

The Complexity of Contextual Meaning in Political Texts on X

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Abstract This study investigates the complexity of contextual meaning in political texts posted by public figures on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). Grounded in Halliday and Hasan's theory of situational context and Searle's speech act theory, the research analyzes how political utterances function through locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The data, drawn from tweets during the 2024 Indonesian presidential election period, were collected using documentation and structured observation methods. The findings indicate that political texts on X are highly layered, combining explicit facts with implicit criticism, ideological stance, and persuasive strategies. Through representative, expressive, and directive speech acts, public figures construct meaning that influences public perception, evokes emotional responses, and fosters political alignment. This study contributes to the understanding of digital political discourse by highlighting how pragmatic strategies shape the interpretation of meaning in online political communication.

Keywords: Complexity, Contextual Meaning, Political Communication, X Platform

I. Introduction

Background

It is undeniable that the development of the digital world has penetrated all areas of life. Today, it seems that almost no aspect of human life is unaffected by digitalization. However, many internet users are only able to receive information without the ability to understand and process it properly, so many people are still exposed to false information. The public must be aware of using digital ethics as a guide when using digital media.

Specifically, the content on X is very different from other social media applications, making it unique with its own characteristics. This is because X only contains short tweets or sentences, unlike other social media platforms which tend to be more similar to each other. There are many reasons why people use X, such as sharing thoughts, showing off, attracting attention, self-promotion, or simply to kill boredom. However, most people use X for recreational purposes. X provides an opportunity for anyone to shout to the world and have fun with a few people who read their tweets.

In addition, the increasing number of public figures using X shows that it is the best medium for disseminating information and interacting with fans in two-way communication. Unlike other social media applications, X can sometimes be the first source of information, especially regarding celebrity news. X provides a lot of real and up-to-date information. Compared to other apps, trending news reaches the public faster thanks to the trending feature. X also presents many informative accounts that provide very useful posts.

Widodo (2017) conducted a study titled 'Hate Speech against Public Officials on Social Media: A Pragmatic Study with a Gender Approach'. His research found that markers of

politeness in hate speech were indicated by news intonation. It showed that both men and women used direct and indirect speech acts when expressing hate speech against public officials on social media. However, Widodo did not specifically analyze the opposite side — how public officials or public figures themselves convey their speech on social media, especially on X. Therefore, it is interesting to conduct a study on the utterances of public figures on social media, particularly on X.

Research Problem

In relation to the background above, the research question is formulated as follows:

How the complexity of contextual meaning is represented in political texts on X?

Research Objective

This study aims to examine and describe the complexity of contextual meaning found in political texts published on the X social media platform. Through this analysis, it is expected to reveal how explicit and implicit meanings are constructed and understood in the context of digital political communication by public figures.

2. Research Methods

Theoretical Foundation

This research uses two main theories: the situational context theory from Halliday & Hasan and the speech act theory from John Searle. These two theories complement each other in analyzing how contextual meaning in political texts is formed and functions in social media communication.

Situational Context Theory – Halliday & Hasan

Halliday and Hasan (1976) introduced the concept of register or situational context, including field, tenor and mode.

Field refers to what is being discussed in a text or utterance. In this research, field relates to political issues raised in tweets on X, such as campaigns, policy criticism, or support for certain figures. Tenor refers to who is involved in the communication and the social relationships between them. Here, tenor explains the relationship between public figures (as speakers) and their followers or the public (as receivers), including roles, attitudes, and social positions. Mode refers to the form and channel of communication used. In this research, the mode is short written communication based on digital media on X, which has informal, interactive, and highly contextual characteristics.

Speech Act Theory – John Searle

John Searle (1979) developed the speech act theory, which explains that speech not only conveys information but also performs actions. Speech acts are classified into three main types: Locutionary refers to saying something with certain structure and literal meaning. Illocutionary act refers to doing something through speech, such as ordering, criticizing, suggesting, or praising.

Perlocutionary act refers to the effect caused by the utterance to the listener, such as convincing, scaring, or persuading.

Data Collection Methods

To answer the research problem, data were collected through two main methods:

- Documentation Method
This method was used to examine the contextual meaning of tweets by public figures on the X platform. All data were collected and recorded, then categorized according to themes relevant to the research focus.
- Observation Method
After being obtained through documentation, the selected tweets were further observed using structured observation method by Bungin (2005: 144–145). This observation was conducted systematically using a standard checklist instrument. The main focus of this method is to analyze the textual and contextual meanings of the tweets.

Data Analysis Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach as explained by Bungin (2015: 83). The data were analyzed using content analysis techniques to deeply explore the structure of the texts and interpret the contextual meanings contained in the tweets of public figures. This process allows the researcher to understand the relationship between the content of the text and the digital communication context in a more holistic way.

3. Results And Discussion

Locutionary Acts

Data NP01 (7 Desember 2023)

Ganjar & Mahfud katanya Anti Politik Dinasti tapi publikasi anak2 di banyak media. Calon sj mulai cenderung Politik Dinasti. Saya org tua besarkan sendiri Anak2 & seusai SMU kuliah di USA & Jepang tapi Sy tdk mau seperti mereka 2 walau anak2ku juara SMU PL Jkt & lebih Genius.

There are several components of locutionary analysis in this text. The following is an explanation of each part:

"Ganjar & Mahfud katanya Anti Politik Dinasti tapi publikasi anak2 di banyak media."

This sentence makes the claim that Ganjar and Mahfud are figures who oppose dynastic politics. However, in the next clause, Natalius Pigai presents a contradictory fact — he states that their children frequently appear in the media. This contrast creates two opposing propositions: their political claim versus the reality of their children's public exposure. It gives the impression that the facts contradict their stated stance. This marks a strong example of a locutionary act, as it explicitly and descriptively presents existing facts and contradictions to the reader.

"Calon sj mulai cenderung Politik Dinasti."

The writer, Natalius Pigai, expresses the view that the candidate in question is beginning to show tendencies toward dynastic politics. The function of this locutionary act is to inform the audience of an opinion or assessment of the political situation in the form of a factual observation.

"Saya org tua besarkan sendiri Anak2 & seusai SMU kuliah di USA & Jepang tapi Sy tdk mau seperti mereka 2 walau anak2ku juara SMU PL Jkt & lebih Genius."

In this part of the text, Pigai claims that he raised his children independently and adds information about their academic achievements. He also explicitly compares himself to Ganjar and Mahfud, reaffirming his children's accomplishments. Here, Pigai attempts to provide factual information and personal comparisons between himself and Ganjar–Mahfud, which is further emphasized through the accompanying image in the post.

From a locutionary perspective, this text is structured as a propositional representation consisting of factual claims — including quotations from political elites, observations of socio-political conditions, and personal data. Each sentence contains literal, measurable, and explicit statements. This locutionary structure provides a solid foundation for forming criticism and moral evaluation at the illocutionary level, while also demonstrating Pigai's strategic attempt to establish his ideological stance factually in front of social media audiences.

Table 1 Locutionary Acts of Data [NP-01]

Element	Locutionary Description
Type of Speech Act	Assertive – The text presents facts, evaluations, and personal claims regarding the phenomenon of dynastic politics, and compares it with the speaker's own personal experience.
Form of Utterance	Declarative – The sentences take the form of informative and evaluative statements. There are no imperative or interrogative forms. The speaker provides information and expresses personal stance in a narrative format.
Structure	Narrative-Comparative and Evaluative – The text begins by raising the issue of dynastic politics, followed by evaluations and assessments, and then compares the speaker and his children with Ganjar & Mahfud as a contrasting set of values.
Referential Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ganjar & Mahfud: Politicians associated with the issue of dynastic politics. - The children of Ganjar & Mahfud (implicitly): Referenced through the phenomenon of their media exposure. - The speaker and his children: Presented as specific points of comparison.
Literal Meaning	- Illustrates the inconsistency of Ganjar & Mahfud, who claim to oppose dynastic politics while publicly showcasing their children.

Data NP02 (October 19, 2023)

Org yg tersenyum dari penentuan Wapres PDIP itu Muhaimin Iskandar darah biru NU. Mahfud tidak dianggap NU oleh kultural jg Struktural. Sy tahu lebih dari 26 thn. Kita akan lihat membludaknya suara NU ke Anies & Muhaimin. Tapi Pak Prabowo menang di Putaran ke 2 setelah vs Amin

From a locutionary perspective, this text presents a sequence of propositions that can be broken down as follows:

- Identification of key figures and the advantage gained
The speaker, Natalius Pigai, conveys that the nomination of the vice-presidential candidate (cawapres) by PDIP has benefited Muhaimin Iskandar. The reason for this advantage is explained through Muhaimin's genealogical status as “blue blood of NU,” a phrase that literally refers to him as a descendant or significant figure within the Nahdlatul Ulama community.

- Claim regarding Mahfud MD's status within NU
Explicitly, the speaker asserts that Mahfud MD is not acknowledged as part of NU, neither culturally (in terms of tradition and social identity) nor structurally (within the official organization). This is an evaluative statement presented as informative, characterizing it as a locutionary speech act.
- Claim of personal knowledge authority
Pigai reinforces his authority and personal experience by stating, "I've known this for more than 26 years," positioning himself as a credible source and legitimizing the preceding claims.
- Prediction
Pigai also makes a predictive proposition, suggesting that support from NU constituents will surge for the Anies–Muhaimin ticket. This is a forward-looking statement that reflects a projection about future electoral dynamics. He further predicts that Prabowo will eventually win in the second round, defeating the Anies–Muhaimin (Amin) pair.

The analysis of this data aligns with Searle's (1969) characterization of locutionary acts as involving factual, evaluative, and predictive propositions. Additionally, the text contains referential elements linked to key figures and institutions (Muhaimin Iskandar, Mahfud MD, NU, PDIP, Anies, and Prabowo). Notably, the narrative structure unfolds through a cause-and-effect logic. Although the tone is formally neutral, the content is laden with opinions and forecasts.

Clearly, the text consists of a series of declarative statements that informatively explain the implications of PDIP's vice-presidential selection on the political dynamics of NU, the positions of major figures, and anticipated outcomes of the 2024 election. These are delivered as factual assertions, which are characteristic of representative speech acts in the locutionary mode.

Table 2 Locutionary Acts of Data [NP-02]

Aspect	Locutionary Description
Type of Speech Act	Representative (Assertive) – The speaker conveys claims, predictions, and evaluations regarding the political impact of PDIP's vice-presidential nomination, the direction of NU voters, and forecasts of the presidential election outcome in a descriptive and evaluative manner.
Form of Utterance	Declarative – The entire text consists of factual and predictive statements containing personal claims, political analysis, and electoral forecasts. There are no interrogative or imperative sentences.
Discourse Structure	Predictive-Analytical Narrative – The text begins by identifying the beneficiary of the nomination, proceeds with an assessment of NU affiliation status, asserts personal experience, predicts NU voter behavior, and ends with a projected winner of the presidential election as part of a logical sequence.
Referential Elements	- Muhaimin Iskandar: Referred to as "blue blood of NU."

Literal Meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communicates that PDIP's vice-presidential nomination benefits Muhaimin. - Mahfud is considered not part of NU. - The speaker claims long-standing knowledge of NU. - Predicts NU support will go to Anies–Muhaimin. - Prabowo is ultimately predicted to win.
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Data NS02 (12 December 2023)

Ganjar Pranowo mengutip data dari ICW soal kerugian negara akibat korupsi. Bagaimana faktanya?

Konten Visual:-

Kata: "Data ICW menunjukkan sekitar (Rp)230-an triliun dalam 10 tahun terakhir kerugian yang terjadi. Apakah akan dibiarkan? Tidak, ini harus diubah."

Fakta: "Kerugian negara yang timbul dari kasus korupsi dari tahun 2013-2022 adalah sebesar Rp 236,4 Triliun."

In line with Searle's (1969) theory, a locutionary act refers to the act of saying something with a grammatically correct structure and a propositional meaning stated plainly, focusing strictly on what is said — not the speaker's intention (illocution) or its effect on the listener (perlocution).

In the text presented by Najwa Shihab, the locutionary analysis can be explained as follows:

"Ganjar Pranowo mengutip data dari ICW soal kerugian negara akibat korupsi."

This sentence, from a locutionary perspective, factually asserts that Ganjar cited data from ICW about state losses caused by corruption. The function of the locutionary act here is to provide descriptive and literal information.

"Bagaimana faktanya?"

This is an explicit interrogative sentence. Najwa Shihab is questioning the validity or accuracy of the data quoted by Ganjar. The purpose is purely to inquire about the facts and to prompt clarification or verification.

"Data ICW menunjukkan sekitar (Rp)230-an triliun dalam 10 tahun terakhir kerugian yang terjadi. Apakah akan dibiarkan? Tidak, ini harus diubah."

In this part, the speaker presents the estimated loss figure as a fact sourced from ICW.

"Apakah akan dibiarkan?" is a literal question regarding the potential consequences of allowing corruption to persist.

"Tidak, ini harus diubah." is a direct rejection and a prescriptive statement expressing the need for reform.

"Kerugian negara yang timbul dari kasus korupsi dari tahun 2013-2022 adalah sebesar Rp 236,4 Triliun."

In this final part, Najwa Shihab presents a factual figure as a form of verification or clarification of the data cited by Ganjar. She affirms this by using an official numerical source from media reports or data-based references.

All portions of the text are composed of factual reporting and numerical data — characteristics of a representative speech act, as described in Searle's (1969) theory. No metaphors or implicit meanings are present in the text, as all meanings are conveyed explicitly and transparently.

Table 3 Locutionary Acts of Data [NS-02]

Aspect	Locutionary Description
Type of Speech Act	Representative (Assertive) – Conveys data, quotations, and factual information regarding state losses due to corruption.
Form of Utterance	Declarative–Informative – The majority of the text consists of informational and data-based statements from both the public figure (Ganjar Pranowo) and factual data cited from ICW and other sources.
Discourse Structure	Descriptive–Argumentative – The text begins with a description of Ganjar's activity citing ICW data, followed by the presentation of visual data, and is then reinforced with official figures to establish an argumentative foundation. The structure flows from claim → data → fact verification.
Referential Elements	- Ganjar Pranowo: The actor who delivers the data citation.
Literal Meaning	- Provides information that Ganjar cited corruption-related state losses amounting to approximately Rp 230 trillion. - Encourages reflection through the rhetorical question "Should this be allowed to continue?" - Presents a comparative figure / official verification that the actual loss from 2013–2022 was Rp 236.4 trillion.

Illocutionary Acts

Criticism

Data KS01 (October 28, 2023)

Dari tim diinfokan yg TIDAK BOLEH dibahas: Wadas, U-20, dan keluarga. MAKA SAYA TIDAK BAHAS. 2. Nyenggol2 pihak lain tidak boleh? Koq bit soal "Mas Gibran nyebrang2 malah ditayangkan? Sementara roastingan terhadap beliau malah dicut? Aneh tapi nyata lah kalian yg sotoy ini

"Dari tim diinfokan yg TIDAK BOLEH dibahas: Wadas, U-20, dan keluarga. MAKA SAYA TIDAK BAHAS."

This utterance explicitly conveys a representative meaning, in which the speaker, Kiky Saputri, states a fact (i.e., that the team imposed a restriction) and expresses compliance by declaring that she will not discuss the restricted topics. This is conveyed emphatically through the use of capital letters. However, the complexity of the utterance lies in its implicit illocutionary force, combining expressive and directive speech acts. Kiky subtly expresses disagreement or veiled protest against the prohibition. Although she states compliance, she also simultaneously mocks the restriction, suggesting it is unreasonable. The use of capital letters further reinforces this critical undertone.

“Nyenggol2 pihak lain tidak boleh?”

In this part of the text, Kiky presents a rhetorical interrogative that appears, on the surface, to be a question. However, its implicit meaning is expressive — a form of veiled criticism. Kiky is conveying her judgment of the unfairness of the restriction in a sarcastic tone. This utterance is not aimed at seeking actual information but at challenging the policy imposed by “the team.”

“Koq bit soal ‘Mas Gibran nyebrang2’ malah ditayangkan? Sementara roastingan terhadap beliau malah dicut?”

These two sentences constitute an illocutionary act in the form of rhetorical questions that demand clarity regarding perceived bias. They also perform a request for explanation or clarification. The complexity of the meaning lies in the implicit expressive-evaluative force — a critique of the selective censorship of topics. Kiky Saputri implies that a certain public figure, Gibran (implicitly linked to Ganjar Pranowo), is being protected — an unfair advantage if rules were to be applied equally. Through this statement, Kiky conveys her critical evaluation of the apparent bias in media content, implying that preferential treatment is given to Gibran Pranowo to benefit his public image.

“Aneh tapi nyata lah kalian yg sotoy ini.”

Explicitly, this utterance represents an expressive speech act in which Kiky Saputri conveys her emotional evaluation directly to the audience or the targeted group — in this case, the team associated with Ganjar Pranowo.

Implicitly, this utterance also reflects a representative speech act with an ideological dimension, in which Kiky positions herself as someone aware of the public irony surrounding the injustice perpetrated by a “supporting team.” She frames the audience as victims of manipulation or even as participants in a system that reinforces this bias.

Table 4 Illocutionary Description Data [KS-01]

Aspect	Illocutionary Description
Linguistic Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Two-part structure: The first part expresses compliance; the second part conveys protest. This contrast builds a rhetorical effect. - Use of rhetorical questions: For example, “Is it not allowed to poke fun at others?” serves to express indirect protest. - Use of sarcastic diction: Terms like “sotoy” (“self-proclaimed smart”) and “strange but true” reflect negative emotional judgments without directly naming any authority. - Direct mention of “Mas Gibran” in a satirical tone indicates a personal but contextually bound critique.
Target Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media users (especially X) familiar with national political dynamics. - Netizens who follow issues related to censorship, media bias, and favoritism in public broadcasts. - Critical groups opposing Gibran and elite actors suspected of protecting his public image.

Main Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To criticize media inconsistency in content filtering. - To encourage the audience to think critically and question the presence of selective censorship or bias, especially behind the construction of political images.
Types of Speech Acts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Representative: Conveys factual claims about topic restrictions. - Commissive: Expresses a commitment not to discuss the forbidden topics. - Expressive: Displays disappointment, sarcasm, and emotional critique. - Implicit Directive: Encourages the audience to become aware of the irony and injustice implied.
Pragmatic Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reveals that the media or organizers uphold double standards and exhibit bias, particularly toward certain political figures. - Builds emotional solidarity between the speaker and the audience, especially those disillusioned with the system. - Frames the readers as those who ought to be aware and responsive, particularly through the sarcastic jab “you self-proclaimed smart ones.”

In this data, there is a complex layer of contextual meaning, as seen in the explicit meaning conveyed through a representative speech act, wherein Kiky states a fact (i.e., that the team imposed a restriction) and expresses compliance by declaring that she will not discuss the prohibited topics. However, at a deeper level, the utterance also contains implicit illocutionary acts, specifically of expressive and directive types. These are evident in how Kiky Saputri subtly conveys disagreement or veiled protest against the restriction. Although she explicitly declares compliance, she simultaneously mocks or critiques the limitation as being unreasonable.

Self-Presentation

Data NP01 (December 7, 2023)

Ganjar & Mahfud katanya Anti Politik Dinasti tapi publikasi anak2 di banyak media. Calon sj mulai cenderung Politik Dinasti. Saya org tua besarkan sendiri Anak2 & seusai SMU kuliah di USA & Jepang tapi Sy tdk mau seperti mereka 2 walau anak2ku juara SMU PL Jkt & lebih Genius.

The above text contains several illocutionary dimensions related to self-image construction, as analyzed below:

Moral Superiority and Independence Claim:

"Saya org tua besarkan sendiri Anak2 & seusai SMU kuliah di USA & Jepang"

Through this statement, Natalius Pigai seeks to present himself as a parent who succeeded through his own efforts. He projects an image of personal integrity by emphasizing that he does not use his children for political gain. Here, the speaker constructs a self-image of moral and social success grounded in independence and ethical conduct.

Moral Contrast with Ganjar & Mahfud:

"tapi Sy tdk mau seperti mereka 2 walau anak2ku juara SMU PL Jkt & lebih Genius."

In this sentence, Pigai explicitly rejects following in the footsteps of Ganjar and Mahfud, particularly in regard to the earlier reference to publicizing their children in the media. He further contrasts the accomplishments of his own children — whom he claims to be more outstanding — yet emphasizes that he does not exploit them for political branding. The main objective of Pigai's statement is to establish his moral standing as superior to that of political elites. He implicitly invites the public to recognize his higher ethical position by distancing himself from the practice of dynastic politics.

Specifically, Pigai emphasizes his stance through the statement "Saya tidak mau seperti mereka" which underscores his personal moral clarity. He further reinforces a self-image of dignified humility in the phrase "anak2ku juara... lebih Genius". It can be concluded that in this utterance, Natalius Pigai actively constructs an image of himself as a honest, dignified individual who stands firmly against dynastic politics.

Table 5 Illocutionary Description Data [NP-01]

Aspect	Illocutionary Description
Linguistic Strategy	Claiming children's achievements; asserting refusal to engage in dynastic politics.
Target Audience	Social media users; anti-dynastic politics groups.
Main Purpose	To enhance self-image and present oneself as a cleaner, more honest, and morally upright figure.
Types of Speech Acts	- Expressive (explicit) – conveys disappointment and criticism toward the inconsistency of political elites. - Directive (implicit) – persuades readers to question the sincerity of the mentioned political figures while aligning with the speaker's ideal moral stance.
Pragmatic Effect	Reinforces the moral distinction between the speaker and the political elites being criticized.

Perlocutionary Acts

Raising Public Awareness

Data [KS-01]

Dari tim diinfokan yg TIDAK BOLEH dibahas: Wadas, U-20, dan keluarga. MAKA SAYA TIDAK BAHAS. 2. Nyenggol2 pihak lain tidak boleh? Koq bit soal "Mas Gibran nyebrang2 malah ditayangkan? Sementara roastingan terhadap beliau malah dicut? Aneh tapi nyata lah kalian yg sotoy ini

According to John Searle's speech act theory, a perlocutionary act refers to the effect an utterance has on the listener or audience, whether it results in changes in attitude, thought, behavior, or emotion. In the context of this text, the perlocutionary function aims to stimulate the public's critical awareness of injustice or political bias. Specifically, several layers of perlocutionary effects are present in this text that serve to raise audience awareness:

- Raising Awareness of Opinion Control and Censorship in Public Discourse

The initial sentence, which states that topics such as "Wadas, U-20, dan keluarga" are off-limits, suggests that public discourse is being regulated. The perlocutionary effect here is to prompt the audience to realize that even in seemingly open forums, certain themes are considered taboo and are deliberately hidden, censored, or controlled. This effect may lead the public or readers to suspect that the supposed openness is, in fact, illusory.

- Raising Awareness of Unequal Treatment in Public Criticism
By highlighting that the "bit soal Mas Gibran" was aired while the "roastingan terhadap beliau malah dicut" Kiky Saputri appears to alert the audience that not all parties are treated equally or fairly when it comes to public criticism. The perlocutionary impact is to instill awareness of inequality, particularly within the power structure, where certain figures are granted preferential treatment when they should instead be legitimate subjects of criticism.
- Provoking Emotions of Dissatisfaction and Skepticism Toward Authority
Through rhetorical questions and sarcastic expressions such as "aneh tapi nyata lah kalian yg sotoy ini" Kiky does more than present facts; she seeks to provoke discomfort, cynicism, and even anger among specific segments of the audience toward certain individuals or the broader system. This perlocutionary act aims to generate emotional dissatisfaction by prompting the audience to question and critique perceived injustices or systemic bias.

4. Conclusion

The contextual meaning of political texts on X is complex. Tweets by public figures contain multiple layers of meaning through locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The surface statements often carry deeper intentions such as persuasion, criticism, or ideological positioning. These acts influence how audiences understand political messages, shaping public perception emotionally and ideologically.

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