is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader), particularly in context. Levinson (1983) expands on this by emphasizing that pragmatics involves the study of the relationship between language and context, which is fundamental to an understanding of language. Additionally, Searle (1969: 16) elaborates on illocutionary acts, stating that these acts are crucial for understanding how language functions beyond the mere transfer of information.

During the debates organized by the KPU, candidates utilize various speech acts to persuade, inform, and engage with both the moderators and the audience. Prabowo's rhetorical strategies, characterized by assertive and sometimes provocative statements, serve as a rich field for analyzing the illocutionary acts that underpin his communication style.

The debates, aired on YouTube and television, are a crucial medium for the public to assess the candidates' policies and personalities. They provide a stage for candidates to perform speech acts that are intended to influence voter perceptions and decision-making. Understanding the pragmatic elements of these speech acts, particularly the illocutionary acts, is essential for interpreting how candidates like Prabowo Subianto attempt to achieve their communicative goals (Austin, 1962: 5).

Given the significance of these debates and the prominent role of speech acts within them, this research aims to identify the types and functions illocutionary acts used by Prabowo Subianto in the first presidential debate of 2023. By analyzing his speech through a pragmatic lens, this study seeks to elucidate how Prabowo's communication style impacts the audience and contributes to his overall rhetorical effectiveness.

## **Method**

The method used in this research is qualitative-descriptive. Sandelowski (2000) states that qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events. This approach is suitable for analyzing the intricate details of speech acts in a specific context, such as a political debate.

For data collection, the first presidential debate of 2023 featuring Prabowo Subianto, Anies Baswedan, and Ganjar Pranowo, which was broadcast on YouTube and

television, was used. The debate video was accessed and transcribed to ensure accuracy in capturing the verbal exchanges. Specifically, Prabowo Subianto's segments of the debate were isolated for detailed analysis. The focus was on his speech acts throughout the debate to understand his communicative strategies and their pragmatic implications.

The data samples were taken from various points in the debate to ensure a comprehensive analysis. Key moments where Prabowo engaged directly with his opponents, responded to questions from the moderators, or addressed the audience were selected. This resulted in a detailed transcription of significant excerpts from Prabowo's contributions to the debate.

Once the relevant segments were selected, they were classified according to their type, function, and strategy. In classifying and analyzing the types of speech acts, this research applied Searle's theory (1969), which categorizes speech acts into assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. To classify and analyze the functions of these speech acts, Leech's (1991) theory was utilized, which identifies functions such as competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive.

## Result And Discussions

The analysis is grounded in examining various types of speech actions and their functions found in the study's data. This article includes 10 analyses, each showcasing different speech actions and their roles as observed in the raw data from the KPU RI YouTube Channel. The emphasis is on sorting and evaluating these speech actions according to their prevalence and context within the debates. Each analysis highlights a unique speech action or function relevant to the study, demonstrating how these elements are used throughout the debates.

### Data 1: Assertive

Prabowo: "Saya sangat setuju bahwa kehakiman harus independen. Kehakiman harus yudikatif ya harus independen. Dan harus kuat dan tidak boleh diintervensi oleh kekuasaan."

(KPU RI Youtube Channel 00:12:45. - 00:12:58.)

In this instance, Prabowo Subianto makes several assertive remarks concerning the judiciary. By saying "Saya sangat setuju bahwa kehakiman harus independen" (*I strongly agree that the judiciary must be independent*), he shows his strong support for judicial independence. The repetition of "Kehakiman harus yudikatif ya harus independen" (*The judiciary must be independent, yes, it must be independent*) highlights his dedication to this principle. Additionally, "Dan harus kuat dan tidak boleh diintervensi oleh kekuasaan" (*And it must be strong and not subject to interference by power*) emphasizes his stance that the judiciary must be powerful and free from external influence.

Prabowo Subianto's remarks also serve a collaborative purpose, aiming to share information and engage in cooperative dialogue to achieve mutual understanding. By clearly expressing his support and explaining the need for a strong and independent judiciary, Prabowo contributes to a cooperative discussion on governance and the rule of law. His statements are intended to resonate with the audience's values, fostering a shared commitment to upholding judicial independence. This collaborative approach helps in building consensus and mutual understanding on this crucial issue.

### Data 2: Assertive

Prabowo: "Mas Anies, Mas Anies. Saya berpendapat Mas Anies ini agak berlebihan. Mas Anies mengeluh tentang demokrasi ini dan itu dan ini. Mas Anies dipilih jadi gubernur

DKI menghadapi pemerintah yang berkuasa. Saya yang mengusung Bapak. Kalau demokrasi kita tidak berjalan, tidak mungkin Anda jadi gubernur. Kalau Jokowi diktator, Anda tidak mungkin jadi gubernur. Saya waktu itu oposisi. Mas Anies, Anda ke rumah saya, kita oposisi, Anda terpilih."

(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:05:30. - 01:06:00.)

By stating "Saya berpendapat Mas Anies ini agak berlebihan" (*I believe Mr. Anies is being somewhat excessive*), Prabowo conveys his opinion that Anies is overreacting in his complaints about democracy. He further supports the functionality of democracy by noting that Anies was elected governor despite the ruling government, which would not have happened if democracy were not working "Kalau demokrasi kita tidak berjalan, tidak mungkin Anda jadi gubernur" (*If our democracy wasn't functioning, you wouldn't have become governor*). Additionally, Prabowo underscores that if President Jokowi were a dictator, Anies would not have been elected "Kalau Jokowi diktator, Anda tidak mungkin jadi gubernur" (*If Jokowi were a dictator, you wouldn't have become governor*). These statements collectively affirm Prabowo's belief in the effectiveness of the democratic process and the improbability of Anies's claims.

Prabowo Subianto's remarks also serve a conflictive purpose, as they are confrontational and aim to challenge and criticize Anies Baswedan's views on democracy. By repeatedly addressing Anies and stating "Saya berpendapat Mas Anies ini agak berlebihan" (*I believe Mr. Anies is being somewhat excessive*), Prabowo openly criticizes Anies's perspective. He further confronts Anies by highlighting the contradictions in his complaints, pointing out that Anies's election as governor is evidence of a functioning democracy. The use of phrases like "Saya yang mengusung Bapak" (*I was the one who supported you*) and "Saya waktu itu oposisi" (*I was in the opposition at that time*) emphasizes Prabowo's role in supporting Anies and contrasts it with Anies's current complaints. This adversarial stance is indicative of the conflictive function, as Prabowo's statements are intended to refute Anies's claims and assert his own viewpoint.

### Data 3: Directive

Prabowo: "Mari kita berbuat kebaikan demi rakyat kita. Kita butuh persatuan dan kesatuan. Kita tidak perlu saling menghasut, saling mencelah, saling menghina."

(KPU RI Youtube Channel 00:14:30 -00:14:45.)

Prabowo Subianto's statement can be seen as a directive illocutionary act, aiming to influence the audience's behavior. The phrase "Mari kita berbuat kebaikan demi rakyat kita" (*Let us do good for our people*) is a call to action, encouraging the audience to engage in beneficial deeds for the community. The following statements, "Kita butuh persatuan dan kesatuan" (*We need unity and togetherness*) and "Kita tidak perlu saling menghasut, saling mencelah, saling menghina" (*We do not need to incite, criticize, or insult each other*), further specify the desired behaviors—promoting unity and avoiding negative actions like incitement, criticism, and insults. These statements collectively guide the audience towards specific actions and attitudes, making this a clear example of a directive speech act.

Prabowo Subianto's statement also fits the convivial function in Leech's framework of speech act functions, characterized by politeness and the aim to establish or maintain social harmony. Prabowo encourages positive actions and unity among the people. The phrase "Mari kita berbuat kebaikan demi rakyat kita" (*Let us do good for our people*) invites collective action for the common good, fostering a sense of community and cooperation. By stating "Kita butuh persatuan dan kesatuan" (*We need unity and*

*togetherness*), he emphasizes the importance of unity and togetherness, essential for social harmony. Furthermore, the directive "Kita tidak perlu saling menghasut, saling mencelah, saling menghina" (*We do not need to incite, criticize, or insult each other*) discourages negative behaviors that can cause discord and conflict. Overall, this statement promotes goodwill, cooperation, and social cohesion, making it a clear example of the convivial function in Leech's framework.

#### **Data 4: Directive**

Prabowo: "Mas Ganjar punya pengalaman sebagai gubernur. Saya ingin bertanya bagaimana pemikiran Bapak untuk mengatasi pengangguran yang masih banyak."  
(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:10:30 - 01:10:45.)

Prabowo Subianto's statement acts as a directive illocutionary act, as it involves requesting information or advice. By stating "Saya ingin bertanya bagaimana pemikiran Bapak untuk mengatasi pengangguran yang masih banyak" (*I want to ask what your thoughts are on addressing the high unemployment*), Prabowo is explicitly seeking Ganjar's insights and strategies on resolving the issue of high unemployment. This request directs Ganjar to respond, thereby attempting to guide his communicative behavior to share his insights and experiences. The directive nature of this speech act is evident as it aims to elicit a specific piece of information or a detailed explanation from Ganjar.

This statement by Prabowo Subianto is also a perfect example of the collaborative function. The collaborative function is characterized by speech acts that aim to share information, seek clarification, or engage in cooperative dialogue to achieve mutual understanding or problem-solving. In this context, Prabowo is recognizing Ganjar's experience as a governor and is seeking his insights on addressing high unemployment. By saying "Saya ingin bertanya bagaimana pemikiran Bapak untuk mengatasi pengangguran yang masih banyak" (*I want to ask what your thoughts are on addressing the high unemployment*), Prabowo invites Ganjar to share his thoughts and strategies, thus fostering a collaborative exchange of ideas. This request for Ganjar's perspective is intended to contribute to a constructive discussion on a significant issue, highlighting the collaborative nature of the speech act.

#### **Data 5: Commissive**

Prabowo: "Saya berkomitmen untuk memperkuat itu. Manakala saya menerima mandat dari rakyat saya akan memperbaiki kualitas hidup semua hakim-hakim di Republik Indonesia."

(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:25:30 to 01:25:45.)

In this instance, Prabowo Subianto makes a clear commitment to his audience. By stating "Saya berkomitmen untuk memperkuat itu" (*I commit to strengthening it*), he pledges to fortify the judiciary. Additionally, "Manakala saya menerima mandat dari rakyat saya akan memperbaiki kualitas hidup semua hakim-hakim di Republik Indonesia" (*When I receive the mandate from the people, I will improve the quality of life for all judges in the Republic of Indonesia*) is a promise to enhance the judges' living conditions across Indonesia if he is given the people's mandate. This statement exemplifies a commissive speech act as it involves a pledge or promise regarding future actions.

His statement has a convivial function, which encompasses speech acts that are inherently polite and aim to establish or maintain social harmony. Such acts often include offering, inviting, greeting, thanking, or committing to something. This utterance

falls under the convivial function because it involves making a positive commitment aimed at improving the judiciary, a significant public concern. By committing to strengthen the judiciary and improve the quality of life for judges, Prabowo is engaging in a speech act that seeks to foster goodwill and trust among the audience. The promise to enhance the judiciary's conditions is intended to reassure the public and build confidence in his leadership, thereby maintaining social harmony and constructively addressing public concerns.

#### **Data 6: Commissive**

Prabowo: "Saya sudah siap mati untuk negara ini."

(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:35:30 to 01:35:45.)

These acts bind the speaker to perform a specific action later. In this context, Prabowo Subianto makes an emphatic personal commitment to the nation. By stating "Saya sudah siap mati untuk negara ini" (*I am ready to die for this country*), he expresses his willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice—his life—for the country's sake. This is a clear example of a commissive speech act as it involves a solemn pledge regarding his readiness to take extreme action if necessary for the nation's benefit.

Prabowo's statement also has a convivial function, which aims to establish or maintain social harmony. By declaring his readiness to sacrifice his life for the country, Prabowo shows his dedication and loyalty to the nation, fostering trust and unity among listeners. This kind of statement is meant to evoke strong emotional support and reinforce his image as a committed and selfless leader, thus maintaining social harmony and strengthening the bond between the leader and the citizens.

#### **Data 7: Expressive**

Prabowo: "Saya senang mendengar jawaban itu."

(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:13:45 to 01:14:00.)

Expressive speech acts are those where the speaker conveys an attitude or emotion about a situation. These acts reflect the speaker's psychological state. In this utterance, Prabowo Subianto expresses his positive emotional response to an answer he received. By stating "Saya senang mendengar jawaban itu" (*I am pleased to hear that answer*), he conveys his pleasure or satisfaction with the response. This is a clear example of an expressive speech act, as it involves expressing a personal feeling or reaction.

Showing positive emotions through statement also fits into Leech's convivial function, which aims to establish or maintain social harmony through polite and positive interactions. This utterance can be classified under the convivial function because it involves expressing a positive emotion that contributes to a polite and harmonious interaction. By stating "Saya senang mendengar jawaban itu," (*I am pleased to hear that answer*), Prabowo acknowledges the response positively, fostering goodwill and maintaining a friendly and cooperative atmosphere. This kind of statement is intended to show appreciation and reinforce a positive relationship between the speaker and the listener.

#### **Data 8: Expressive**

Prabowo: "Terus terang saja, saya dalam hal ini setuju dengan sikap dan jawaban dari Pak Ganjar masalah korupsi."

(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:23:45 to 01:24:00.)

Prabowo Subianto expresses his agreement and support for Ganjar's stance on corruption. By stating "Terus terang saja, saya dalam hal ini setuju dengan sikap dan jawaban dari Pak Ganjar masalah korupsi" (*Frankly, I agree with Mr. Ganjar's stance and response on the issue of corruption*), he conveys his positive attitude towards Ganjar's position. This is a clear example of an expressive speech act, as it involves expressing a personal feeling or reaction.

This utterance fits the collaborative function because it involves expressing agreement and support, contributing to a constructive and cooperative interaction. By expressing his agreement, Prabowo fosters a sense of mutual understanding and collaboration on the issue of corruption. Such a statement helps build a cooperative atmosphere where both parties can work towards a common goal.

#### **Data 9: Declaration**

Prabowo: "Dalam demokrasi kekuasaan tertinggi ada di rakyat. Hakim yang tertinggi adalah rakyat. Tanggal 14 Februari rakyat yang akan mengambil keputusan."  
(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:45:00 to 01:45:15.)

Here, Prabowo Subianto is making a declarative statement about the nature of democracy and the role of the people in it. By stating, "Dalam demokrasi kekuasaan tertinggi ada di rakyat. Hakim yang tertinggi adalah rakyat. Tanggal 14 Februari rakyat yang akan mengambil keputusan" (*In a democracy, the highest power lies with the people. The highest judge is the people. On February 14, the people will make the decision*), he asserts the principle that the ultimate authority in a democracy rest with the people, and they will exercise this authority on a specific date. This is a clear example of a declarative speech act as it involves making a statement that defines or reaffirms a fundamental democratic principle.

This utterance served as a competitive function, which involves speech acts intended to compete with the social goals of others, often by asserting authority or issuing commands. By emphasizing "Dalam demokrasi kekuasaan tertinggi ada di rakyat. Hakim yang tertinggi adalah rakyat. Tanggal 14 Februari rakyat yang akan mengambil keputusan" (*In a democracy, the highest power lies with the people. The highest judge is the people. On February 14, the people will make the decision*), Prabowo underscores the ultimate authority of the people in a democracy, positioning himself against his opponents. By highlighting the power of the electorate and the specific date of the decision, he implicitly challenges his opponents and mobilizes his supporters. This competitive move underscores the democratic process and encourages the audience to exercise their power decisively, potentially in his favor.

#### **Data 10: Declaration**

Prabowo: "Kami menempatkan hukum HAM perbaikan pelayanan pemerintahan pemberantasan korupsi perlindungan terhadap semua kelompok di masyarakat sebagai sesuatu yang sangat penting."  
(KPU RI Youtube Channel 01:50:00 to 01:50:15.)

These acts have the power to alter the status or condition of a situation or object. In this instance, Prabowo Subianto makes a declarative statement about his administration's priorities. By stating, "Kami menempatkan hukum HAM perbaikan pelayanan pemerintahan pemberantasan korupsi perlindungan terhadap semua kelompok di masyarakat sebagai sesuatu yang sangat penting" (*We place human rights law, the improvement of government services, the eradication of corruption, and the protection of all societal groups as very important*), he asserts that these areas are top

priorities. This is a clear example of a declarative speech act as it involves making a statement that defines or reaffirms fundamental principles and priorities.

This statement include into a collaborative function, which involves sharing information, seeking clarification, or engaging in cooperative dialogue to achieve mutual understanding or problem-solving. By outlining these priorities, Prabowo shares important information about his administration's commitments and emphasizes the significance of these issues. This utterance fosters a cooperative dialogue, helping to build a sense of mutual understanding and collaboration between the speaker and the audience. It reinforces the idea that these issues are of paramount importance and should be addressed collectively.

## Conclusion

This study conducted a pragmatic analysis of the illocutionary acts used by Prabowo Subianto during the first 2023 Indonesian presidential candidate debate. The total of 30 data were found meeting the clasification, were selected and categorized into various types of illocutionary acts: 10 assertives, 4 directives, 6 commissives, 5 expressives, and 5 declarations. These acts were analyzed to determine their functions, which include competitive, convivial, collaborative, and conflictive purposes.

Our analysis reveals that Prabowo Subianto employs these speech acts strategically to assert his authority, persuade the audience, and foster a positive atmosphere. His use of assertives and directives helps convey his strong positions and guide audience behavior, while commissives demonstrate his commitment to future actions. Expressive acts convey personal feelings, and declarations emphasize democratic principles and priorities.

Overall, Prabowo's effective use of illocutionary acts highlights his rhetorical skills and ability to engage with the audience, impacting public perception and voter decision-making. This study underscores the importance of understanding speech acts in political communication and their role in achieving communicative goals.

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