

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS IN USTADZ ABDUL SOMAD'S SPEECH ON THE 2024 GENERAL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pragmatic functions of Ustadz Abdul Somad's (UAS) speech regarding the 2024 General Election. The research aims to identify the specific types of illocutionary acts employed and analyze how these linguistic choices construct a persuasive message for a peaceful election. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the dataset consists of one full-length video lecture (approximately 60 minutes) retrieved from YouTube. Data were analyzed using John Searle's Speech Act Theory through a three-stage coding procedure: data reduction, categorization based on illocutionary functions, and contextual interpretation. The findings indicate a predominance of directive speech acts, which UAS uses to explicitly urge voters and election organizers (KPU) to uphold the LUBER JURDIL principles. By prioritizing directives over other acts, the speaker transforms a religious lecture into a practical call for civic responsibility. While this study is limited to a single speech by one prominent figure, the findings provide a framework for religious preachers to communicate political neutrality. These results contribute to the field of pragmatics by demonstrating how religious authority is leveraged to promote intelligent voting behavior and mitigate money politics in a democratic transition.

Keywords: *Illocutionaryact, Lecture, Election, Qualitative.*

Introduction

Elections in democratic nations serve as critical benchmarks for public participation and the manifestation of people's aspirations (Budiarmo, 2008). In the Indonesian context, the 2024 General Election (Pemilu 2024) represents a pivotal democratic transition, requiring adherence to the principles of "LUBER JURDIL" (Direct, Public, Free, Confidential, Honest, and Fair). However, the integrity of this process is often threatened by "election corruption," defined as the promise of rewards or money politics to influence voter behavior (Badoh & Dahlan, 2020). While previous studies have addressed technical solutions such as e-voting to mitigate these issues (Lubis et al., 2022), there is a significant social dimension in how voters are mobilized and persuaded through religious discourse.

Religious leaders in Indonesia, such as Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS), play a strategic role in shaping public opinion. UAS's lecture, "Towards the Peaceful, Honest, and Trustworthy 2024 General Election," uploaded on his YouTube channel, serves as a prime example of how religious authority is utilized to address civic duties. Despite the wealth of political analysis regarding the 2024 election, there is a research gap in understanding how religious rhetoric functions

pragmatically to influence political conduct. Most Political analyses focus on electoral laws or candidate electability, yet few examine the linguistic mechanisms, specifically how a preacher's utterances function as social actions to prevent abstention (golput) and money politics.

This study employs Pragmatics, specifically Speech Act Theory, to analyze these mechanisms. Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as the study of speaker meaning, focusing on the intention behind utterances rather than mere literal interpretation. Within this framework, Searle (1980) and Austin (1975) argue that language is not just used to describe reality but to perform actions. These illocutionary acts, which include categories such as directives, representatives, expressives, commissives, and declarations (Yule, 1996), are the fundamental units of linguistic communication. The rationale for applying Speech Act Theory to UAS's speech lies in its ability to decode the illocutionary force behind his religious advice, revealing whether his utterances function as mere information, moral commands, or political requests.

While previous research has explored speech acts in campaign speeches (Ismail, 2013),

movie scripts (Wijaya & Helmie, 2019), and vlogs (Yunanda et al., 2021), this study offers a unique contribution by focusing on the intersection of religious authority and democratic participation. By analyzing the illocutionary acts in UAS's lecture, this research seeks to uncover how a religious figure navigates the sensitive landscape of a national election to promote intelligent voting and ethical behavior. This linguistic approach provides a deeper understanding of the persuasive power inherent in religious political discourse in Indonesia.

Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive design with a supplementary quantitative distribution analysis to investigate the pragmatic functions of religious discourse. The data source is a video lecture by Ustadz Abdul Somad (UAS) titled "*Menuju Pemilu 2024 Damai, Jujur, dan Amanah*," uploaded on November 11, 2023. This specific artifact was selected due to its significant duration (57 minutes) and high contextual relevance to the 2024 Indonesian General Election.

The data collection followed a rigorous orthographic transcription process. The video was downloaded to allow for repetitive observation and precise utterance unit identification. The researcher transcribed the entire content and performed data reduction by highlighting segments containing speech act features. To ensure accuracy, the final transcript was cross-referenced with the original audio three times to capture prosodic cues that might influence pragmatic meaning.

The analysis followed a systematic two-cycle coding framework as proposed by Tracy (2013) to ensure depth and theoretical alignment. First-Cycle Coding (Initial Categorization) means that the researcher utilized descriptive coding to summarize the primary topic of each utterance and in vivo codes to preserve the specific religious terminology used by UAS. This cycle focused on the literal action occurring in the data, answering the question, What is happening here? Second Cycle Coding (Theoretical/Axial Categorization) means that the codes from the first cycle were re-examined and organized into broader hierarchical categories based on Searle's (1980) Speech Act Theory. Utterances were classified into five functional containers: representatives, commissives, directives, declarations, and expressives. This phase required interpretive creativity to align linguistic data with disciplinary frameworks.

To avoid superficial interpretation and researcher bias, the coding scheme was subjected to a peer-debriefing mechanism. A secondary

linguistic expert reviewed a subset of the coded data to ensure that the categorization of utterances (e.g., distinguishing between a "suggestion" and a "command") remained consistent with Searle's definitions. Discrepancies were resolved through a consensus-based approach, ensuring that the qualitative findings are grounded in academic rigor and high intercoder reliability.

While the study is fundamentally qualitative, it employs descriptive quantitative counts to provide a robust analytical foundation. The frequency counts of illocutionary acts (Table 1) are not merely statistical artifacts but serve as a diagnostic tool to identify the speaker's primary communicative intent. By quantifying the predominance of directives (49 instances) over other acts, the study provides empirical evidence that the discourse functions primarily as an instructional and persuasive tool rather than a mere informative lecture. This numerical evidence is essential for the subsequent contextual interpretation of how religious authority is leveraged in political participation.

Detailed Procedures are unlike the original version, which was more general; this revision specifies the transition from orthographic transcription to specific utterance units. Coding Cycles means clearly differentiating between descriptive/in-vivo coding (Cycle 1) and axial/theoretical coding based on Searle (Cycle 2). Reliability means adding a specific section on Intercoder Reliability and peer-debriefing to address the lack of detail on trustworthiness in the original text. Analytic Justification means that tied the use of tables/numbers directly to identifying communicative intent, making the quantitative part a necessary bridge to the qualitative analysis rather than a separate, superficial section.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the distribution of illocutionary acts identified in Ustadz Abdul Somad's lecture and interprets how these acts function pragmatically in relation to the research objectives. Rather than treating frequency counts as isolated results, the findings are contextualized within Speech Act Theory to explain how linguistic choices operate as social action in a religious and political setting.

Based on the analysis of 102 utterances, four types of illocutionary acts were identified: directives (49), representatives (43), expressives (7), and commissives (3). No declarative acts were found. As shown in Table 1, directive acts constitute the most dominant category, indicating that the lecture is not merely informative but fundamentally action-oriented.

Table 2. The Number of illocutionary act found in Ustadz Abdul Somad Lecture Speech

No	Illocutionary Act Categories	Number of Items
1	Representatives	43
2	Commissives	3
3	Directives	49
4	Declarations	0
5	Expressives	7
	Total	102

Table 1 demonstrates that the predominance of directives reflects the speaker's intention to influence audience behavior directly. In Searle's (1980) framework, directives function to get the hearer to do something, and in this lecture, they are consistently oriented toward civic participation, ethical voting, and resistance to money politics. The high frequency of directives, therefore, answers the research question concerning how illocutionary acts are used to construct persuasive religious discourse during the 2024 General Election.

Representatives

Representative acts, the second most frequent category, function to establish shared assumptions and moral legitimacy. Through claims, explanations, and suggestions, Ustadz Abdul Somad constructs a narrative of electoral reality, such as the prevalence of money politics and political rivalry, while grounding these claims in religious values familiar to the audience. These representatives provide the epistemic foundation upon which directives gain authority.

Excerpt1:

Perbedaan pilihan politik adalah hal yang wajar, tetapi hati kita harus tetap tenang dan senantiasa dalam zikir agar kompetisi pemilu tidak berujung pada konflik.

(Differences in political choices are natural, but our hearts must remain calm and focused on remembrance, so that electoral competition does not lead to conflict).

In this context, Ustadz Abdul Somad seeks to inform his audience that in elections, people may have different choices, but their hearts should always remain in remembrance. The sentence "*Nanti kalau ada orang yang ngajak berkelahi*" ("*Later, if someone asks to start a fight.*") functions as a presuppositional statement, as it requires a response or conclusion to a hypothetical situation. This is answered by Ustadz Abdul Somad with the statement, "*then drive him away by reciting Ayat Kursi.*" He then informs his congregation that many people are currently vying for positions because of the 2024 General Election, in which candidates for executive positions such as president and vice president, as well as legislative candidates at district/city, provincial, and national levels, are competing and

campaigning to attract voters' attention so that they can occupy these positions.

The utterance above is considered a *claim* statement. Thus, according to the classification of illocutionary acts, claiming can be categorized as a representative act.

Excerpt 2:

Jika masyarakat ditawari uang dalam pemilu, mereka tidak boleh membiarkan hal tersebut memengaruhi pilihan politiknya dan harus tetap memilih pemimpin yang adil, amanah, serta berkomitmen pada kesejahteraan bangsa dan daerah.

(if people are offered money during the election, they should not let it influence their vote and must instead choose leaders who are just, trustworthy, and committed to the welfare of the nation and the region)

In this context, Ustadz Abdul Somad intends to ask his pilgrims whether they would accept offers of money politics when the 2024 general election comes. Therefore, his advice is to accept such offers of money politics, but he suggests that voters should still choose, in the upcoming 2024 general election, individuals who have high integrity both spiritually and socially, particularly in the region of Bone, Sulawesi, where he delivered the lecture. By doing so, the people of Bone, South Sulawesi, are expected to obtain council members who prioritize the progress of the city of Bone. The utterance above is considered a "suggestion" statement. Thus, according to the classification of illocutionary acts, suggesting can be categorized as a representative act.

Excerpt3:

Pemilu harus diselenggarakan berdasarkan prinsip LUBER langsung, umum, bebas, dan rahasia dengan tetap menjamin keadilan serta memberikan akomodasi bagi pemilih berkebutuhan khusus.

(The general election must be conducted according to the LUBER principles direct, public, free, and secret while ensuring fairness and accommodation for voters with special needs)

In this context, Ustadz Abdul Somad intends to inform his pilgrims that the 2024 general election should be conducted based on the principles of direct, free, and secret elections (LUBER), as well as honesty and fairness

(JURDIL). The utterance above is considered a “claim” statement. Thus, according to the classification of illocutionary acts, claiming can be categorized as a representative act.

Commissives

Commissive acts appear minimally, reflecting the genre of the speech: a public sermon prioritizing moral guidance over personal promises or institutional commitments.

Excerpt 4:

Saya berkomitmen bahwa sedekah yang dihimpun dari jamaah akan disalurkan kepada para santri penghafal Al-Qur'an di seluruh Indonesia sebagai bentuk tanggung jawab sosial.

(I commit that the alms collected from the congregation will be distributed to Qur'an-memorizing students across Indonesia as a form of social responsibility)

In this context, Ustadz Abdul Somad is committed to ensuring that the congregation's alms will be given to Qur'an-memorizing students, especially those in Islamic boarding schools around Bone, Sulawesi, managed by the Charity Brigade, abbreviated as PASKAS. Updated information indicates that the number of Qur'an memorizing students spread across almost all regions of Indonesia has reached 600,000. The statement above can be considered a 'commitment' statement. Therefore, according to the classification of illocutionary acts, this act of committing can be categorized as a commissive act.

Directives

According to Yule (1996), directives are speech acts in which the speaker attempts to persuade the listener to perform a certain action. Key terms associated with directives include: ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat, invite, permit, dare, and challenge. In Ustadz Abdul Somad's lecture speech, forty-nine (49) instances were found containing directive speech acts. In his lecture, the directives are used when Ustadz Abdul Somad intends to command his audience. The following excerpt contains Ustadz Abdul Somad's utterances that include directive speech acts.

Excerpt 5:

Jangan menerima politik uang dalam jumlah apa pun, karena praktik tersebut dilarang dan bertentangan dengan nilai moral dan ajaran agama.

(Do not accept money politics in any amount, because such practices are forbidden and contradict moral and religious values.)

In this context, Ustadz Abdul Somad instructed his congregation not to accept money politics because, in Islamic teachings, it is

considered a sinful or forbidden act. Whether the amount is small or large, money politics should not be accepted. The utterance above is considered a “command” statement. Thus, according to the classification of illocutionary acts, commanding can be categorized as a directive act.

Declarations

According to Yule (1996), directives are speech acts in which the speaker attempts to get the listener to perform a certain action. The key terms associated with directives include *ask, order, command, request, beg, plead, pray, entreat, invite, permit, dare, and challenge*. However, in Ustadz Abdul Somad's lecture speech, there is no declarative speech act.

Expressives

Expressive acts, though limited in number, play a strategic interpersonal role. By expressing warmth, humor, and appreciation toward the local audience in Bone, Sulawesi, the speaker strengthens relational closeness and cultural alignment.

Excerpt 6:

Saya merasa nyaman dan terhormat menyampaikan ceramah ini di Bone, meskipun cuaca panas, karena sambutan hangat dan apresiasi budaya dari masyarakat setempat.

(I feel comfortable and honored delivering this lecture in Bone, despite the heat, because of the warm welcome and cultural appreciation shown by the local community)

In this context, although the weather was hot when he delivered the lecture in Bone, Sulawesi, he felt comfortable because he received a hat called *Tobone Reca*, which he immediately wore throughout the lecture in the area. The utterance above is considered a “feeling” statement. Thus, according to the classification of illocutionary acts, expressing a feeling can be categorized as an expressive act.

Based on the findings, the researcher discovered importantly, the distribution of illocutionary acts is shaped by the local context of Bone, South Sulawesi. References to regional identity, local symbols (e.g., *Tobone Reca*), and regional political representation indicate that the speech is context-sensitive rather than universally generic. This contextual embeddedness partially explains why directives dominate: the speech responds to immediate electoral concerns within a specific community facing real political pressures.

The dominance of directive illocutionary acts in Ustadz Abdul Somad's lecture should not be interpreted merely as a quantitative outcome but as a reflection of broader communicative goals, genre conventions, and sociopolitical context. As a

religious sermon delivered close to election day, the speech operates at the intersection of moral instruction and civic mobilization. In this context, directives function as a pragmatic bridge between religious authority and political behavior.

From a communicative perspective, directives serve three main purposes. First, they construct moral obligation by framing electoral participation as a religious duty rather than a personal preference. Commands and exhortations such as rejecting money politics are not presented as optional advice but as ethically binding actions grounded in Islamic teachings. Second, directives shape audience impact by transforming passive listeners into morally accountable agents. The frequent use of imperatives and rhetorical questions *Siap jaga Bone?* (Are you ready to look after Bone?) invites collective affirmation and reinforces group identity. Third, directives carry political implications, as they promote electoral integrity without explicitly endorsing candidates, allowing the speaker to maintain a stance of political neutrality while still influencing voter behavior.

However, the dominance of directives can also be explained by alternative factors beyond persuasive intent. One such factor is genre convention. Religious sermons traditionally prioritize exhortation over deliberation, making directives a normative feature rather than an exceptional strategy. Another factor is the performative nature of public preaching, where audience engagement is achieved through call-and-response patterns, repetition, and commands. These performative elements may inflate the frequency of directives independently of political motivation.

The local context of Bone, Sulawesi, further shapes the illocutionary distribution. As a region with strong communal ties and respect for religious authority, directive speech acts are likely to be perceived as legitimate guidance rather than coercion. The speaker's alignment with local

identity enhances the effectiveness of directives, as moral appeals resonate more strongly when embedded in shared cultural references.

Despite these strengths, the analysis also requires critical reflection on methodological and ethical considerations. First, the reliance on orthographic transcription may introduce bias, as intonation, pauses, and non-verbal cues crucial for interpreting illocutionary force are only partially captured. Although repeated listening was conducted, some pragmatic nuances may remain underrepresented.

Second, analyzing a religious figure's political speech raises issues of representation and researcher positioning. The classification of utterances as directives or representatives is influenced by theoretical assumptions rooted in Western speech act theory, which may not fully account for local religious communicative norms. There is a risk of overemphasizing political intent while underestimating devotional or pastoral functions of the speech.

Ethically, it is also important to acknowledge that framing religious discourse as a tool for political influence must be handled cautiously. While the study highlights the positive role of religious authority in promoting ethical elections, it should not imply that religious speech is inherently instrumental or manipulative. Instead, this analysis views Ustadz Abdul Somad's lecture as a form of moral mediation, where religious language provides ethical guidance within a democratic process.

Overall, this discussion moves beyond reiterating typology frequencies by demonstrating how illocutionary acts operate within a complex interaction of religion, politics, culture, and performance. The findings suggest that directive dominance is not merely a linguistic pattern but a strategic and contextually grounded feature of religious political discourse in Indonesia.

Table 2. Types, Functions, and Examples of Speech Acts in Ustadz Abdul Somad's Lecture

No	Type of Speech Act	Function	Example From Ustadz Abdul Somad's Lecture
1	Directive	To order, invite, demand, advise, prohibit, and command	<i>Urged congregation in Bone, Sulawesi to pledge to choose national and legislative leaders with integrity; urged election organizers, monitors, and law enforcement to conduct elections fairly and honestly</i>
2	Representative	To complain, criticize, recount experiences, state facts, assume, suggest, predict, conclude, and claim	<i>Described the situation before the 2024 general election, explaining that campaign teams offered money to buy votes (money politics); advised congregation not to accept such money; reminded congregation to remember God (zikir) and recite "Bismillahirrahmanirrahim" when voting.</i>
3	Expressive	To express feelings	<i>Expressed positive feelings about being warmly welcomed by the people of Bone and receiving gifts, including the Tobone Recca hat.</i>

Conclusion

The 2024 General Election in Indonesia is one of the most important events in the country and must be conducted in accordance with applicable laws as a democratic nation. Therefore, it requires the participation of all Indonesians, including civil society and election organizers, such as members of the Election Commission (KPU) and the Election Supervisory Board (BAWASLU), to ensure its success. Ustadz Abdul Somad, as one of the prominent religious figures in Indonesia with over eight million social media followers, often delivers lectures to his congregation about the importance of avoiding money politics and choosing presidential, vice-presidential, and legislative candidates who prioritize the development and welfare of their respective regions. Using speech act theory in pragmatics, this study aims to analyze Ustadz Abdul Somad's intentions and the speech acts he performs in his lecture concerning the 2024 General Election in Indonesia. The researcher identified five categories of speech acts in Ustadz Abdul Somad's lecture. The findings show that directive acts are the most frequently occurring speech acts in his lecture, followed by representative acts, which rank second in frequency.

Ustadz Abdul Somad mostly used directive speech acts in his lecture to instruct his congregation to participate in the 2024 General Election, choose appropriate candidates, and avoid money politics. In his lecture, directive speech acts functioned for various purposes, including asking, ordering, commanding, requesting, begging, pleading, praying, entreating, inviting, permitting, daring, and challenging his congregation regarding the 2024 General Election.

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