

A Pragmatics Analysis of Positive Comments on TikTok Trend “30 Days English Speaking Challenge”

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Abstract

Purpose : The study aims to identify the type of speech acts found in positive comments on the TikTok trend “30 Days English speaking Challenge” and to explore the contextual function of these speech acts in the comments section.

Methodology : This study used a descriptive qualitative approach. The data in this study were collected using purposive sampling by selecting positive English comments from the video trends in TikTok account @alelcripta uploaded from July to August 2025. The comments were chosen based on relevance to the content of the challenge videos and their suitability for the research focus in terms of speech acts. The data were analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) which consist of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The technique used included documentation by taking screenshots of comments and analyzed according to Searle’s (1979) classification of speech acts – assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Then the data analyzed in greater depth to represent the functions or meanings behind the types of speech acts.

Results : This study shows there are five types of speech acts identified, except for declarative speech acts. A total of 145 positive comments were found, with the details : assertive (30), directive (37), commissive (7), and expressive (71).

Applications/Originality/Value : This study has the potential to highlight the role of positive feedback in building self-confidence and motivation to learn, especially for English learners in online communities, as well as enriching the creation of a supportive and constructive environment on social media.

Introduction Section

In recent years, TikTok has gained significant attention from the Indonesian public. Like other social media platforms, TikTok is also used as a means of entertainment, communication, obtaining information, and even self-expression. According to the online news CNN Indonesia (2020), citing data from Sensor Tower, 11% of the total 63.3 million downloads on iOS and Android came from Indonesia. In August 2020, Indonesia was named the country with the highest number of TikTok app downloads. One of the most popular phenomena on TikTok right now is a series of challenge videos created within a specific time period and uploaded sequentially with timestamps such as “Day 1,” “Day 2,” and so on, according to the target days set by the trend creator. This content usually involves establishing new routines or developing new skills, such as cooking and knitting, healthy lifestyles through running, or learning to speak different languages, for instance, “30 Days English Speaking Challenge.” Although it is not yet perfect in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and other aspects, the tremendous support and positive appreciation in the comments section, compared to negative responses, has attracted various groups of people, from students, doctors, and employees to content creators, to participate in the speaking challenge trend and upload their videos to their TikTok accounts.

The contribution of the platform users in responding to this trend aims to improve English speaking skills through constructive feedback. Argyris et al. (2021) shows that positive emotions among audiences in online interactions can be triggered by certain forms of linguistic actions. This is in line with the high level of support and appreciation in the comments section of English-speaking challenge videos on TikTok. Furthermore, Wang et al. (2023) show in his study that multilevel speaking engagement patterns among users in online comment sections significantly involve word choice, argument structure, and linguistic imitation. In addition, the spread of this video trend is influenced by TikTok's algorithm, particularly the For Your Page (FYP) feature, which makes it easier for content to reach a wider audience beyond the creator's followers. This is reinforced by a study conducted by Loupessis & Intahchomphoo (2025), which reveals that the platform's algorithm creates a culture of participation in comments and encourages interaction between users.

Exploring the positive expression function found in the comment section of English challenge videos by applying speech act theory is convenient and fascinating to study. Austin (1962) considered utterances to be performative acts where language goes beyond description to perform functions. Drawing from the work of Austin (1962), Searle (1979) classified

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speech acts into five different types : assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. Searle's taxonomy makes it easier to analyze the different types of comments on TikTok—especially those that offer compliments, encouragement, and expressions of solidarity, in order to clarify their underlying aims and the interactive order they constitute. For this reason, the speech acts theory enables scholars to go beyond the mere phonetic level of analysis and appreciate the motivational, appreciative, or inspirational acts that TikTok users perform through their utterances. This is supported by a study by Schoppa (2025), who argues that in digital spaces, expressive and directive speech acts tend to emerge that are more natural and unplanned, as well as performative, in order to build social connections by applying meta-illocutionary expressions such as praise, encouragement, admiration, and congratulations. These patterns align closely with the kinds of supportive comments frequently found in the “30 Days English Speaking Challenge.”

Social and cultural factors reinforce the need for digital platforms for informal language learning. Most Indonesians feel anxious when speaking English in public because they are afraid of making grammatical mistakes and mispronouncing words. However, with the development of technology, learning media for improving speaking English has become more varied and creative. One example is its application on the social media platform TikTok as a means of learning, practicing, and developing English speaking skills through a short video trend challenge of speaking English in 30 days. Not only a platform used for entertainment and gossip, English challenges on TikTok also play a role in attracting platform users to participate in these challenges, which are marked by interactions between users in the comments section. The large number of positive comments in the comments section increases motivation and confidence for language learners. This is in line with a study conducted by Duha et al. (2025) which shows that authentic interaction, direct feedback, and high levels of student engagement can significantly improve language learning outcomes on social media platforms. These aspects explain why TikTok challenges can motivate users to practice speaking English with more confidence.

The topic of speech acts has been widely discussed and raised in previous studies. Amalia et al. (2022) covers the topic about speech acts in cooking tutorial videos. Meanwhile, specifically research on TikTok comments can be found in a study by Andrea and Fatmawati (2023) they identify the comment section with applied directive speech act in @Kompas TV. Meanwhile, Megarizki and Prayitno (2024) focus on the TikTok comment section of @resep_debm used expressive acts. Beyond TikTok, there are a study focus on the use expressive speech acts, Darmawan (2024) analyzed netizens comments on President Biden's X post and Fadillah et al. (2024) analyzed comments in Instagram that aims to explore relevance between these comments into the student moral values.

In addition, Yoga and Roselani (2024) investigated comments on @Gemmacorrell'S and conveyed strategic ways in communications to reflect social support and mental health. Moreover, Makh sunah et al. (2024) explored a study of expressive speech acts in Nessie Judge's YouTube comments section. Several additional pieces of literature reinforce studies on the form and function of speech acts in the digital realm. For example, a study conducted by Hågemark and Gärdenfors (2025) raises the topic of the cognitive framework of speech acts. ALSaqr and Mahzari (2025) describes expressive speech acts in Arabic Instagram comments as expressions of praise. Rahmayanti et al. (2025) in her study shows that in building closeness with the audience, various pragmatic strategies are applied by Indonesian YouTubers. Meanwhile, Amezcua et al. (2025) as well as Supriyadi and Makatita (2025) focus on their study related to communication patterns, tone, and sentiment about health issues and QRIS adoption in the comments section on TikTok.

Based on previous research discussions, many studies have provided insights and descriptions of the use of various types of speech acts in diverse contexts and media, such as TikTok, X, Instagram, and YouTube. This illustrates the importance of speech acts in reflecting social attitudes in the digital space. Similar to previous studies, this study also discusses the topic of speech acts and applied Searle's classifications. However, few studies have focused specifically on *positive* speech acts, particularly within educational TikTok trends. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in previous research in the field of pragmatics, particularly in the scope of speech acts that focus on positive expressions and comments at educational content on social media. The study focuses on identifying the use of speech acts, specifically in positive comments on the TikTok trend “30 Days English Speaking Challenge,” and to explore the contextual meaning of these speech acts.

Focusing on positive expressions, this study certainly has the potential to contribute both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study contributes to expanding research in the field of pragmatics, particularly language actions that focus on positive speech in digital media, which is still rarely discussed. Meanwhile, practically this study contributes to educators, content creators, and digital literacy practitioners. For educators, this study can be applied to build online learning interactions by including constructive feedback to foster student motivation and confidence. For content creators, this study can be used for communities to advance communication strategies that encourage inclusive, supportive, and motivating participation. For digital literacy practitioners, this study can be used to develop training modules in social media based on empathetic communication, positive reinforcement, and responsible interaction norms.

Theoretical Review

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics study that focuses on the meaning that arises in the context of language use. This field of study does not only examine the literal meaning of words in a statement, but also delves into the actual meaning conveyed by the speaker and how that meaning is understood by the listener. Yule (1996) states that listeners are free to interpret the meaning conveyed by the speaker's words. The purpose of communication and various social situations can determine how

a statement is understood. This is in line with the science of pragmatics according to Leech (2016) which states that pragmatics studies meanings related to conversational situations. The use of language in everyday life, when observed from a pragmatic perspective, has a broad scope. Levinson (1983) categorizes this pragmatic scope into several central areas, including deixis, presupposition, implicature, speech acts, conversational structure, and politeness. Deixis relates to words whose meaning depends on context, such as “here,” “that,” or “now.” Presupposition refers to assumptions contained in a statement in order for it to be understood, while implicature explains implied meanings that are not stated directly, as explained by Grice (1975) in his cooperative principle. In addition, pragmatic studies also discuss how speakers regulate turn-taking and maintain politeness in social interactions, as explained by Brown and Levinson (1987).

Speech acts are one of the fields of pragmatics. Austin was the first to introduce speech act theory through the book *“How to Do Things with Words”* (1962) and divided speech acts into three levels, namely locutionary acts (the act of saying something with a specific meaning), illocutionary acts (the purpose or intention of the utterance), and perlocutionary acts (the effect of the utterance on the listener). The concept of illocutionary was then expanded to become a core part of speech acts in Searle’s theory (1969) and Searle (1979) divided speech acts into five types.

Assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative are classifications of speech acts developed by Searle’s (1979). Each type has a variety of meanings or functions. First, assertive speech acts, which describe actions used to state something, express beliefs or opinions about something, such as the comment *“I’m also join English speaking challenge.”* The second type is directive speech acts, which aim to get someone to do something, such as *“Let’s learn English together,”* which serves as encouragement. The third type is commissive speech acts, which are statements used to provide assurances, offers related to something, or promises, for example, *“I will follow your way.”* Then, the fourth type of expressive speech acts, which are used to express feelings such as appreciation, praise, congratulations, or gratitude, for example, *“I really appreciate your consistency, congratulations on your progress.”* The last type is declarative speech acts, which are statements used to declare changes in social reality through speech, for example, in a wedding, the priest says, *“You are now officially husband and wife,”* so that statement changes a person’s marital status from single to married. However, such statements can only be made by people who have special authority in certain contexts, such as priests, referees, judges, and so on. Therefore, this type of speech act is rarely found in comments on social media.

In addition to the classical theories above, in the context of digital discourse, studies on pragmatics have undergone developments. Changes in the way humans interact through social media have triggered the emergence of digital pragmatics and studies of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). Herring (2018), through the framework of Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA), states that features found on digital platforms, such as “like” buttons, nested replies, text, images, emojis, and so on, influence the realization of speech acts on digital platforms. Therefore, comments on these platform tend to be more expressive and supportive than face-to-face conversations. The study by Taguchi (2020) emphasizes that naturally, digital interactions on social media facilitate an authentic communication space for users, including in expressing speech acts such as praise, motivation, and support for language learning. The form of positive comment feedback describes these findings, which can serve as social and linguistic feedback. Overall, from a theoretical perspective, user participation in comments that produce speech acts cannot be separated from components such as algorithm visibility and participatory norms. This awareness is important for examining how positive comments in the *“30 Days English Speaking Challenge”* video provide meaning as social and linguistic support, especially those containing praise, encouragement, and motivation.

Methodology

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach which aims to identify the types of speech acts are found in several English positive comments on videos TikTok trend *“30 Days English Speaking Challenge”* and to analyze the contextual functions of these speech acts in improving a supportive learning environment for people who join the trend or just watch the video content. The data in this study were collected using purposive sampling by selecting positive English comments from the video trends on TikTok account *@alelcipta* uploaded from July to August 2025. The comments were chosen based on relevance to the content of the challenge videos and their suitability for the research focus in terms of speech acts.

To ensure the validity of this study, the researcher will use triangulation of data source and data collecting techniques. In this study, source triangulation will be applied by collecting English positive comments from videos in the TikTok trend English speaking challenge. Then, methodological triangulation will be employed by combining documentation (collecting screenshots of the comments) and content analysis (classifying the comments based on Searle’s speech act theory). In addition, the researcher will apply an expert judgment technique by consulting with a lecturer or a peer to validate the classification of speech act types by Searle’s theory and the functions on TikTok videos trend English speaking challenge.

The data were analyzed using qualitative analysis techniques as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) which consist of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. For the first research question (Q1), which focuses on identifying the types of speech acts used in the positive comments on trend *“30 Days English Speaking Challenge”* TikTok videos, the data in the form of textual comments were reduced by selecting only English comments expressing positive responses toward the trend. These comments were then classified according to Searle (1979) taxonomy of speech acts—assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative. The data were classified according to the type and presented in a table. For the second research question (Q2), which aims to analyse the contextual functions of

these speech acts found in comments. The data was analysed in greater depth to represent the functions or meanings behind the types of speech acts found in the context of positive comments on the trending video “30 Days English Speaking Challenge,” which had been identified earlier in the first research question. After that, a conclusion was drawn by interpreting the functions of the types of speech acts in the comments. Each piece of data is coded with the letter C followed by a number (e.g., C01, C02, and so on), where C stands for “comment.” This numbering system is used to facilitate writing that refers to representative data in the findings and discussion sections.

Findings

The study analyzed 145 positive comments obtained from 30 short videos in the TikTok trend “30 English Speaking Challenge” on the @alelcipta account, which were uploaded from July to August 2025. Based on Searle’s (1979) classification, the results of the study revealed that four of the five types of speech acts were identified, namely : assertive, directive, commissive, and expressive. The distributions of the types of speech acts presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Speech Acts on TikTok Positive Comments @alelcipta

No.	Types of Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Assertive	30	20.69%
2.	Directive	37	25.52%
3.	Commissive	7	4.83%
4.	Expressive	71	48.97%
5.	Declarative	0	0%

The following sections present representative examples of data found in each type of speech act and their contextual interpretations. In general, all findings are contextual to the dataset and do not claim to represent interactions on TikTok.

Assertive Speech Acts

A total of 30 assertive speech acts were identified in positive comments on the @alelcipta account. These acts are usually used to state something. In this context, the dominant function was found to be the speech act to convey views on a matter or opinion, as well as to convey positive information related to challenges. The following are representative examples from the data and meaning of these speech acts.

Example of Representative Data :

C01 : “... I am join also ... English speaking challenge”

Based on the data excerpt C01 taken from @Bg_Ef_store’s comment, the meaning of these utterances is to state information about the commenter also joining in the trend of English speaking challenge.

C02 : “...Your video encourages me to do the same...”

Based on the data excerpt C02 taken from @caeruleus’s comment, the meaning of these utterances is to state information that the English challenge video made the commenter interested in doing the same.

C03 : “... When we learn something, we often rush and forget to appreciate “the beauty of process”. Your video are a great reminder that it’s okay to slow down, progressing little by little and make mistakes along the way. Anyway, my motto in learning languages has always been : “fake it till you make it,””

Based on the data excerpt C03 taken from @amethyous’s comment, the meaning of these utterances is to express an opinion or view about appreciating a process. This comment can motivate the reader’s not to be afraid to try and not to worry about making mistakes as long as we are willing to continue learning.

C04 : “... I’ve been doing the same thing for years, I recorded myself reviewing books, movies, food, or even just yapping on camera. It indeed helps me improve my speaking skills, ...”

Based on the excerpt C04 taken from @shynta’s comment, the meaning of these utterances is to convey information based on the commenter’s experience, that improving English speaking skills by recording and doing it regularly is very effective. This review can make people interested in joining the challenge.

The characteristics of assertiveness appear to be applied in various learning experiences and identities in accordance with Taguchi (2020) findings, which confirm that assertive actions in the digital space describe affiliation in digital communities.

Directive Speech Acts

A total of 37 directive speech acts were identified, and this type was the second most dominant found in positive comments @alelcipta account. These speech acts usually aim to influence someone to do something. In this context, the most acts were found to function as request, advice, encouragement, suggestion, and invitation. The following are representative examples from the data and meaning of these speech acts.

Example of Representative Data

C05 : *"Let's go build community bro."*

Based on the data excerpt C05 taken from @mentegaasammanis's comment, the meaning of these utterances is an invitation to form a community for learning English speaking together.

C06 : *"Hii, not to put you down or anything, just a tiny correction, I noticed in a few videos you said 'I'm not realize', but the correct one is 'I don't realize,...'"*

Based on the data excerpt C06 taken from @huemay's comment, the meaning of this utterance is to politely advise the creator to improve grammar when practicing English speaking.

C07 : *"Can u be my partner to speak English? Haha"*

Based on the data excerpt C07 taken from @Whatever's comment, the meaning of this utterance is to request that the creator's become friends to learn English speaking together.

C08 : *"Do you have any goals for learning English in this platfom?"*

Based on the data excerpt C08 taken from @Adit's comment, the meaning of this utterance is to ask for information and expect an answer or response from the content creators.

C09 : *"... Keep up with ur English journey!!"*

Based on the data excerpt C09 taken from @John Palacio's comment, the meaning of this utterance is to encourage the creator to continue the process of learning English speaking.

TikTok's interactive nature in facilitating responses and participation shows the dominance of actions such as invitations and suggestions, as described by Schoppa. Thus, direct support between users becomes a form of directive action.

Commissive Speech Acts

A total 7 types of commissive acts were found in positive comments on challenge videos on the @alelcipta account. These acts are usually used to express a commitment to do something in the future. In this context, the most commissive acts were found to show the commitment and promise of viewers or commenters to support the content creator's activities in 30 days English speaking challenge, as well as their intention to participate. The following are representative examples from the data and meaning of these speech acts.

Example of Representative Data :

C10 : *"... I will the one who supports your video every day, "*

Based on the data excerpt C10 taken from @Wahyu Fr's comment, the meaning of these utterances is a commitment or promise to always provide support during the creator 's 30 days speaking challenge.

C11 : *"... I will do the same as youuu soon,..."*

Based on the data excerpt C11 taken from @Ian's comment, the meaning of this utterances is to express the commenters' intention and commitment in the future plans to do the same thing as the content creator.

Although not dominant, the presence of commissive acts in the comments section of digital platforms reflects users' symbolic commitment to the participatory learning culture described by Loupessis and Intahchomphoo (2025).

Expressive Speech Acts

Expressive speech acts are the most dominant form found in positive comments on the TikTok account @alelcipta, with a total of 71 utterances. Expressive speech acts are usually used to express feelings. In this context, the most common data are appreciation, congratulations, praise, gratitude, thanks, hope, pride, and admiration. The following are representative examples of the data and meanings of these speech acts.

Example of Representative Data :

C12 : *" I love your accents. You didn't try be like others! Just perfect."*

Based on the data excerpt C12 taken from @Callme.lia's comment, the meaning of this utterance expresses admiration because of the content creator's own unique characteristics.

C13 : *"You've really inspired me to be more confidance in practicing my English kak,..."*

Based on the data excerpt C13 taken from @doktermatcha's comment, the meaning of these utterances is to express feelings inspired by the content creators because of the content.

C14 : *"Wow u're amazing!! U did it well!!"*

Based on the data excerpt C14 taken from @A' s comment, the meaning of these utterances is to express praise.

C15 : *"MANNNN, you are getting better day by day! Proud of you!!!"*

Based on the data excerpt C15 taken from @bubi's comment, the meaning of the utterances is to express pride in seeing the content creator's progress day by day.

C16 : *"I hope to be fluent in english when speak like u."*

Based on the data excerpt C16 taken from @entaaaiaia's comment, the meaning of this utterance is to express the hope of being able to be like the content creator's English speaking skills.

C17 : *"Congratulations for your consistency! ... good job."*

Based on the data excerpt C17 taken from @moco's comment, the meaning of this utterances is to express congratulations for the content creators' consistency.

C18 : *"Thanks for share your journey ... it makes me motivated."*

Based on the data excerpt C18 taken from @mentari's comment, the meaning of these utterances is to express gratitude to the creator for documenting English learning journey on TikTok and motivating the commenter.

C19 : *"...You, your process and your progress are so admirable,..."*

Based on the data excerpt C19 taken from @Daniel Nugroho's comment, the meaning of this utterance is to express admiration for the creator's the process and progress that was made.

C20 : *"...It's not easy to keep it up since a lot of people give up in middle journey, but yet here you are proving that you can handle it,..."*

Based on the data excerpt C20 taken from @moco's comment, the meaning of this utterance is to express pride for the creator's consistency in completing the English speaking challenge.

C21 : *"Can't wait for another post."*

Based on the data excerpt C21 taken from @Laladonboi's comment, the meaning of these utterances is to express joy and enthusiasm for the creator's English speaking challenge video uploaded.

The high number of expressive acts supports by Herring (2018) argument that the function of expressive acts is reinforced by positive comments on social media due to the influence of support norms and the visibility of the TikTok algorithm.

Declarative Speech Acts

In this study, declarative speech acts were not found in positive comments about the English speaking challenge trend on the @alelcipta TikTok account. This type of speech act is not relevant to the context of comments on this video challenge content because this type of act can only be performed by people who have institutional authority in accordance with Searle (1979) theory.

Discussion

The findings indicate that expressive speech acts dominate user interactions within the *"30 Days English Speaking Challenge,"* reflecting how TikTok functions as a supportive and emotionally driven learning environment. Consistent with Herring (2018) concept of digital expressivity, TikTok's multimodal affordances, algorithmic visibility, and participatory norms encourage users to provide praise, encouragement, and positive reinforcement as a form of community-building. In the context of educational videos such as the *"30 Days English Speaking Challenge"* trend, comments often appear as encouragement to learn to speak together or invitations to form English language communities, as well as support for creators to continue uploading these trending videos consistently on TikTok. This is in contrast to comments that appear on political news articles, which often contain criticism and demands (Andrea and Fatmawati, 2023). Assertive acts are often associated with the speaker's personal experiences or self-expression. This is in line with Taguchi (2020) observations on self-presentation in digital environments. In this context, speakers use assertives to share their personal experiences while learning to speak English and to share their views.

Although not numerous, commissive speech acts contribute to the comments section in the context of trending videos, such as statements expressing a commitment to future actions. This is in line with Zhang's (2025) concept of participatory culture. Declarative acts were not found in the comments section, in line with Searle's 1979 theory which explains that declarative actions can only be performed by people who have institutional authority. Compared to studies on entertainment-oriented content (Makhsunah et al., 2024) and confrontational comment sections (Ndraha et al., 2022), the current findings reveal a unique pragmatic pattern, shaped by the educational nature of the challenge, which emphasizes positive reinforcement and motivation. This interpretation should be considered along with methodological limitations, including a relatively small data set, an exclusive focus on positive English language comments, and potential algorithmic filtering that increases the visibility of supporting messages. Although expert judgment reinforces coding, qualitative analysis still involves subjective interpretation. Future research will benefit from a larger, more diverse dataset and multimodal approach.

Conclusion

The results of the study show that assertive, directive, expressive, and commission language actions in the comments section of the “30 Days English Speaking Challenge” video are influenced by TikTok participation norms and a supportive learning culture. For English learners, these language actions are not merely evaluative comments, but can be useful in creating a positive and motivating environment. These findings contribute to digital pragmatics by showing how platform features and community expectations influence the distribution and function of speech acts in online learning spaces. In practical terms, this TikTok challenge has the potential to increase student participation, provide emotional support, and encourage peer engagement. This suggests that a well-designed challenge format can boost confidence and stimulate active engagement among educators and content creators. Future research should focus on developing a larger and more diverse scope and dataset, integrating multimodal analysis, and exploring how different algorithmic or community dynamics influence language patterns across various genres on TikTok.

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