

## **NDASMU IN PRABOWO SUBIANTO'S POLITICAL SPEECH: AN ANALYSIS OF EXPRESSIVE SPEECH ACT AND NETIZENS' RESPONSES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the expressive speech acts contained in the utterance “ndasmu” delivered by Indonesia’s 8<sup>th</sup> President, Prabowo Subianto, during a political speech at the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gerindra Party. The data were obtained from the video of the speech and comments from netizens on social media platforms. The theoretical framework is based on Searle’s (1979) theory of expressive speech acts, which views such utterances as reflections of the speaker’s psychological state toward a specific situation. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected through documentation and observation, while the analysis involved categorizing netizen responses into positive, negative, and humorous reactions. The findings reveal that the utterance “ndasmu” is a spontaneous emotional expression representing displeasure, which received a variety of responses from the public. These responses demonstrate how expressive speech acts in political communication can trigger broad social reactions and contribute to digital political discourse.

**Keywords:** expressive speech acts, political utterances, public perception, social media

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Language serves as the primary tool of communication in human life, whether in daily conversation, formal writing, or professional discourse (Rahmawati et al., 2025). In the political domain, language holds the power to convey messages, evoke emotions, and influence public perception. One of the most crucial elements in political speeches is word choice. Therefore, selecting the appropriate words is essential in both written and spoken communication (Fizriyani et al., 2023). The chosen words affect not only the

clarity of the intended message but also the overall effectiveness of the communication itself. In this context, the utterances of a political figure can generate diverse reactions from the public. This shows the social and emotional significance of expressive speech acts in public discourse, especially in building connections between speaker and audience (Ahmad & Riadi, 2025). In recent years, the use of emotionally charged language by political figures has become a significant issue in Indonesian political discourse, especially as such expressions increasingly go viral and provoke public

debate on social media. In the same vein, (Karimah, 2023) examined the political communication strategies of candidates Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD on digital platforms, finding that effective use of social media significantly increases engagement and shapes public opinion, particularly among the youth.

A notable example is the statement "ndasmu" made by Prabowo Subianto, the eighth President of Indonesia, during a political speech. This expression, which in Javanese carries a harsh and expressive connotation, garnered significant attention on social media. The utterance sparked public debate not only due to its diction but also because it was perceived to reflect Prabowo's anger in response to a comment stating that "this cabinet is too big, a fat cabinet."

A study by Juwita (2017) revealed that expressive speech acts were employed during the 2014 Indonesian presidential debates to deliver criticism, satire, and other emotional expressions aimed at influencing opponents and audiences. The use of expressive speech acts is crucial in political debates, as it highlights the importance of word choice in conveying meaning and intention. This can also be observed in political speeches where emotional expressions are employed to reinforce political stances or attitudes. Lestari et al., (2020)'s study on speech acts and language style in Indonesian presidential inauguration speeches, found that expressive speech acts were used by several presidents to communicate their emotions and attitudes toward particular situations.

Beyond the linguistic perspective, it is also essential to consider the current digital era, in which political leaders' statements are not only delivered

through speeches or debates but are also rapidly disseminated and processed via social media. Social media functions as a public space for discussion and critique. Public responses to the "ndasmu" utterance have been highly varied, ranging from support and condemnation to humor in the form of memes and parodies. For this reason, it is important to understand how such an utterance can be viewed as an expressive speech act that not only reflects the speaker's emotions but also shapes the dynamics of political discourse on social media. Taufiq & Savitri (2023) investigated Instagram Reels content reviewing culinary experiences in Surabaya, revealing that expressions such as praise and criticism are employed to convey evaluations, reflecting the speaker's emotions and attitudes. Recent studies have also examined how expressive speech acts influence online political discourse and public reactions, particularly on social media platforms (Assidik et al., 2023; Mukminin, et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2025; Sukmawati & Fatmawati, 2023). These findings support the relevance of this study in analyzing how a single utterance can trigger diverse public interpretations.

This study aims to analyze the expressive speech act contained in Prabowo Subianto's utterance "ndasmu" and to examine the various responses it elicited from netizens on social media. The research is expected to provide deeper insights into the relationship between language, emotion, and public reaction in the political context, as well as how social media functions as a space for shaping public discourse. Therefore, analyzing expressive speech acts in political speeches, such as the use of the utterance "ndasmu" by Prabowo

Subianto, requires careful consideration of the social, cultural, and media contexts that influence public perception. Recent studies show that such expressions can have significant impacts on shaping public opinion and societal responses.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Speech act theory is a significant part of pragmatic studies that examines how language is used to perform actions. Searle (1979) in his work *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts*, elaborates on the classification of speech acts into three components: locutionary acts (the literal meaning of utterances), illocutionary acts (the speaker's intention behind the utterance), and perlocutionary acts (the effect produced on the hearer). Among these, illocutionary acts are the most crucial in understanding how speakers convey intended meaning within specific contexts. Searle (1979) further categorizes illocutionary acts into five distinct types: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Assertives represent statements about reality, directives attempt to make the hearer perform an action, commissives commit the speaker to future actions, expressives express the speaker's psychological or emotional state, and declarations change the external reality by the utterance itself.

The focus of this study lies on expressive speech acts, as defined by Searle (1979) which are used to articulate the speaker's emotions or attitudes toward a particular situation. Expressive acts do not necessarily intend to affect external reality but rather serve as outlets for internal psychological states. These expressions

cover a wide range of emotional responses, including thanking, apologizing, congratulating, complaining, praising, and condoling. Specifically, in the context of this research, the utterance "ndasmu" by Prabowo Subianto can be categorized as an expressive speech act, representing annoyance or complaint. Through such utterances, speakers convey their personal psychological responses to situations or statements they encounter. Therefore, the theoretical framework of this research is grounded entirely in Searle's classification of speech acts, with particular emphasis on the expressive category and its relevance to political discourse involving emotional expressions.

## 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method, which is considered appropriate for providing an in-depth description and analysis of linguistic phenomena based on qualitative data without involving numerical data or statistical calculations. The data for this study were obtained from two sources: the primary data consists of a video of Prabowo Subianto's political speech containing the expression "ndasmu," serving as the main material for analysis, while the secondary data comprises responses from netizens in the form of comments collected from social media platforms such as Twitter (X), TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.

The data collection technique used in this study is documentation, involving the preservation of the speech video and the capturing of screenshots of netizen comments that demonstrate various public responses to the utterance. These data were then

analyzed using Searle's (1979) theory of expressive speech acts, focusing on the utterance "ndasmu" as an expression of emotion, with netizen responses categorized into three groups: positive, negative, and humorous. The findings of this study are presented descriptively, supported by direct quotes and screenshots of selected netizen comments, which are grouped based on their type of reaction to illustrate how expressive speech functions in digital political discourse.

## 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Result

In his speech at the 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Gerindra Party on Saturday, February 15, 2025, Prabowo Subianto uttered the Javanese expression "ndasmu," which drew immediate attention and reactions on social media. This utterance, carrying a strong expressive and emotional charge in Javanese culture, triggered diverse public responses. The utterance was delivered as a reaction to criticism from the public, particularly accusations that the cabinet was excessively large. The relevant portion of the speech was:

*"Ada orang-orang pintar bilang kabinet ini kabinet gemuk, terlalu besar... ndasmu!"*

This remark reflects emotional rejection, which is categorized as an expressive speech act conveying anger or annoyance.

The controversial remark "ndasmu" expressed by Prabowo Subianto in his speech constitutes a form of expressive speech act. According to Pratama and Utomo (2020) expressive speech acts function as a medium for conveying the speaker's emotional expression to the

listener, based on a particular context or situation. In this case, Prabowo was responding to a statement referring to the government cabinet as a "*kabinet gemuk*." Delivered in a slightly whispered tone, the expression "ndasmu" a Javanese term literally meaning "your head" and often used with a tone of annoyance-served as a spontaneous emotional outburst by the speaker.

In the context of political speeches, such expressions can also be associated with emotional rhetoric, aimed at fostering a sense of closeness or signaling alignment with a particular stance (Istikoma & Wijayanti, 2019). Moreover, in today's digital communication culture, emotionally charged expressions like this tend to attract public attention, as they are perceived to reflect the authentic or genuine character of public figures (Sukmawati & Fatmawati, 2023)

Although Prabowo did not raise his voice significantly-uttering the word in a low tone that was still clearly audible to the audience-his reaction to the criticism, "*kabinet ini kabinet gemuk, terlalu besar*" was delivered in a mildly mocking tone, reflecting displeasure and rejection of the critique. The subsequent utterance of "ndasmu" further reinforced his discontent, illustrating an expressive speech act that was emotional and direct. Despite often being considered controversial, such forms of expression may serve as rhetorical devices for politicians to assert their stance and character, particularly when conveyed spontaneously in public forums (Pratama & Utomo, 2020). The following section explores how netizens responded to Prabowo Subianto's utterance "ndasmu" across various social media platforms. These responses

are categorized and analyzed based on their expressive content. Observations conducted across several social media platforms such as Twitter (X), TikTok, and Instagram indicate that netizens' responses can be classified into three categories: positive, negative, and humorous. The following are examples of each type of response.

### a. Positive Response

This type of response comes from individuals who support Prabowo and do not take issue with his statement. They regard the utterance as a natural and spontaneous expression within a political context.

#### Quoted Comment:

*"Siapapun presidennya bila sudah resmi dilantik akan kami dukung."*

*(TikTok, username withheld)*



Figure 1. Positive Comment on Twitter

These comments clearly demonstrate support for Prabowo Subianto, both personally and in terms of acceptance toward emotional expressions in political discourse. In the context of expressive speech acts, such comments reflect that a portion of the public does not view the utterance as problematic and remains committed to supporting the leader of the Republic of Indonesia.

### b. Negative Response

Netizens in this category criticize the utterance as inappropriate for a political figure to express, especially in front of a large audience and under media scrutiny.

#### Quoted Comment:

*"Kok ada pemimpin bilang 'ndasmu' yang dijadikan contoh loh ini."*

*(TikTok, username withheld)*



Figure 2. Negative comment on TikTok

These comments indicate that a segment of the public questions the propriety of the statement, particularly because it was delivered by a political figure in a formal event attended by an audience and covered by the media. From the perspective of expressive speech acts, such criticism arises as a reaction to an emotional expression perceived as contextually inappropriate.

### c. Humorous Response

Netizens in this category tend to be considered neutral, as they respond by creating humorous content such as memes or sarcastic comments, which contributed to making the utterance "ndasmu" go viral on the internet.

#### Quoted Comment:

*"Kalo nggak ada 'ndasmu' nggak rame! Biasa aja kali, ekspresi bapak-bapak."*

*(Twitter (X), username withheld)*



Figure 3. Meme on Twitter

These humorous comments and memes demonstrate that in digital society, political expressions can be interpreted flexibly depending on the communicative style of different groups. Humor serves as a tool for fostering closeness- even with political figures-and reinforces netizens' participatory culture in public discourse without necessarily revealing rigid ideological positions.

#### 4.2. Discussion

A study by Sapridianto (2024) found that in the 2024 presidential debate, there were 220 instances of expressive speech acts, such as expressions of gratitude, criticism, sarcasm, and anger. This finding indicates that expressive speech acts are used to build emotional connections with the audience and influence public perceptions of the candidates. Previously, Herfani and Manaf (2020), in her study on the 2019 presidential and vice-presidential debates, identified speaking strategies that include positive politeness small talk, negative politeness small talk, speaking without small talk, and ambiguous speech. These strategies reflect the candidates' efforts to convey messages persuasively while maintaining their public image.

According to Fairclough (1997 as cited in Supriyadi, (2018), critical discourse analysis focuses on discourse structures that shape, confirm, legitimize, reproduce, or challenge power relations and domination in society. This approach aids in revealing the hidden ideology and power within political texts. Furthermore, research by Putri (2015) demonstrated that political communication in the form of rhetoric, speeches, and political message delivery can be observed through various inherent aspects of political communication. Each aspect plays a distinct role in shaping public

perception of the candidates.

One prominent example of an expressive speech act is although consisting of a single word, Prabowo Subianto's utterance "ndasmu" carries significant emotional and rhetorical weight. From a linguistic perspective, the word holds strong connotative meaning and was used within a communicative situation marked by psychological tension. The diction "ndasmu", which in Javanese literally means "your head," is commonly employed in contexts of anger or rejection, often conveying tones of belittlement, sarcasm, or mockery.

Despite being delivered in a relatively soft, whispered tone, the manner of delivery actually signifies high emotional control and serves as an even sharper form of satire. This aligns with the notion that speech acts can manifest either explicitly or implicitly, depending on the speaker's communicative strategy (Masruri et al., 2023).

Persuasively, this word choice represents a condensed form of a longer, emotionally charged sentence, such as "your statement is irrational" or "your criticism is unfounded." It illustrates the speaker's intentional use of brief yet meaningful language to reject the criticism expressed. This linguistic style reveals a direct and unfiltered character, which-within political discourse-may signify closeness to the public, but at the same time may pose risks in terms of communication ethics.

The public response to the utterance "ndasmu" extended beyond mere commentary. Social media amplified the dissemination of the phrase through parody videos, memes, and short clips that went viral on platforms such as TikTok, Twitter (X), and Instagram. This phenomenon demonstrates that social media not only serves as a medium for response but also as a space for the

reiteration and reinterpretation of meaning, thereby enriching public understanding of expressive speech acts. This dynamic is closely related to the filter bubble phenomenon, which causes individuals to be exposed primarily to content that aligns with their existing views, reinforcing polarization and shaping reactions to political discourse (Safitri et al., 2024)

According to Supriyadi, (2018) social media operates on the logic of virality and algorithms, which facilitate the transformation of political expressions into elements of popular culture. This helps explain why the utterance "ndasmu" garnered reactions that can be broadly categorized into three types-positive, negative, and humorous-while continuing to spark widespread discussion over an extended period. Netizens engaged not only with the content of the utterance itself but also with the manner of its delivery and the political charisma of the speaker.

This can be understood as part of digital political culture, in which content such as memes circulates within echo chambers that reinforce the ideological identities of specific groups. As AlAfnan (2025) notes, "memes tend to circulate within political echo chambers, which enhance engagement within ideologically aligned groups while limiting exposure to opposing views." In this context, humorous responses to the "ndasmu" utterance function not merely as entertainment but also as a form of political affirmation within the social media ecosystem. Some users even adopted the phrase as a symbol of courage or as a satirical critique of the current political landscape. Thus, "ndasmu" has transcended its role as a mere expressive speech act; it has become a political symbol, a marker of

identity, and even a commodity in the digital sphere. As discussed in *Budaya Populer di Era Sosial Media*, social media has transformed popular culture by enabling political content to become part of broader digital trends that shape public perception and collective identity.

The expression "ndasmu" serves as an entry point for discussing the boundaries between personal expression and ethical standards in public communication. In the political sphere, the courage to express spontaneous emotions is often perceived by supporters as a form of authenticity; however, it may also raise concerns about a leader's professionalism and role-model behavior. Therefore, the use of expressive speech acts in politics cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts of the audience. According to research by (Assidik et al., 2023), expressive speech acts in political communication on social media reflect the emotional dynamics and public perceptions of political issues, which are shaped by social and cultural contexts.

This phenomenon illustrates that today's society does not merely assess the content of political speeches but also evaluates the style of delivery and the accompanying emotional expressions. The divided public reactions-ranging from support, threats, to humorous responses-demonstrate that the meaning of an utterance heavily depends on shared social understandings constructed through social interaction, particularly on social media platforms. (Mukminin, at.al, 2024) found that netizens' responses to expressive speech acts by political figures on social media are highly diverse, spanning from support to sharp

criticism. This indicates that the interpretation of political utterances is strongly influenced by public perceptions and the social values embraced by the community.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study finds that the utterance "ndasmu," delivered by Prabowo Subianto during a political speech, serves as a powerful example of an expressive speech act that conveys strong emotional rejection and dissatisfaction. Although consisting of only a single, colloquial word, "ndasmu" carries rhetorical weight and sparked wide-ranging responses from the public on social media. Based on the analysis of expressive speech acts, the responses from netizens can be understood as emotional reactions reflecting psychological attitudes toward the utterance. Supportive comments express agreement and solidarity with the speaker's emotion, negative comments show rejection or discomfort with the choice of words in a political setting, while humorous comments demonstrate how expressive speech acts are often reinterpreted creatively in online communities.

The analysis shows that the meaning and impact of a political utterance are negotiated and amplified by public reactions through social media dynamics, transforming spontaneous expressions into viral political discourse. Future research is encouraged to explore other expressive speech acts by political figures, particularly regarding their influence on public trust and political identity in the digital era.

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