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Positive Politeness Strategies on Billboards for Legislative Candidates in Banyumas Regency in 2024

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Abstract

This study examines positive politeness strategies in commissive speech acts on billboards of legislative candidates in the Banyumas Regency in 2024. Prospective legislative candidates use this billboard to capture votes in their constituencies. Campaign billboards often contain political promises as a form of commissive speech acts. This study aims to fill the gap in previous research that has not examined commissive speech acts in the context of campaign billboards, emphasizing a pragmatic approach to understanding how language functions in political communication. All the data were in the form of text from 210 billboards photographed along Banyumas protocol roads, and 30 of them contained positive politeness. The data were analyzed based on positive politeness strategies according to Brown and Levinson's theory. The results showed that legislative candidates used eight positive politeness strategies to express commissive speech acts. Those strategies are giving promises, giving reasons, being optimistic, being concerned about the hearer's wants, making jokes, using group identity markers, giving gifts to the hearer, and using exaggeration. These strategies help convey campaign messages clearly and attract the attention of potential voters. This research contributes to understanding the use of language strategies in the context of political campaigns and proposes further research to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in winning voters' votes. The findings are expected to provide practical benefits for legislative candidates and enrich the study of pragmatics in the political context.

Keywords: *campaign billboards; commissive speech acts; legislative candidates; positive politeness; pragmatics*

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Introduction

To be elected as legislative members, people need to convince their constituents to vote for them. Candidates have taken various methods to convince their constituents. These methods are usually carried out by promising various good things if the candidate is successfully elected as a member of the legislature, for example, exemption from

education costs, provision of free lunches, exemption from health care costs, a more prosperous life, increased employment opportunities, and a better economy. These good things were conveyed by candidates in their campaigns, and these were realized in the speeches they delivered to potential voters. Utterances used by a speaker to promise something in the future time is classified as commissive speech acts (Searle, 1979). These words are conveyed in such a way that they can attract potential voters. These methods then become the candidates' strategies for gaining votes.

Despite extensive research on these speech act categories (Ashfiya & Degaf, 2023; Azizah & Suhardi, 2020), significant gaps still exist in our understanding of how commissive speech acts function in specific contexts, especially in political communication. The practical meaning of these speech acts, especially during election campaigns, requires further investigation. For example, the effectiveness of promises made by political candidates on their billboards may be influenced by the social context and the perception of the seriousness of the promises. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the use of commissive speech acts in election billboards and by focusing on the positive politeness strategies used by candidates to approach potential voters. Examining these strategies will provide a deeper understanding of the role of language in shaping political discourse and its impact on voter behavior.

In 2024, Indonesia held general elections to elect the President and Vice President, members of the People's Representative Council, and members of the Regional Representative Council. It will be held directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, honestly, and fairly. The end of 2023 is the right time for candidates to begin pursuing opportunities to become members of legislative councils. It is not a strange sight if we easily find photos of prospective candidates plastered on the roadside with candidate numbers, party names, party flags (party icons), imagery, and sweet promises offered to prospective voters.

The billboards are meant to grasp public attention and make the prospective voters choose the candidate. To obtain it, the candidates need a strategy. One strategy is by using politeness strategy. Politeness is a universal language feature that can be found in almost every language. Some linguists have postulated politeness theory from time to time. Brown and Levinson focused on the concept of face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The face is conceptualized as an individual's positive claim of social values in socializing contact (Goffman, 1955; Mulyana & Qomariana, 2023).

The texts commonly found on the billboards for legislative candidates in Banyumas Regency in 2024 are promises as the candidate makes a commitment to future action. Promise is a part of commissive speech acts. Commissives are illocutionary acts meant to force the speaker to perform future actions (Searle, 1979). In addition, it conveys the speakers' intention to take action, and it includes vows, promises, rejections, and threats (Huang, 2015).

Commissive speech acts have been examined using data derived from film conversations, commercials, legislative debates, presidential speeches, and translations. Research on women's commissive speech acts has been conducted (Ashfiya & Degaf, 2023). They noted that commissive speech acts highlight the significant impact on social context as they strongly correlate with the social context in which they occur, and people from varying social classes may use various etiquette and language techniques. Commissive speech acts also have been analyzed by using data from the movie. The kinds of commissive speech acts employed in particular settings and how listeners or interlocutors interpret them are largely determined by social norms (Azizah & Suhardi, 2020). Utterances used in commissive speech acts are usually literal and direct as they will enable the hearer to catch the speaker's intention (Supri & Rahmatiany, 2021).

There are several researches about political billboards. For example, an article entitled Persuasive Languages on political billboard of the 2024 Indonesian General

Election in Padang City West Sumatra, Indonesia, focuses on the 2024 Indonesian General Election in Padang, examining how linguistic landscapes (like local languages and stylistic choices) on political billboards serve to connect with diverse communities. The study explores how language is structured to introduce candidates, convey primary messages, and add supplementary information through strategic politeness and deixis (Farhan et al., 2024). In addition, an article entitled Language of Political Campaign: Unraveling the Linguistic Landscape in Billboard Advertisements examines billboard language in Kupang, particularly how legislative candidates employ linguistic strategies that incorporate local dialects alongside standard Indonesian. The study reveals a strong focus on emotional appeal and cultural identity to resonate with voters, reinforcing political messages through phrases that reflect local values and identities (Benu et al., 2024).

Several researches have been conducted. However, no research has focused specifically on commissive speech acts using billboard data for legislative candidates. Thus, this study aims to fill the existing research gap. Based on the previously described research background, this research investigates the strategy of commissive speech acts on the billboards for legislative candidates in Banyumas Regency in 2024, employing positive politeness.

Methodology

This study concentrates on positive politeness strategies used in expressing commissive speech acts on the billboards for legislative candidates in the Banyumas Regency in 2024. Thus, it falls under the category of pragmatic study. It also is qualitative and descriptive in nature. Creswell (2013) noted that while describing a phenomenon being studied, qualitative investigations frequently employ words or images. As a result, this study also offered a qualitative explanation for a linguistic phenomenon on billboards for legislative candidates by considering the environment or context. The data of this study consists of text found on billboards of prospective legislative members that can be easily found along protocol roads in Banyumas Regency.

One of the utterances analyzed in the study is "*udah saatnya kita pilih yang wanita, berkarakter, amanah & peduli*." First, it translated into English. Then, researchers analyzed the text units. The text was analyzed by using Brown and Levinson's positive politeness theory so researchers could categorize the strategy used in the sentence. If it were needed, other elements except text would be analyzed to support the message in text.

The data was taken by photographing the campaign boards of prospective council members in the Banyumas Regency. The data for this research were 210 billboards for legislative candidates in Banyumas Regency in 2024. Out of 210 billboards, 30 use positive politeness. Once the data were collected, the researchers classified the text types into Searle's positive politeness strategies. The next step is data reduction. The data on positive politeness strategies that are used repeatedly will be reduced so that there is no data saturation. This data is then elaborated in terms of its lingual or text units.

The results of the analysis are then displayed by explaining the text as well as the theoretical foundation that is complemented by previous research. This is intended to obtain comprehensive analysis results by filling in the gap in the previous study.

Results and Discussion

Brown and Levinson (1987) state that appealing to common ground in communication is a massive strategy for positive politeness as it tries to calculate partners' needs and wants to indicate camaraderie, such as camaraderie of attitude, interest, goal, knowledge, and in-group membership.

We found eight positive politeness strategies used in expressing commissive speech acts on 30 billboards for legislative candidates in the Banyumas Regency in 2024. Those strategies are giving promises, giving reasons, being optimistic, being concerned

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about the hearers' wants, making jokes, using group identity markers, giving gifts, and using exaggeration.

Table 1 shows the positive politeness strategies used on the billboards for legislative candidates in the Banyumas Regency in 2024.

Table 1. Positive Politeness Strategy on Legislative Billboards Candidates

Positive Politeness Strategy	Text	English Translation
Giving promises	*PSI menang, BPJS gratis*	PSI wins, BPJS is free
Giving reasons	*Udah saatnya kita pilih yang wanita, berkarakter, amanah & peduli*	It's time for us to choose a woman, with character, trust & care
Being optimistic	*Yang baru, siap kerja*	Newbie, ready to work
Concerning to hearers' wants	*Bekerja untuk kesejahteraan masyarakat yang lebih baik*	Working for better community welfare
Making a joke	*Calege subur, rakyate makmur*	Prosperous Candidates, Prosperous People
Using in group identity marker	*Dukung Palestina merdeka karena penjajahan di atas dunia harus dihapuskan*	Support independent Palestine because colonialism in the world must be abolished
Giving gifts	*Berpengalaman luas, jujur, sederhana, dan merakyat*	Widely experienced, honest, simple, and popular
Using exaggeration	*Orang yang paling ikhlas untuk rakyat Indonesia itu Prabowo*	The sincerest person for the Indonesian people is Prabowo

1. Giving Promises

Giving promises strategy is a persuasive technique commonly used in political billboards. An example of this can be seen in a billboard from the PSI party, which effectively employs this strategy to resonate with the public.



Figure 1. PSI Party Billboard Using Give Promises Strategy

The utterance *"PSI menang, BPJS gratis"* which can be literally translated into 'PSI wins, BPJS free' is an example of a giving promise strategy. Indonesia Solidarity Party (PSI) promised that if they win the election, they will free BPJS contributions for all Indonesian people. BPJS, or the Social Security Administration Agency, is a special institution tasked with organizing social security programs for the health and employment of all Indonesian people. By waiving BPJS fees, PSI has promised something to its prospective voters. BPJS contributions for some people are considered burdensome because they still lack the ability to cover their living needs (Linardi, 2022). Therefore, freeing BPJS contributions for all Indonesian people is one of the promises that will attract prospective voters.

This utterance is categorized as positive politeness because it uses polite language, and there are no elements that lead or attack other parties. Instead, it focuses on the benefits that will be provided if PSI wins. Speech that contains a promise to free BPJS (*Badan Penyelenggara Jaminan Sosial*, or translated as

Social Security Agency for Health) contributions cannot be categorized as speech that attacks other parties. This speech actually contains positive things in the form of free BPJS contributions if the conditions are met, namely PSI's victory. This is in line with the statement of Adhari & Sesmiyati (2022) that positive politeness strategies are designed to reduce conflict during communication. It is also categorized into the giving promise strategy because the sentence gives positive expectations. In using a promising strategy, the speaker may promise to the hearer that they will receive something (Son & Afriana, 2023). In this case, the promise is that PSI will strive to make BPJS free if they succeed in winning the election. Although the word "promise" is not directly mentioned, the message conveyed by the sentence effectively functions as a promise offered to people. The illocution of promise can be inferred from the meaning of the utterance that a beneficial thing will be given if a certain condition is fulfilled.

The strategy of giving promises aims to provide positive expectations. This aligns with the statement of Wiyanto et al. (2023) that the promise shows the good intentions of the speaker and satisfies the positive face of the hearer. By promising a free BPJS fee, the poster tries to attract sympathy and support from people who need BPJS services or support welfare policies. It also shows concern for people's welfare and a commitment to providing benefits that are directly felt by the community.

2. Giving Reasons

Giving reasons strategy is a technique employed in political billboards to provide voters with a clear rationale behind campaign promises. An example can be observed in a billboard from the Golkar party.



Figure 2. Golkar Party Billboard Using Give Reasons Strategy

The utterance "*udah saatnya kita pilih yang wanita, berkarakter, amanah & peduli*" is classified giving reason. This utterance is translated into 'It's time for us to choose a woman, with character, trust & care'. According to (Nurmawati et al., 2019), giving reason refers to hearers' reflexivity or when the speaker asks or gives an explanation of something that the hearer wants to know. In this context, the utterance offers compelling reasons for voters to select female candidates. The reasons given are that the female candidates are considered to have good character, be trustworthy, and be caring. By giving these reasons, the billboard indirectly encourages people to consider their choices more seriously. By presenting these reasons, the billboard not only informs but also encourages voters to reflect more seriously on their choices. The percentage of 30% for women to sit as council members has not been fully realized, so this can be a great opportunity for women who want to participate in the contest as council members (Umagapi, 2020).

The strategy of giving reasons serves to align the audience's decisions with the speaker's intentions, effectively guiding them toward supporting female candidates. This method highlights specific qualities that voters should consider, thereby enhancing their understanding of the candidate's character. Son & Afriana (2023) state that the audience tends to agree with the speaker for a plausible reason. Consequently, this billboard fosters a more favorable perception of female candidates, prompting readers to view them as

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viable options in the electoral process. By emphasizing the importance of selecting candidates who embody these positive traits, the utterance reinforces the role of women in leadership and encourages a shift in voter attitudes.

3. Being Optimistic

Being optimistic is one of the approaches in political billboards, often used to inspire hope and positivity among voters. Gerindra party billboard illustrates this strategy to appeal to public aspirations.



Figure 3. Gerindra Party Billboard Using Be Optimistic Strategy

The utterance "*yang baru, siap kerja*" or 'Newbie, ready to work' is classified as being an optimistic strategy. The utterance inspires the belief that the new person has new enthusiasm and energy for work. It contains positive words, such as "*yang baru*" and "*siap kerja*", which create an optimistic impression. The word "*yang baru*" (the newbie) suggests something fresh and with potential, while "*siap kerja*" (ready to work) emphasizes readiness and enthusiasm for work. This is in line with the statement of Dewi & Ayomi (2023) that this strategy is used by the speaker to maintain positive thinking and confidence. The words imply a belief in the potential of the new person or new idea to bring about positive change. It reflects an optimistic attitude that the candidate has new energy and enthusiasm that can bring about positive change.

The use of optimistic strategies serves to allay fears. Optimistic strategies can help allay fears or concerns among people. The hearer tends to trust the speaker because they perceive the speaker's dedication, leading to the listener's willingness to cooperate (Son & Afriana, 2023). Optimistic messages can provide confidence that the future can be better and that the new person has the potential to make a meaningful contribution.

4. Concerning the Hearer's Wants

Political billboards often use concern to hearer's wants strategy to show empathy and attentiveness to voters' needs. This technique is exemplified by the PDIP party billboard, which aligns its messaging with the desires and priorities of the public.



Figure 4. PDIP Party Billboard Using Concern to Hearer's Wants Strategy

The sentence "*bekerja untuk kesejahteraan masyarakat yang lebih baik*" which literally translates into 'working for better community welfare' is grouped into concerns to the hearer's wants strategy. According to Rayani et al. (2023), the concern to the hearer's wishes strategy takes place when the speaker knows the hearer's personal information that reflects their understanding of the listener's needs and desires. In this case, the utterance shows attention to the reader's wants and needs in terms of welfare. Readers, in general, have a desire to live in a better and more prosperous society. By highlighting the efforts to achieve this goal, the utterance directly responds to the reader's wants and needs, thus increasing the sense of relevance and interest.

The use of concern for the hearer's wants strategy serves to establish an emotional connection with the prospective voters. By paying attention to their wishes, the billboard can build an emotional connection with the reader. Son & Afriana (2023) also state that by emphasizing the fact that the speaker is

familiar with the hearer's information, the speaker conveys solidarity.

5. Making a Joke

Making a joke strategy is sometimes found in political billboards to create a connection with the audience. Nasdem party billboard demonstrates this approach, using humor to engage and resonate with potential voters.



Figure 5. PSI Party Billboard Using Jokes Strategy

The utterance "*calege subur, rakyate makmur*" employs positive politeness through a joke. The utterance can be freely translated into 'Prosperous candidates, prosperous people'. According to Wahdani et al. (2023), jokes are effective when there's shared knowledge and values between the speaker (S) and the listener (H). In this instance, the joke capitalizes on the shared understanding that the term "*subur*" (fertile or prosperous) is not solely reserved for describing soil conditions but can also humorously denote a person's physical condition. The phrase "*calege subur*" humorously describes someone who is physically fat or large. By using this wordplay, the candidate is humorously acknowledging her own physical attributes, particularly her large body, as depicted in the poster.

The use of jokes in legislative election billboards serves to reduce tension. This is in accordance with Wahdani et al. (2023) statement that the function of using jokes strategy is to make the audience comfortable. Addas (2022) also highlighted that jokes or humor are very effective in delivering messages and entertaining participants in communication.

6. Using in Group Identity Markers

The use of in group identity markers strategy is one of the methods in political advertising that fosters a sense of unity and shared identity. A billboard from the Perindo party uses this approach, appealing to the public by emphasizing group affiliation.



Figure 6. Billboard of Legislative Candidate Using Group Identity Markers Strategy

The utterance "*Dukung Palestina merdeka karena penjajahan di atas dunia harus dihapuskan*" which can be translated into 'support independent Palestine because colonialism in the world must be abolished' belongs to the strategy of using group identity. In the utterance, the candidate expressed support for Palestine, which implicitly identifies himself as part of a group that supports Palestine. This shows a similarity or affiliation with certain groups that have the same views or goals. This is in accordance with the statement of Muhtadi et al. (2022) that using group identity strategy shows membership where the speakers have similarities with the listeners. In addition, Indonesia is a country that supports peace in Palestine, so Indonesia condemns all forms of colonialism there (Hannase, 2020).

The use of group identity strategy to show partiality is effective, as most Indonesian people support Palestine. This is related to the function of group identity strategy, where each group has its own identity marker that shows a sense of membership or belonging to a particular group (Rayani et al., 2023). By using this strategy, the candidate wants to tell the

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audience his affiliation with groups that support Palestine.

7. Giving Gifts

Giving gifts strategy is a technique where political billboards offer tangible or symbolic benefits to voters. This approach is evident in a PDIP party billboard, which employs the promise of beneficial outcomes to attract public interest.



Figure 7. PDIP Party Billboard Using Give Gifts Strategy

The utterance "*Berpengalaman luas, jujur, sederhana, dan merakyat*" or 'widely experienced, honest, simple, and popular' is a realization of the giving gifts strategy. This strategy is realized when the speaker gives sympathy or expresses words that make the hearers feel that they are liked, cared for, and so on (Yolanda & Bram, 2022). In this case, the gift given is compliments. The statement emphasizes the positive qualities of the candidate, such as a person who is experienced, honest, modest, and humble. By highlighting these qualities, the billboard aims to improve the image of the candidate from prospective voters' perspectives.

The giving gifts strategy functions to build a positive image. According to Wahdani et al. (2023), this strategy creates an atmosphere of mutual understanding and empathy. The candidate assumes that people want leaders who have certain qualities. By letting them know that the candidate is qualified, he tries to understand and respect the people. This makes the candidate's image better.

8. Using Exaggeration

Using exaggeration strategy is a persuasive technique in political billboards, often used to heighten the appeal of campaign promises. The following picture of the party billboard provides a clear example, employing amplified language to capture public attention and support.



Figure 8. Party Billboard Using Exaggeration Strategy

The utterance "*Orang yang paling ikhlas untuk rakyat Indonesia itu Prabowo*" or 'The sincerest person for the Indonesian people is Prabowo' is categorized as an exaggeration strategy. According to Son & Afriana (2023), an exaggerating strategy is often executed by emphasizing intonation, stressing, and other prosodic aspects alongside intensifying modifiers, all aimed at magnifying the significance of the statement. In this utterance, the strategy shows absolute and exaggerated language to assert Prabowo's sincerity. The use of the word *paling* or "most" implies a high level of sincerity attributed solely to Prabowo, thereby exaggerating his qualities.

The exaggerating strategy serves to attract prospective voters' attention by showing positive qualities. According to Bintangtricahya et al. (2023), this strategy helps to gain voters' interest, making the candidate noticeable and memorable. By creating the impression that the candidate possesses superior qualities, the billboard aims to improve the candidate's image and reputation. This strategy is used to make things seem more important than they should be so that they catch voters' interest.

Conclusion

The research on positive politeness strategies on billboards for prospective legislative members in Banyumas Regency in 2024 is one of the pragmatic researches that focus on the ways or strategies used by legislative candidates to win seats in the local government. This study investigates the strategy of commissive speech acts on the billboards for legislative candidates in Banyumas Regency in 2024, employing positive politeness, and reveals that the billboards in Banyumas Regency used eight positive politeness strategies to realize their campaign promises. Those strategies are giving promise, giving reason, being optimistic, being concerned about hearers' wants, making jokes, using group identity markers, giving gifts, and using exaggeration. All the strategies used in the billboard prioritize profits for potential voters. This is in accordance with the characteristics of a positive politeness strategy that focuses on maintaining the positive face of the hearers or prospective voters. This study contributes to the field of pragmatic studies by providing a detailed analysis of positive politeness strategies. In addition to identifying eight different strategies, it also shows how these strategies are tailored to prioritize the interests of potential voters.

However, this study is limited by its geographical scope and only focuses on billboards from the 2024 legislative campaign, which may not reflect strategies used in other regions and media. Therefore, we suggest further researchers dig deeper into the effectiveness of this positive politeness strategy in winning the fight in the regional election arena (Bajpai & Sáez, 2022). One way to measure the effectiveness of this politeness strategy is to look at the success of the strategy to attract the votes of potential voters. The high voter vote is an indicator of the success of one of the strategies. Measuring the effectiveness of this politeness strategy is important because the more effective a strategy is, the more promising the results. Effective strategies can be used to reduce the campaign costs of legislative candidates so that they can allocate funds to other, more urgent interests.

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