

Acts of Criticism and Support of Netizens in the Discourse on the Palestinian Issue on Indonesian Twitter: A Pragmatics and Critical Discourse Study

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Abstract. This study examines the speech acts of criticism and support of Indonesian netizens on Twitter regarding the Palestinian issue with the study of pragmatics and critical discourse analysis as well as how their political and social beliefs are expressed in their views. The results of this study show the dominance of expressive and directive speech, which is used to express feelings (such as pride, pity, and aggression) and calls to express actions (such as highlighting products related to Israel). The language used is quite rhetorical and emotional, highlighting the company's anti-Zionist, pro-Palestinian and anti-global ideology, to the point of suggesting extreme views. Various discursive strategies, such as religious techniques, metaphors, and euphemisms, are used to mobilize opinion and collectively reinforce identity.

Keywords: Speech Acts, Critical Discourse Analysis, Palestinian Issue, Indonesian Twitter.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, Twitter has developed rapidly as one of the most influential social media platforms for shaping and expressing public opinion. With its core features tweets, retweets, quote tweets, and threads users are enabled to disseminate ideas quickly and broadly. Its real-time and responsive nature has made Twitter a highly active forum for debating social and political issues. According to Mutsvairo and Ragnedda (2019), Twitter plays a significant role in raising political awareness, fostering digital activism, and mobilizing public support. As Papacharissi (2015) notes, it is a “highly participatory and decentralized” medium that allows users to both produce and consume discourse.

In Indonesia, Twitter ranks among the top five most used platforms for expressing opinions, especially in relation to online demonstrations, social movements, and responses to international issues such as the Palestinian crisis. More than 24 million Indonesians actively use Twitter, engaging intensively in discussions on politics, religion, and humanitarian concerns (We Are Social, 2024). This reflects how Twitter functions not only as a channel for online debate but also as a space for expressing emotions and negotiating ideological positions. In the context of the Palestine–Israel conflict, Indonesian netizens have mobilized solidarity through hashtags such as #FreePalestine and #alAqsaUnderAttack, accompanied by calls for boycotts and demands for stronger governmental action (Alamsyah et al., 2023; Prasetyo & Hidayat, 2022).

Nevertheless, public discourse on Twitter is not monolithic. While support for Palestine dominates, other perspectives emerge, including neutral stances, skepticism toward online solidarity movements, and critiques of extreme religious expressions. Sentiment analysis by Hasibuan et al. (2023) highlights polarization among Indonesian netizens, ranging from strong pro-Palestinian positions to more critical or neutral voices. This suggests that conflict is reproduced not only in the physical world but also in the realm of digital discourse, where language becomes a tool for shaping ideology and identity.

From a linguistic perspective, combining speech act theory (Searle, 1969) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008) provides a comprehensive framework to analyze how netizens’ utterances reflect social positions and ideological struggles. Speech acts categorize expressions into directive, expressive, commissive, declarative, and representative, allowing us to examine pragmatic intentions behind online statements. Meanwhile, CDA situates language within broader structures of

power and ideology, uncovering how terms such as “occupation,” “genocide,” or “freedom” function rhetorically to reinforce group identities and mobilize public sentiment. As Van Dijk (2008) argues, language in digital spaces often conveys strong emotions that simultaneously unite in-groups and marginalize out-groups.

Thus, Twitter can be seen as a digital public sphere where linguistic practices are both communicative and political. This study integrates pragmatics and CDA to investigate Indonesian netizens’ speech acts of criticism and support in relation to the Palestinian issue. Specifically, it seeks to (1) describe the forms of speech acts employed by netizens, and (2) examine how ideological positions and socio-political stances are constructed through discourse. By doing so, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how digital communication in Indonesia reflects broader dynamics of power, ideology, and solidarity in global conflicts.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Dominance of Expressive and Directive Speech Acts

The analysis of 30 selected tweets demonstrates that expressive and directive speech acts dominate Indonesian Twitter discourse on the Palestinian issue. Expressive acts frequently convey emotions such as empathy, anger, or pride, while directives primarily take the form of calls for boycott, solidarity, or resistance.

Example: “@indomie this brand is a traitor... boycott Indomie and switch to local brands ID #Palestine”.

This utterance blends expressive acts (anger and disappointment) with directive acts (urging boycott). It employs rhetorical strategies of negative labeling (“traitor”) and symbolic nationalism through the Indonesian flag emoji. Similarly, tweets that mention “jihad,” “solidarity,” or “boikot produk” reveal how directives mobilize collective action.

3.2 Representative Speech Acts and Ideological Narratives

Representative acts often appear as factual or quasi-factual statements framed with ideological implications. These tweets not only present information but also legitimize resistance. Example: “All 537 KFC branches in Turkey have closed... let us follow in Indonesia and Malaysia #Boycott”.

Here, the statement operates as a representative act (presenting a fact) while simultaneously carrying a directive force (encouraging action). Such discourse constructs boycott movements as effective political tools, reinforcing anti-Zionist and anti-corporate ideologies.

Other representative tweets reference BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) campaigns, lending authority and credibility to the discourse by aligning with international activist narratives.

3.3 Commissive and Declarative Acts

Although less dominant, commissive and declarative acts emerge in several tweets. Commissive acts involve personal or collective pledges, such as promises not to consume Israeli-affiliated products.

Example: “I will never buy products that support the occupation.”

Declarative acts appear in comments that redefine the conflict ideologically, such as “Israel is our common enemy, not a matter of religion.” These statements illustrate attempts to reconstruct social and political positions by reframing the conflict as universal resistance against oppression. Such utterances indicate strong ideological positioning, where personal commitments become collective obligations.

3.4 Discursive Strategies

Across these speech acts, netizens employ multiple discursive strategies that amplify ideological and emotional resonance:

3.4.1 Religious rhetoric: Prayers (e.g., “Ya Allah, support the mujahideen”) and calls for jihad frame the conflict within spiritual and moral obligations.

3.4.2 Metaphors and euphemisms: The use of coded language such as “Z10N15” for Zionist or apocalyptic metaphors like “hell gates have opened” intensify emotional engagement while evading censorship.

3.4.3 Visual and multimodal persuasion: Emojis (🇵🇸), videos of Gaza victims, or satirical infographics (e.g., boycott to-do lists) extend the impact of textual discourse.

3.4.4 Labeling and polarization: Negative labels such as “traitors” or “genocidal state” enforce Van Dijk’s (2008) in-group/out-group polarization, constructing a moral binary between oppressed (Palestinians) and oppressors (Israel and its allies).

3.5 Ideological Polarization and Counter-Narratives

While most tweets are pro-Palestinian, some express skepticism or opposition. A minority critique the #FreePalestine narrative as extremist or counterproductive. Others remain neutral, offering factual updates without ideological framing. These counter-narratives reveal that Indonesian Twitter discourse is not monolithic but fragmented and contested. Overall, Twitter functions not only as an outlet for emotional expression but also as a digital ideological battleground. Speech acts are performative, shaping identities, mobilizing action, and reinforcing ideological divisions in global conflicts.

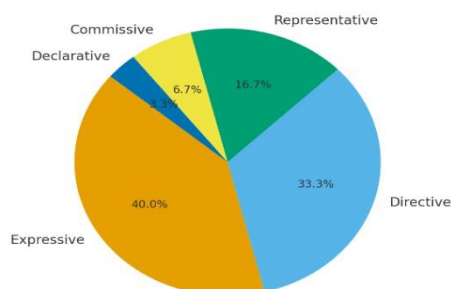
To provide a clearer overview of the overall findings, the distribution of speech acts from the 30 analyzed tweets is summarized in numerical form. As shown in Table 1, expressive and directive speech acts dominate the dataset, followed by representative, commissive, and declarative acts with smaller proportions. This distribution confirms that Indonesian netizens on Twitter mostly engage in emotionally driven expressions and calls for action when discussing the Palestinian issue.

Table 1. Distribution of Speech Acts in Twitter Discourse on the Palestinian Issue.

Speech Act	Count (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Expressive	12	40,0%
Directive	10	33,3%
Representative	5	16,7%
Commissive	2	6,7%
Declarative	1	3,3%

Diagram of Speech Act Distribution This distribution confirms that emotional and action-oriented discourse dominates Indonesian Twitter on the Palestinian issue, while commissive and declarative acts remain marginal but significant in their ideological intensity.

Distribution of Speech Acts in Twitter Discourse on Palestine (n=30)



CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that Indonesian Twitter discourse on the Palestinian issue is predominantly shaped by expressive and directive speech acts, reflecting both emotional engagement and calls for collective action. Expressive acts allow netizens to articulate anger, empathy, and solidarity, while directives translate these emotions into mobilizing practices such as boycotts, solidarity campaigns, and symbolic resistance. Representative acts, though less frequent, contribute to legitimizing ideological narratives and framing political action, while commissive and declarative acts highlight the moral and ideological commitments of users.

This indicates that Twitter functions not only as a platform for information exchange but also as a digital arena for ideological negotiation, where speech acts serve as tools for shaping identity, reinforcing solidarity, and challenging dominant power structures. The prevalence of religious rhetoric, metaphors, euphemisms, and multimodal elements underscores how discourse operates beyond words, embedding emotions and values in collective identity formation.

The study thus answers its research purpose by showing that:

1. Forms of speech acts—especially expressive and directive—dominate and shape the discourse around the Palestinian issue on Indonesian Twitter.
2. Ideological positioning is clearly embedded in discourse, ranging from pro-Palestinian solidarity, anti-Zionism, religious resistance, to counter-narratives that challenge mainstream interpretations.

Recommendations

1. For academics, this research provides insight into how online discourse blends pragmatics and ideology, offering a framework for further studies across different platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok.
2. For policymakers, the findings highlight the importance of promoting digital literacy to prevent the escalation of hate speech while encouraging constructive public debates.
3. For social media users, the study reminds that language has performative power, shaping not only opinions but also social identities and collective actions. Responsible communication is therefore crucial in navigating sensitive global issues.

In conclusion, the Palestinian discourse on Indonesian Twitter exemplifies how language, emotion, and ideology intertwine in digital activism, making speech acts central to the negotiation of solidarity and resistance in the online public sphere.

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