

Why Do 'Rhetorical' Speech Acts Emerge in Digital Era Communication?

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Abstract

Objectives: This study aims to analyze the factors driving the emergence of rhetorical speech acts in digital communication culture, particularly in food vlog content on YouTube. Rhetorical speech acts are proposed as a new category within illocutionary speech act theory, focusing on the use of rhetorical questions to influence, direct thinking, and emphasize points without expecting direct answers.

Methods: The method employed is qualitative with a netnographic approach, where data were collected from three prominent Indonesian food vloggers: Tanboy Kun, Nex Carlos, and Mgdalenaf.

Results: The study results show that rhetorical speech acts emerge as a way for vloggers to enhance audience engagement and highlight key points. Unlike conventional speech acts such as assertives, directives, and expressives, rhetorical speech acts focus more on creating cognitive and curious effects without requiring an explicit response.

Conclusion: The study recommends that rhetorical speech acts have become an essential component of dynamic and flexible digital communication, enriching speech act theory with new dimensions relevant to modern communication. This study also recommends further research on the application of rhetorical speech acts across various digital platforms and encourages content creators to optimize these strategies to enhance engagement and message effectiveness in digital interactions.

Keywords: Rhetorical speech acts; digital communication; pragmatics; food vloggers

لماذا تظهر أفعال الكلام "البلاغية" في اتصالات العصر الرقمي؟

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ملخص

الأهداف: هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل العوامل التي تؤدي إلى ظهور أفعال الكلام البلاغية في ثقافة الاتصال الرقمي، وبشكل خاص محتوى مدونات الفيديو الخاصة بالغذاء على اليوتيوب، وكما يتم اقتراح أفعال الكلام البلاغية كفئة جديدة ضمن نظرية أفعال الكلام الإنجازية. والتركيز على الغاية من أفعال الكلام مثل استخدام الأسئلة البلاغية للتأثير على المتلقي، أو حظه على التفكير المباشر، أو التركيز على بعض النقاط دون توقع إجابات من المتلقي.

الطريقة: اتبعت الدراسة المنهج النتنوغرافي؛ حيث تم جمع البيانات من ثلاثة مدوني فيديو إندونيسيين بارزين: تانبوي كون و نيكس كارلوس و مغلديناف.

النتائج: أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن أفعال الكلام البلاغية توظف كوسيلة لمدوني الفيديو لتعزيز مشاركة الجمهور وتبسيط الضوء على النقاط الرئيسية. وعلى عكس أفعال الكلام التقليدية مثل التأكيدات والتوجيهات والتعبيرات، تركز أفعال الكلام البلاغية بشكل أكبر على خلق تأثيرات معرفية وعاطفية دون الحاجة إلى استجابة صريحة.

الخلاصة: خلصت هذه الدراسة إلى أن أفعال الكلام البلاغية أصبحت مكوناً أساسياً للاتصال الرقمي الديناميكي والمرن، مما يثري نظرية فعل الكلام بأبعاد جديدة ذات صلة بالتواصل الحديث. وكما توصي هذه الدراسة بإجراء مزيد من الأبحاث حول تطبيق أفعال الكلام البلاغية عبر مختلف المنصات الرقمية وتشجيع منشئي المحتوى على تحسين هذه الاستراتيجيات لتعزيز المشاركة وفعالية الرسالة في التفاعلات الرقمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أفعال الكلام البلاغية؛ الاتصالات الرقمية؛ البراغماتية؛ مدونو الفيديو الغذائي.



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Introduction

The act of communication has significantly evolved over time. From simple oral and written communication in the past to complex digital communication in the modern era (Anwar et al., 2021; Wang & Liu, 2019; Smith & Anderson, 2020; Jones & Scott, 2021). The flexibility and dynamics of human communication methods continue to develop. The digital era has introduced new platforms that allow for instant and cross-border communication, such as social media, blogs, and video streaming. This flexibility enables individuals and groups to communicate in more creative and interactive ways without being constrained by space and time (Kümpel et al., 2020; Spiliotopoulos & Oakley, 2021; Van Dijk & Poell, 2019).

In digital communication, speech acts play a crucial role in conveying messages (Dreißigacker et al., 2024; Yao & Ling, 2020). Speech acts always encompass three main aspects: locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts (Ekoro & Gunn, 2021). Locutionary acts involve producing utterances with specific meanings (Ninio, 2018); illocutionary acts refer to the function of the utterance, such as providing information (assertive), giving commands (directive), expressing feelings (expressive), making commitments (commissive), and making formal declarations (declarative) (Witek, 2021; Al-Shboul et al., 2024); and perlocutionary acts refer to the effects the utterance has on the listener (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). Each type of speech act helps regulate interaction and ensure the message is received according to the speaker's intent (Antas & Majewska, 2021).

Among the three types of speech acts, illocutionary acts are the most important in communication (Simboteanu, 2023). Illocutionary acts pertain to the intent or function of the utterance, which is the core of communication because it directly relates to the purpose of each statement (Oishi, 2022; Sbisà, 2013). Understanding illocution enables the listener to interpret and respond to messages correctly and distinguish between different types of utterances (Rahayu, 2020). In the digital world, where non-verbal context is often missing due to the absence of conversational partners who are only present through gadgets, understanding illocutionary acts becomes crucial. This factor aids content creators in achieving their goals of building relationships with audiences or disseminating information (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996).

As communication methods evolve in the digital world, there is a phenomenon where speakers pose questions not to elicit answers but to influence, direct thinking, or emphasize a point to the audience. Such actions can be referred to as "rhetorical speech acts." Rhetorical question is a special category in pragmatic studies aimed at influencing or directing the audience's thoughts without requiring a direct response (Mirzaei et al., 2016). The use of rhetorical speech acts is essential in digital communication, especially in content aimed at educating, entertaining, or persuading the audience (Du Plessis, 2013; Bendrat, 2019; Villarroel Ordenes et al., 2019; Kedrowicz & Taylor, 2016).

This study aims to analyze the factors that drive the emergence of rhetorical speech acts in digital communication culture. Through an in-depth analysis of the three largest food vloggers in Indonesia, namely Tanboy Kun, Nex Carlos, and Mgdalenaf (Tanboy Kun, 2023; Nex Carlos, 2023; Mgdalenaf, 2023), this research identifies the reasons behind the use of rhetorical speech acts and how these strategies are used to influence audiences in the digital context.

In this research, rhetorical speech acts are proposed as a category of illocutionary acts to complement assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative acts in Searle's speech act theory (Searle, 1969). Rhetorical speech acts include utterances that seem to ask questions but do not expect responses from the interlocutor. These speech acts are actually intended to influence or direct the audience's thoughts without requiring a direct response. Forms of these utterances include rhetorical questions, dramatic statements, and other phrases designed to make the audience think or feel in a certain way (Du Plessis, 2013; Morales Sanchez & Martin Villareal, 2019).

The explanation above shows that while research on digital communication and persuasive strategies is common, little has specifically examined why and how rhetorical speech acts emerge in digital communication culture. This gap creates a need to understand more deeply the reasons behind the use of rhetorical speech acts and how these strategies affect audience engagement. Social media platforms like YouTube demand content creators find effective ways to capture attention and build audience engagement, yet a deep understanding of the reasons for and effectiveness of these strategies is still lacking. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is the general concept of rhetorical speech acts? (2) How do rhetorical speech acts compare with other speech acts? (3) What is the context of rhetorical speech acts for the

communicative purposes of vloggers in the digital era? (4) How can the formulation and position of rhetorical speech acts be understood within illocutionary act theory?.

Research on rhetorical speech acts was first formulated by Cornelia Ene (1983), who stated that rhetorical questions function as illocutionary acts in speech act theory with the aim of persuading listeners through shared presuppositions. However, Ene's concept of rhetorical speech acts did not develop significantly because, at the time, speech act studies focused on traditional illocutionary acts, and the practical application of rhetorical utterances was limited to specific communication contexts such as public speeches, advertisements, and political propaganda. Frank (1990) updated the idea of rhetorical illocution, highlighting the limitations of traditional speech acts in handling complex rhetorical questions that are difficult to interpret in everyday communication contexts. However, Frank's research also did not develop much due to the difficulty of identifying rhetorical speech acts, making it challenging to implement this concept in broader and more applicable pragmatic studies. Further research was conducted by Ilie (2010) and Rafiq (2017), who examined rhetorical speech acts limited to parliamentary and political contexts, and by Wang (2014), who used novel samples to see statements that did not expect answers from readers.

In the context of the digital world, rhetorical utterances have also been studied by Du Plessis (2013), Bendrat (2019), Villarroel Ordenes et al. (2019), Kedrowicz & Taylor (2016), and Morales Sánchez & Martín Villarreal (2019). Du Plessis (2013) discussed persuasive communication on social media to promote sports events. Bendrat (2019) showed the application of traditional rhetorical theory in digital media. Villarroel Ordenes et al. (2019) examined speech acts and image actions in brand messages on social media and linked them to illocutionary acts. Kedrowicz and Taylor (2016) explored rhetorical strategies in digital presentations such as TED Talks. Morales Sánchez and Martín Villarreal (2019) analyzed rhetorical strategies in the dissemination of digital texts. These studies demonstrate the significant role of rhetoric in influencing and directing audience thinking and enhancing the effectiveness of digital communication. Villarroel Ordenes et al. (2019) introduced the novelty of using speech act theory and big data analysis to understand the effects of rhetoric in sharing consumer messages on social media.

Based on the concept of rhetorical speech acts from previous studies, this research offers novelty by proposing rhetorical speech acts as a complement to traditional illocutionary acts such as assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative acts. By observing the use of rhetorical questions by vloggers on YouTube, this study shows that rhetorical speech acts are relevant not only in public and political speeches as studied by Ene (1983), Ilie (2010), and Rafiq (2017), or in conversations between authors and readers as researched by Wang (2014), but also in modern digital communication. A gap in previous research, as indicated by Du Plessis (2013), Bendrat (2019), and Morales Sánchez & Martín Villarreal (2019), is the lack of focus on categorizing rhetorical speech acts as illocutionary acts. Villarroel Ordenes et al. (2019) did link rhetoric to illocutionary acts but focused more on visual and verbal effects in digital marketing. This research complements Frank's (1990) findings that had difficulty implementing rhetorical speech acts in daily life. This novelty is essential to keep pragmatic studies dynamic and evolving in line with changes in digital era communication, enriching speech act theory with a new dimension relevant to current communication, and expanding the scope of pragmatic applications in linguistic studies.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative method with a netnographic research approach. The qualitative method is utilized to explore and deeply understand the phenomenon of rhetorical speech acts in digital communication (Creswell, 2014). Netnography is chosen as it facilitates the analysis of interactions occurring on digital platforms, particularly YouTube, thereby providing insights into the use of rhetorical questions by vloggers (Kozinets, 2015).

The data sources for this study are derived from three prominent Indonesian food vloggers: Tanboy Kun (18.9 million subscribers: [YouTube Link](#)), Nex Carlos (4.99 million subscribers: [YouTube Link](#)), and Mgdalenaf (4.32 million subscribers: [YouTube Link](#)). These three food vloggers were selected due to their large following and diverse content, which facilitates the observation process of the use of rhetorical speech acts in various situations and contexts. Although

there are various YouTube genres such as politics, sports, video games, music covers, and reaction videos, each has its limitations: political content tends to be controversial (Chen, 2021; Rao et al., 2021), sports require specialized knowledge (Post et al., 2020), video games demand gaming skills (Choi et al., 2020), and music covers and reaction videos are often prone to copyright issues (Harwanto, 2022). In contrast, food vloggers in Indonesia have grown from the general public, offering content that is easy to follow, easy to replicate, and appeals to a broad audience (Sugihartana & Rusadi, 2024). This makes food vloggers an ideal topic for this research, as they provide a diverse and widely relevant context for examining the use of rhetorical speech acts. Data collection was conducted through observations of videos uploaded by these vloggers with high exposure (number of views).

The data analysis technique was carried out in several steps. *First*, data collection was performed by downloading and watching videos from the three vloggers. Each instance of rhetorical speech acts that appeared in the videos was meticulously noted and analyzed to understand the general concept of rhetorical speech acts. *Second*, the identified speech acts were categorized based on their rhetorical forms and compared with other speech acts (assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative) to highlight differences. *Third*, the collected data were interpreted using a pragmatic approach to determine how the rhetorical speech act strategies effectively achieve the communicative goals of vloggers in the digital era. *Fourth*, a theoretical formulation of rhetorical speech acts in the context of illocutionary acts within pragmatic studies was conducted. This stage was undertaken to determine its position within the theory of illocutionary acts (Patton, 2015). These instruments are designed to ensure that the study can accurately identify, analyze, and interpret the use of rhetorical speech acts in digital communication by vloggers, as well as their contribution to modern pragmatic theory.

Results

General Concept of Rhetorical Speech Acts

Rhetorical speech acts are a communication phenomenon where speakers use certain questions or statements not to obtain direct answers, but to influence, direct thinking, or emphasize a point to the audience. In pragmatic studies, rhetorical speech acts are proposed as a special form of illocutionary acts, primarily aimed at creating a specific effect on the listener through shared presuppositions. For instance, a question in the content of a food vlogger might be:

"Okay... let's get straight to it, I'm really curious about how spicy this Paqui is?" (by Tanboy Kun)

The utterance *"how spicy this Paqui is?"* does not structurally conform to the standard form of a question, as it lacks subject-verb inversion. However, functionally, it acts as a rhetorical question with an exclamatory tone, serving as a rhetorical device to emphasize the speaker's curiosity and to capture the audience's attention on the topic being discussed. In this context, this utterance helps to spark interest, attract attention, and build excitement about the content, rather than to seek an actual answer.

In the digital era, the use of rhetorical speech acts becomes significant with the growth of social media and other online communication platforms. A rhetorical question helps content creators deliver messages more engagingly and direct the audience's attention (Andersen, 2014; Ranganath et al., 2018). Additionally, this form enriches the communication experience by adding layers of depth and meaning (Spago, 2016). Through rhetorical questions or dramatic statements, speakers can create stronger curious or cognitive effects on the audience. For instance, in the context of food vloggers, a question like *"Can I survive without drinking after eating this Paqui? One chip challenge!"* (by Tanboy Kun), is not meant to be answered by the viewers but to emphasize the extremity of the challenge and build anticipation. Such rhetorical questions attract viewers' attention and make them more engaged with the presented content. This creates a deeper and more interactive experience for the audience with the created content.

In digital content contexts such as vlogs, rhetorical questions are often used not to get answers but as tools to enhance audience engagement. The speakers, namely vloggers, realize that communication in this format is one-way, where the audience cannot provide immediate responses (Frobenius, 2014; Maity & Racat, 2018). When vloggers pose questions that

do not require answers, they are actually inviting the audience to think or feel something. Such utterances create the illusion of direct interaction even though the audience is merely watching and cannot respond in real-time. In this way, speakers can make viewers feel more connected and involved in the ongoing conversation (Zhang & Lee, 2023; Munukka et al., 2019).

Rhetorical structures are often designed to encourage someone to think or feel something without requiring a verbal response (Nham et al., 2022). These utterances provide flexibility for speakers to direct the flow of communication according to their goals, whether to educate, persuade, or entertain the audience. Thus, rhetorical speech acts help bridge the gap between speakers and listeners in a fast-paced and dynamic digital environment.

Comparison of Rhetorical Speech Acts with Other Speech Acts

In pragmatic studies, speech acts are key elements that help in understanding how language is used to achieve specific communicative goals (House & Kadar, 2023; Farinde & Oyedokun-Alli, 2020). As formulated by Searle (1969), speech acts encompass various types of actions such as assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Each type of speech act has different purposes, contexts, and expected responses (Zaitso et al., 2021; Collins, 2020). However, with the advent of the digital era, a new type of speech act has emerged, known as rhetorical speech acts. Rhetorical speech acts are used to influence or direct the audience's thinking without requiring a direct response and are often employed in video blog-based social media like YouTube and TikTok. Below is a tabulation comparing traditional illocutionary acts with rhetorical speech acts in terms of purpose, example utterances, common contexts, expected responses, and primary use.

Table 1. Comparison of Conventional and Rhetorical Speech Acts

Aspect	Rhetorical	Assertive	Directive	Expressive	Commissive	Declarative
Purpose	To influence or direct the audience's thinking without requiring a direct response.	To provide information or statements that are true or false.	To give commands or requests.	To express feelings or emotions.	To make promises or commitments.	To change the status or state of something through utterance.
Example Utterances	<i>"Can I survive without drinking after eating this Paqui? One chip challenge!" (Tanboy Kun)</i>	<i>"This shredded coconut is indeed sweet, but I wish it tasted more like turmeric shredded coconut, so it's more savory. But this coconut is rather sweet." (Nex Carlos)</i>	<i>"So that's it for my vlog this time, I warn you to stick to your limits. If you can't handle spicy or have stomach issues, don't try it." (Magdalena)</i>	<i>"A billion people suggested I try the original Paqui. Wow...wow!" (Tanboy Kun)</i>	<i>"Later I'll explore Binjai too, but I don't know if I'll make a video or not." (Magdalena)</i>	<i>"The customer is king. No way, here I am the king!" (Nex Carlos)</i>
Common Contexts	Social media, vlogs, political speeches, advertisements.	Various formal and informal communication contexts.	Everyday interactions, work situations.	Personal contexts, social interactions.	Formal and informal situations that require a promise.	Official ceremonies, formal situations.
Expected Response	No direct response expected, but	The listener receives information.	The listener performs the requested	The listener understands the speaker's	The listener expects the speaker to	The listener acknowledges the change in

Aspect	Rhetorical	Assertive	Directive	Expressive	Commissive	Declarative
	influenced by the conveyed question.		action.	feelings.	fulfill the promise.	status or state.
Primary Use	To increase audience engagement, emphasize important points, create curious effects for audience.	To convey information or beliefs.	To instruct or request someone to do something.	To convey emotions or feelings.	To communicate a commitment to do something.	To change the status or state through formal declaration.

The table above provides a more concrete overview of the comparison between rhetorical and other speech acts. Rhetorical speech acts differ from other speech acts such as assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative in terms of purpose, context, and expected response. Rhetorical speech acts aim to influence or direct the audience's thinking without requiring a direct response, often used to increase engagement and emphasize important points. Conversely, as explained by Hisham & Hashim (2022), assertive speech acts provide information expected to be accepted as true or false, directives give commands expecting action, expressives convey feelings expected to be understood, commissives involve promises to be fulfilled, and declaratives change the status or state through formal statements recognized by the listener. Each of these speech acts is used in different contexts according to the specific communicative goals to be achieved.

In the concept of conventional speech acts according to Searle (1969), each speech act essentially has specific purposes and contexts. Each type of speech act plays a crucial role in communication, helping speakers and listeners achieve the desired understanding and actions. Examples of the use of Searle's speech acts can be seen in the following table.

Table 2. Forms of Conventional Speech Acts

Type of Speech Acts	Example Utterances	Purpose of the Utterance
Assertives	(1) <i>"If my chicken isn't lying, it tastes much better with Samyang sauce."</i> (Tanboy Kun) (2) <i>"This shredded coconut is indeed sweet, but I wish it tasted more like turmeric shredded coconut, so it's more savory. But this coconut is rather sweet."</i> (Nex Carlos) (3) <i>"The toppings here are eggs, otak-otak, and fried wontons. Wow, let's eat..."</i> (Magdalena)	To convey information or statements believed to be true by the speaker.
Directives	(1) <i>"Hey guys, hurry up and bite the thigh part, it has a lot of skin, it's great!"</i> (Tanboy Kun) (2) <i>"This is only in Cirebon, man, if you want to eat this, you have to come to Cirebon."</i> (Nex Carlos) (3) <i>"So that's it for my vlog this time, I warn you to stick to your limits. If you can't handle spicy or have stomach issues, don't try it."</i> (Magdalena)	To give commands or requests to the listener.
Commissives	(1) <i>"Let him try, no problem. Let's continue eating."</i> (Tanboy Kun) (2) <i>"At twelve o'clock, everyone comes out. After this, we will take a break, eat in the afternoon, and eat again at night, right? Just wait for the next Cirebon episodes."</i> (Nex Carlos)	To make promises or commitments to do something in the future.

Type of Speech Acts	Example Utterances	Purpose of the Utterance
	(3) <i>"Later I'll explore Binjai too, but I don't know if I'll make a video or not."</i> (Magdalena)	
Expressives	(1) <i>"A billion people suggested I try the original Paqui. Wow...wow!"</i> (Tanboy Kun) (2) <i>"Uh... this is insanely great, man!"</i> (Nex Carlos) (3) <i>"I really can't handle this kind of stuff. Oh my god!"</i> (Magdalena)	To express the speaker's feelings or emotions.
Declaratives	(1) <i>"So in the previous episode, it was KFC, it wouldn't be balanced if I only did KFC, so this time I'm doing McD."</i> (Tanboy Kun) (2) <i>"The customer is king. No way, here I am the king!"</i> (Nex Carlos) (3) <i>"Yes, of course, down to earth. A king who is down to earth."</i> (Nex Carlos)	To change the status or state of something through an utterance.

Based on the tabulation above, assertive utterances in vlogs are used to convey information or statements believed to be true by the speaker. For example, Tanboy Kun says, *"If my chicken isn't lying, it tastes much better with Samyang sauce,"* expressing his belief about the food's taste. Nex Carlos talks about shredded coconut that he finds sweet, while Magdalena describes her food toppings in detail.

Directives appear when vloggers give commands or requests. For instance, Tanboy Kun instructs his viewers to immediately bite the chicken thigh with lots of skin, and Nex Carlos states that to enjoy certain food, one must go to Cirebon. Magdalena warns her viewers to be cautious with their spice limits. Commissive acts reflect a commitment or promise to do something in the future, such as when Tanboy Kun says, *"Let him try, no problem. Let's continue eating,"* or when Nex Carlos announces his meal plans for the day. Magdalena also uses commissive speech acts when discussing her plans to explore Binjai.

Expressive speech acts convey the speaker's feelings or emotions. For example, Tanboy Kun enthusiastically reveals that many people have suggested he try the original Paqui. Nex Carlos uses expressives when he feels satisfied with his food, and Magdalena expresses her inability to handle spicy food. Declarative acts change the status or state of something, such as when Tanboy Kun clarifies the difference between his vlog episodes on KFC and McD, or when Nex Carlos asserts that the customer is king and he is the king in a certain context. Declaratives are also used by Nex Carlos when he declares himself as a king who is down to earth. Each of these types of speech acts plays an important role in conveying messages and achieving the desired communicative goals.

The explanation and identification related to Searle's speech acts above differ from the concept of rhetorical speech acts. Rhetorical speech acts are types of utterances aimed at influencing or directing the audience's thinking without requiring a direct response. In communication, rhetorical speech acts are often used to influence the audience, direct their thinking, emphasize an important point, add a dramatic element, and build audience engagement. Examples of rhetorical speech acts in context can be seen in the table below.

Table 3. Examples of Rhetorical Utterances

Speaker	Utterance	Analysis of Rhetorical Element
Tanboy Kun	<i>"Does Samyang sauce mixed with a burger taste better like KFC yesterday?"</i>	A question that does not require an answer, aimed at comparing and emphasizing taste.
	<i>"Fried chicken with Samyang sauce tastes amazing. Does the burger taste the same?"</i>	Aimed at making viewers think without expecting a direct answer.
	<i>"What? The cameraman wants to try? Okay."</i>	Shows surprise, involving the audience without expecting a verbal response.

Speaker	Utterance	Analysis of Rhetorical Element
	"How many chickens have we got? Three? Oh, this is the fifth chicken, guys!"	Emphasizes a point without expecting an answer from the audience.
	"Five hundred thousand for chips?"	Expresses surprise to attract attention without needing an answer.
	"Okay... let's get straight to it, I'm really curious about how spicy this Paqui is?"	Makes viewers curious without expecting an answer.
	"Can I survive without drinking after eating this Paqui? One chip challenge!"	Challenges the audience and creates anticipation without needing an answer.
Nex Carlos	"You really have a candidate, huh?"	Expresses surprise, not expecting an answer.
	"You're the king buying here, huh?"	Emphasizes status without expecting an answer.
	"It's hard, right?"	Indicates difficulty without expecting an answer.
	"Wow.. what is this?"	Shows surprise without needing an answer.
	"Am I really supposed to eat plants?"	Expresses disbelief without expecting an answer.
	"What is this?"	Shows confusion without expecting an answer.
Magdalena	"Can't do it? It's hard, huh? It's hard."	Indicates difficulty without needing an answer.
	"Because back then we cooked near, what was it called? Sound music. So we cooked following, what was it called? Beat. Just used to it."	Explains cooking habits with questions that do not expect answers.
	"So, how about it? Who dares to eat Indomie with two hundred chilies? I dare."	Challenges and shows bravery without expecting an answer.
	"So this Seblak Samyang is very spicy. What will happen to me later?"	Shows concern without expecting an answer.

The table above presents various rhetorical utterances used by three well-known vloggers in Indonesia, namely Tanboy Kun, Nex Carlos, and Magdalena. These rhetorical utterances are analyzed based on the rhetorical elements they contain. Tanboy Kun frequently uses rhetorical questions that do not require direct answers from his audience to emphasize the taste and quality of the food. For example, when he asks, *"Does Samyang sauce mixed with a burger taste better like KFC yesterday?"* this question is actually aimed at comparing and emphasizing the taste without expecting an answer. Similarly, when he says, *"Can I survive without drinking after eating this Paqui? One chip challenge!"* it is a way to challenge the audience and create anticipation without requiring an answer. The utterance is not classified as an expressive because it functions as a rhetorical question. Although it may appear to convey the speaker's anticipation or curiosity, its primary purpose is not to express a personal feeling but to create suspense and engage the audience in the challenge. Therefore, this utterance serves as a rhetorical device to capture the audience's attention, rather than merely expressing personal emotions as seen in conventional expressives.

Moreover, Tanboy Kun also uses rhetorical utterances to show surprise and engage the audience. For instance, *"What? The cameraman wants to try? Okay."* This sentence does not expect a verbal response but rather shows his surprise and involves the audience in the situation. He also often expresses his surprise in an attention-grabbing way, such as in the utterance *"Five hundred thousand for chips?"* which reveals his surprise about the price of the chips without expecting an answer from the audience.

Nex Carlos uses rhetorical utterances to show surprise, disbelief, and to emphasize status or difficulty without expecting an answer. For instance, in the question *"You really have a candidate, huh?"* Nex Carlos expresses his surprise without expecting an answer. He also uses utterances like *"You're the king buying here, huh?"* to emphasize the buyer's status without requiring an answer. Utterances such as *"It's hard, right?"* and *"Am I really supposed to eat plants?"* are used to show difficulty or disbelief without expecting a response from the audience.

Magdalena uses rhetorical utterances to show difficulty, explain habits, challenge the audience, and express concern without expecting an answer. For instance, in the utterance *"Can't do it? It's hard, huh? It's hard,"* she shows difficulty without expecting an answer. She also uses rhetorical questions to explain cooking habits, such as in *"Because back then we cooked near, what was it called? Sound music. So we cooked following, what was it called? Beat. Just used to it."* Additionally, Magdalena challenges the audience with questions like *"So, how about it? Who dares to eat Indomie with two hundred chilies? I dare,"* and expresses her concern with the utterance *"So this Seblak Samyang is very spicy. What will happen to me later?"*

The use of rhetorical utterances by these vloggers serves to attract the audience's attention, emphasize important points, and create strong emotional effects without expecting direct answers. This rhetorical form is considered effective in building audience engagement and making the content more interesting and interactive (Riddick, 2019; Bossens et al., 2022). Rhetorical speech acts offer a new approach in modern communication, especially in the digital era. The use of these speech acts helps speakers achieve their communicative goals more effectively, whether in social media, vlogs, political speeches, or advertisements, by influencing the audience's thinking and feelings without requiring a direct response.

Context of Rhetorical Speech Acts for Communicative Purposes of Vloggers in the Digital Era

In digital content, rhetorical questions are commonly used for several purposes, such as influencing the interlocutor (audience), directing the audience's thinking, emphasizing an important point to the audience, creating a dramatic element, and building audience engagement (Riddick, 2019; Ranganath et al., 2018; Andersen, 2014). These purposes are outlined in the following table.

Table 4. Purposes of Rhetorical Speech Acts

Purpose of Rhetorical Speech Act	Utterance	Analysis of Purpose
Building audience engagement	<i>"So, how about it? Who dares to eat Indomie with two hundred chilies? I dare."</i>	Engages the audience by challenging them, making them feel part of the challenge presented.
	<i>"Can I survive without drinking after eating this Paqui? One chip challenge!"</i>	Invites the audience to think and participate in the challenge, thus increasing their engagement.
Influencing the interlocutor (audience)	<i>"Does Samyang sauce mixed with a burger taste better like KFC yesterday?"</i>	Presents a comparison to influence the audience's opinion about different flavor combinations.
	<i>"Fried chicken with Samyang sauce tastes amazing. Does the burger taste the same?"</i>	Encourages the audience to consider the possibility that the burger with Samyang sauce might be better.
	<i>"Five hundred thousand for chips?"</i>	Expresses surprise to influence the audience's perception of an unreasonable price.
	<i>"Okay... let's get straight to it, I'm really curious about how spicy this Paqui is?"</i>	Engages the audience to share the same curiosity, emphasizes the spiciness of the food, and creates a sense of anticipation.
Emphasizing an important point	<i>"Can't do it? It's hard, huh? It's hard."</i>	Emphasizes the difficulty faced to highlight the challenge.
	<i>"It's hard, right?"</i>	Highlights the difficulty to emphasize the point that the action is indeed hard.
	<i>"So this Seblak Samyang is very spicy. What will happen to me later?"</i>	Underlines the level of spiciness to emphasize the extreme nature of the taste.

Purpose of Rhetorical Speech Act	Utterance	Analysis of Purpose
Creating a dramatic element	<i>"How many chickens have we got? Three? Oh, this is the fifth chicken, guys!"</i>	Uses a rhetorical question to create a dramatic effect about the quantity of food eaten.
	<i>"Wow.. what is this?"</i>	Expresses surprise or confusion to add a dramatic element to the content.
	<i>"Am I really supposed to eat plants?"</i>	Uses confusion to emphasize the absurdity of the situation faced.
	<i>"What is this?"</i>	Expresses confusion to provide a dramatic effect in the content.
	<i>"What? The cameraman wants to try? Okay."</i>	Shows surprise to provide a dramatic element and attract the audience's attention.
	<i>"You really have a candidate, huh?"</i>	Uses a rhetorical question to show disbelief and add drama to the content.
	<i>"You're the king buying here, huh?"</i>	Emphasizes status and ownership to add a dramatic element and attract the audience's attention.

In digital content, rhetorical purposes are often used to achieve various effective communicative effects. One of the main purposes is to build audience engagement. For instance, when a vlogger says, *"So, how about it? Who dares to eat Indomie with two hundred chilies? I dare,"* they directly challenge the audience to participate in the challenge. This makes the audience feel like part of the ongoing activity. Another example is, *"Can I survive without drinking after eating this Paqui? One chip challenge!"* which invites the audience to think and participate in the challenge faced by the vlogger, thereby increasing their engagement and interaction.

Additionally, rhetorical purposes are also used to influence the interlocutor (audience). An example of such an utterance is, *"Does Samyang sauce mixed with a burger taste better like KFC yesterday?"* which conveys a comparison aimed at influencing the audience's opinion about different flavor combinations. Similarly, *"Fried chicken with Samyang sauce tastes amazing. Does the burger taste the same?"* makes the audience consider the possibility that the burger with Samyang sauce might be better. Expressions like, *"Five hundred thousand for chips?"* are used to express surprise and influence the audience's perception of an unreasonable price. Meanwhile, *"Okay... let's get straight to it, I'm really curious about how spicy this Paqui is?"* directs the audience's thinking to share the same curiosity about the spiciness of the food.

Rhetorical speech acts are also frequently used to emphasize an important point. For instance, utterances like, *"Can't do it? It's hard, huh? It's hard,"* emphasize the difficulty faced to highlight the challenge. Statements like, *"It's hard, right?"* highlight the difficulty to emphasize the point that the action is indeed hard. Additionally, expressions like, *"So this Seblak Samyang is very spicy. What will happen to me later?"* underline the level of spiciness to emphasize the extreme nature of the taste faced by the vlogger, helping the audience understand the intensity of the challenge.

Creating a dramatic element is another purpose of rhetorical speech acts in digital content. For example, rhetorical questions like, *"How many chickens have we got? Three? Oh, this is the fifth chicken, guys!"* are used to create a dramatic effect about the quantity of food consumed. Expressions like, *"Wow.. what is this?"* express surprise or confusion to add a dramatic element to the content. Statements like, *"Am I really supposed to eat plants?"* use confusion to emphasize the absurdity of the situation faced. Meanwhile, *"What is this?"* expresses confusion to provide a dramatic effect in the content. Sentences like, *"What? The cameraman wants to try? Okay,"* show surprise to provide a dramatic element and attract the audience's attention. Rhetorical questions like, *"You really have a candidate, huh?"* are used to show disbelief and add drama to the content. Finally, expressions like, *"You're the king buying here, huh?"* emphasize status and ownership to add a dramatic element and attract the audience's attention.

By using these various rhetorical purposes, vloggers can create content that is more engaging, interactive, and

entertaining for their audience (Medina et al., 2023). Rhetorical speech acts allow them to emphasize key points, build deeper engagement, influence opinions, and add dramatic elements that make the content more lively and appealing.

Discussion: Formulation of Theory and Position in Illocutionary Speech Act Theory

Based on studies related to rhetorical speech acts and their comparison with conventional speech acts, it can be formulated that rhetorical speech acts are a form of communication where the speaker uses certain questions or statements not to obtain direct answers, but to influence, direct thinking, or emphasize a point to the interlocutor. In pragmatic studies, rhetorical speech acts are proposed as a special form of illocutionary acts, primarily aimed at creating a specific effect on the listener through shared presuppositions. Shared presuppositions are assumptions or knowledge already considered to be possessed and agreed upon by all parties involved in the communication (Atlas, 2006; Kecskes & Zhang, 2013; Mazarella & Domaneschi, 2018). This form of information may not be explicitly stated in the conversation but is assumed to be understood and accepted by both the speaker and the listener.

Rhetorical speech acts are proposed as a complement and extension of the existing categories of illocutionary acts in Searle's theory. Rhetorical speech acts are types of speech acts aimed at influencing or directing the audience's thinking without requiring a direct response. These speech acts serve to enhance the appeal of communication and are often used in digital communication, such as vlog content, social media, and advertisements. The use of rhetorical speech acts allows speakers to create stronger curious or cognitive effects on the audience through shared presuppositions and are often designed to emphasize an important point or build audience engagement without expecting an explicit response.

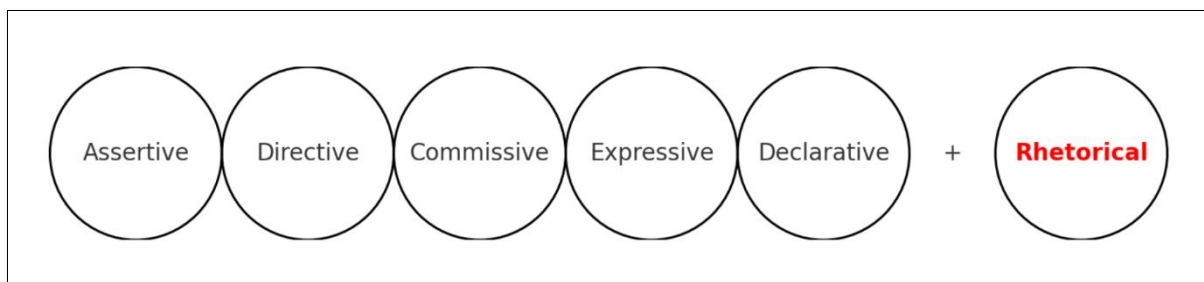


Figure 1: Position of Rhetorical Speech Acts

The position of rhetorical speech acts in illocutionary speech act theory can be seen as a subcategory of the traditional illocutionary acts proposed by Searle (1969). Rhetorical speech acts extend the scope of illocution by focusing on more subtle communicative effects that do not require an explicit response from the audience. In the context of digital communication, rhetorical speech acts are highly relevant because they allow content creators to capture attention, emphasize key points, influence thinking, and build relationships with the audience through creative and effective communication strategies. Rhetorical speech acts help bridge the gap between speakers and listeners in a fast-paced and dynamic digital environment.

Rhetorical questions in the digital era facilitate content creators in delivering messages in a more engaging and effective manner. This strategy helps speakers focus the audience's attention on specific aspects of their message and direct the audience's thinking in line with their communicative goals. In this theoretical formulation, rhetorical speech acts are integrated as part of a broader pragmatic approach to understanding how digital communication evolves and how these communication strategies can be applied to achieve different communicative objectives.

The emergence of rhetorical speech acts shows that illocutionary speech act theory remains dynamic and can develop in line with changes in communication methods in the digital era. The adoption of rhetorical speech acts in illocutionary theory enriches the theory with new dimensions relevant to modern communication and expands the scope of pragmatic applications in linguistic studies. In digital communication, rhetorical speech acts become an effective tool for creating more lively, engaging, and effective interactions between speakers and listeners without being bound by space and time.

Rhetorical speech acts allow speakers to deliver messages in a more flexible and dynamic manner in accordance with the demands and characteristics of communication in the digital era.

The findings of this study demonstrate that rhetorical speech acts add a new dimension to speech act theory, particularly illocutionary theory, within the evolving context of digital communication. Frobenius (2014) highlights the importance of creating an interactional illusion in one-way video formats, while Morales Sánchez & Martín Villarreal (2019) emphasize how rhetorical strategies in digital platforms strengthen audience engagement through cognitive appeal. Building on these insights, this study introduces rhetorical speech acts as a specific subset of illocutionary acts that generate curiosity and direct audience thinking without requiring explicit responses, setting them apart from more conventional rhetorical tools.

This research also underscores that rhetorical speech acts are not simply tools of persuasion but serve a broader function in organizing audience attention in digital communication. For instance, Du Plessis (2013) shows how rhetorical questions attract attention and promote audience engagement on social media. Extending this concept, our findings reveal that rhetorical speech acts in vlogging are particularly effective in eliciting curiosity and drawing the audience into the content, enhancing both message impact and cognitive engagement.

Additionally, this study builds on the concept of shared presuppositions, as introduced by Kecskes & Zhang (2013), who argue that common knowledge is essential for mutual understanding in digital contexts. Here, shared presuppositions allow rhetorical questions to engage the audience without needing explicit explanation, leveraging the vlogger's and audience's mutual familiarity with themes and content genres to deepen audience connection.

Ultimately, these findings suggest that speech act theory, especially illocutionary theory, remains flexible and applicable to modern communication. In digital content creation, such as vlogging, rhetorical speech acts add a valuable layer to existing theory, allowing for more dynamic interactions and enabling content creators to influence audience perception and engagement. This adaptability highlights rhetorical speech acts as a relevant and practical addition to illocutionary theory, which now extends beyond literal responses to encompass cognitive effects that foster audience curiosity and sustained engagement.

Conclusions

The emergence of rhetorical speech acts in digital communication highlights the need for more creative and effective communication strategies to attract and retain audience attention. In an era where content competes for attention in very short spans, rhetorical questions as a form of dramatization become a useful tool for content creators. Rhetorical speech acts help create deeper engagement with the audience, influence their thinking, and emphasize important points without requiring direct responses. These acts become a crucial component in digital interactions, enabling messages to be delivered in an engaging and memorable way.

In the context of pragmatic theory, rhetorical speech acts expand the aspects of illocution. These findings show that communication is not just about conveying information or commands, but also about creating curious and cognitive connections with the audience. Rhetorical speech acts enrich pragmatic theory by providing new dimensions that align with the demands of modern communication. With this adaptation, speech act theory remains relevant and dynamic, reflecting the changes and developments in how humans communicate in the digital era. These findings also pave the way for further research on how communication strategies like rhetorical speech acts can be applied in various digital contexts to achieve different communicative goals.

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that linguistic researchers continue to develop studies on rhetorical speech acts in other various digital communication contexts, such as social media, podcasts, and live streaming platforms. Further research is essential to expand the scope of illocutionary speech act theory by incorporating various evolving forms of digital communication. For content creators, it is encouraged to optimize the use of rhetorical speech acts in their communication strategies. Rhetorical speech acts can enhance audience engagement and interaction, as well as strengthen message delivery.

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