



Assertive Speech Acts in YouTube Comments on the 'Democratic Candidates Debate Education' Video

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Abstract. This research explores how people use assertive speech acts in the comment section of a YouTube video titled "Democratic Candidates Debate: Education," which was uploaded by ABC News. A qualitative method with content analysis is employed to examine how users share their thoughts, express agreement or disagreement, and participate in online discussions through assertive language. The data were collected from selected comments posted between 2019 and 2020, particularly those reacting to the candidates' views on education. The analysis applies Searle's speech act theory, focusing on seven types of assertive speech acts: claiming, stating, reporting, describing, informing, complaining, and concluding. A total of 24 assertive utterances were identified, with the following distribution: claiming (11), reporting (3), complaining (4), stating (2), informing (2), describing (1), and concluding (1). Among these, "claiming" appeared most frequently, indicating that many users shared strong opinions or support, especially for Andrew Yang's stance on education. Overall, the findings suggest that YouTube serves not only as a platform for viewing content but also as a space where people actively engage in discussions, express their beliefs, and respond to public issues through language.

Keywords: Assertive Speech Acts; Online Discussion; Searle's Theory; YouTube Comments; Online Discourse.

1. INTRODUCTION

The success of communication depends significantly on how language is used. Language is a tool for transmitting information and a medium for constructing meaning that is understood and shared between speakers and listeners. When communication is effective, it reflects a mutual understanding that enables interaction and connection. However, communication effectiveness is measured by how well the audience comprehends and absorbs the shared information. In an increasingly interconnected world, language is more vital than ever in facilitating meaningful interactions (Nisa & Manaf, 2021).

Humans are inherently social beings who communicate to meet the need for connection and interaction. Through language, individuals can express emotions, share ideas, and build relationships with others. Language enables people to express themselves and adapt to, as well as influence, their society. This illustrates that the use of language is deeply contextual, and the meaning of any utterance often depends on who says it, to whom, in what situation, and with what intention (Izar et al., 2021).

Moreover, the rise of digital platforms has changed how people engage in public communication. Social media has blurred the lines between private and public expression, personal opinion, and shared discourse. The influence of social media extends beyond communication alone. It now shapes political, educational, legal, and cultural structures. In educational and political contexts, social media has become a powerful tool for engagement

and discourse, providing alternative spaces for public discussion (Prayitno et al., 2021). Among various social media platforms, YouTube is a distinctive place where users consume content and participate in discussions. Viewers can engage directly with content through comments, expressing agreement, criticism, or expanding on the arguments presented. Comment sections have evolved into arenas for public dialogue, where people react to content and construct meaning collaboratively (Yunanda et al., 2022).

Furthermore, one of the videos that attracted attention was a debate held by ABC News titled “*Democratic Candidates Debate: Education.*” In the video, candidate Andrew Yang shared his views on charter schools versus public schools. He argues that a child's academic success is mainly influenced by out-of-school factors such as parents' economic condition, stress level, and social environment (60%). In comparison, school education only accounts for about 30%. Therefore, he emphasized the importance of providing higher salaries for teachers and financial support for underprivileged families so that children's education can run optimally, both in the classroom and in the home environment.

Based on this YouTube video, this study aims to analyze the types of assertive speech acts in YouTube comments and identify how assertive words are used in online discussions. By understanding the use of assertive words in online interactions, this research is expected to provide insight into digital communication patterns and how language is used to express opinions, support arguments, or even oppose certain views in public discussions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Pragmatics is a crucial branch of linguistics that examines how people utilize language to convey meaning in real-life situations. Instead of just analyzing the dictionary meanings of words, pragmatics focuses on how what we say is influenced by our intentions and how others understand us depending on the context. It is less about what the words mean and more about what the speaker means. This field highlights how we choose our words carefully and adjust our speech based on who we are talking to, where we are, and what is happening around us (Cummings, 2010).

The study of pragmatics emerged as a distinct field in the mid-twentieth century. This development occurred in response to earlier language theories, such as those developed by scholars like Frege and Russell, who focused on language as a logical system without giving much attention to its application in real-life communication. Pragmatics offered a different perspective by demonstrating that meaning is heavily influenced by context and human interaction. One important figure in this change was H.P. Grice. Grice introduced the concept

of implicature, which explains how people often convey more meaning than what they say directly. Grice argued that successful communication depends on the listener being able to understand the speaker's intention, based on shared knowledge and the situation in which the conversation happens (Zufferey et al., 2021).

Pragmatic knowledge is something people naturally employ when communicating. Even without learning formal rules, we are often able to understand expressions that are figurative, exaggerated, or closely tied to the situation at hand. For example, when someone says, "*My day was a nightmare,*" others usually understand it as a way of expressing frustration or stress, not as a literal event. This kind of understanding comes from shared experiences, cultural knowledge, and the context in which the words are spoken. Pragmatics helps researchers study how people make meaning through language in both direct conversation and online communication, where the way something is said, the speaker's intention, and the cultural background all influence how the message is understood (Birner, 2012).

The Cooperative Principle and Gricean Maxims

According to H. P. Grice, the concept of implicature explains how people often convey more than what their words directly state. To help listeners understand what a speaker means, Grice explained that conversation follows a logical pattern. However, communication works because both speakers and listeners act cooperatively and reasonably. This theory is based on the idea that people follow certain shared rules during conversation. One important aspect of this theory is the Cooperative Principle, which states that people are expected to make contributions that align with the topic and purpose of the conversation (Zufferey et al., 2021).

Grice explained that people typically follow certain basic rules when they communicate with each other. These include **Quantity**, **Quality**, **Relation**, and **Manner**. The Maxim of Quantity means that a speaker should give enough information for the listener to understand, but not give more details than necessary. The Maxim of Quality implies that people should try to be honest and only say things they believe are true and have good reason to say. The Maxim of Relation is about staying on topic, making sure what is said is connected to the conversation. The Maxim of Manner advises people to speak clearly, avoid confusing language, be concise, and explain things in a simple and organized manner (Leech, 2016).

Grice's maxims are not strict rules that people must always follow. Instead, they serve as general guidelines to help conversations run smoothly. Grice believed that communication works well because people usually expect others to be cooperative. This shared belief helps listeners understand both the direct meaning of what is said and the deeper meaning behind the words. If a speaker seems to go against one of the maxims, such as by saying too little or

bringing up something that does not seem related, listeners usually do not think the conversation has failed. Instead, they often assume the speaker still wants to cooperate and try to find the hidden or suggested meaning. Grice called this meaning an implicature (Senft, 2014).

Types and Characteristics of Implicature

Grice identified two main types of implicature: **conventional implicature** and **conversational implicature**. Conventional implicatures are associated with specific words or phrases, and their meaning remains the same regardless of the situation. People usually understand them in the same way, without needing extra context. In contrast, conversational implicatures depend significantly on the problem and the assumption that speakers are trying to cooperate in the conversation (Zufferey et al., 2021).

These types of implicatures have a few special features. First, they are calculable, which means that listeners can figure them out by thinking carefully about what was said and why. Second, they are cancellable, meaning the speaker can retract them or retract their statement, and the conversation remains coherent. Third, they are reinforceable, so the speaker can choose to explain them more clearly if needed (Zufferey et al., 2021).

Speech Acts

John R. Searle continued to develop the speech act theory introduced by J.L. Austin. Searle explained that language is not only about forming correct sentences, but also about doing things through words. Communication goes beyond the simple transmission of information, encompassing the performance of specific actions through the use of language. For instance, when a person makes a promise or gives a command, they are not simply speaking, but they are carrying out an action through their words. This idea that words can be used to carry out actions is what defines a speech act (Searle et al., 2012).

Direct and Indirect Speech Acts

The distinction between direct and indirect speech acts is a crucial concept in speech act theory. It helps us understand how people use language to communicate more effectively. A direct speech act happens when the form of the sentence matches the speaker's intention. For example, if someone says, "*Close the door, please,*" they are directly asking someone to do something. The message is easy to understand because the sentence structure and the speaker's purpose are connected (Ruytenbeek, 2023).

In contrast, an indirect speech act takes place when the speaker's words do not directly show their true intention. For example, when someone says, "*Can you close the door?*" it may sound like they are simply asking about the other person's ability. However, in most situations,

this is meant as a polite request. The listener is expected to understand the real meaning by considering the context, the speaker's tone, and common social expectations (Ruytenbeek, 2023).

According to speech act scholars like Searle, indirect speech acts are closely related to the concept of conversational implicature, as introduced by Grice. This idea suggests that speakers often convey more than what they say directly, and listeners use logic and shared understanding to infer the intended meaning. To understand an indirect speech act, the listener needs to use pragmatic thinking. In other words, understanding the context helps the listener comprehend what the speaker wants to convey (Ruytenbeek, 2023).

Locutionary, Illocutionary, and Perlocutionary Acts

According to Austin, every speech act consists of three interconnected parts: the locutionary act, the illocutionary act, and the perlocutionary act. The locutionary act is the act of producing a sentence with a specific grammatical form and literal meaning. This part focuses on the actual words and their arrangement. Beyond that, the illocutionary act refers to what the speaker intends to convey when making a statement. This part is the main focus of a speech act and includes actions such as making a statement, issuing a command, posing a question, or making a promise. Austin emphasizes that the illocutionary act is important because it shapes how people understand the statement within social interactions (Searle et al., 2012).

Finally, the perlocutionary act refers to how the utterance affects the listener. Unlike the other two components, the perlocutionary outcome, such as persuading, frightening, or soothing the listener, is not always under the speaker's control, as it depends on how the listener interprets and reacts to the message. These three parts demonstrate how language functions not only to convey information, but also to perform and influence actions in communication (Searle et al., 2012).

Classification of Illocutionary Acts

Austin classifies speech acts into five distinct types, each reflecting the social and linguistic role that an utterance plays in a given context. These categories help to explain how language functions not just to convey meaning, but also to perform actions within social interactions (Searle et al., 2012).

Verdictives involve delivering a judgment or evaluation based on reasoning or evidence. These speech acts often convey an assessment of a situation, whether formal or informal. Verbs commonly associated with verdictives include acquit, hold, calculate, describe, analyze, estimate, rank, and assess. They typically indicate the speaker's evaluation of facts or values.

Exercitives are speech acts concerned with decision-making or influencing actions. These include giving orders, making requests, or issuing prohibitions, and they often reflect the speaker's authority, intention, or stance regarding what should be done. Examples of exercitive verbs include order, command, plead, recommend, appoint, declare open, proclaim, and give.

Commissives are speech acts in which the speaker commits to a future course of action. Using this type of utterance, the speaker assumes a responsibility to carry out an action, often through promises, oaths, or formal agreements. Common verbs in this category include promise, vow, pledge, guarantee, swear, and contract, all of which reflect a clear intention to act.

Expositives, speech acts used to explain ideas, clarify meanings, or present arguments. These utterances help structure communication by interpreting or defining concepts, offering opinions, or organizing the flow of discourse. Examples of expositive verbs include affirm, deny, illustrate, report, describe, explain, and classify, all of which convey understanding or reasoning within a conversation or text.

Behabitives are speech acts that express the speaker's feelings, attitudes, or social responses to the actions or experiences of others. This category includes language that reflects appreciation, disapproval, empathy, or recognition of social norms. Typical examples include verbs such as apologize, thank, congratulate, welcome, bless, curse, toast, protest, and challenge, all of which indicate how the speaker emotionally or socially responds to a situation or person.

In addition, John R. Searle developed and systematized J.L. Austin's basic theory by providing a systematic taxonomy of speech acts based on their illocutionary force, or the intended communicative function behind an utterance. Searle identified five principal categories of speech acts, each characterized by the speaker's purpose and the socio-linguistic context in which the utterance occurs (Searle et al., 2012).

Assertives or Representatives include utterances that describe a situation or convey the speaker's belief in the truth of a proposition. Examples of this type include statements, reports, claims, and conclusions. The illocutionary force of assertives lies in the speaker's commitment to the factual accuracy of the expressed content.

Directives consist of utterances intended to prompt the listener to perform a specific action. This category encompasses requests, commands, suggestions, and advice. The core function of directives is to exert influence over the behavior of the hearer.

Commissives represent speech acts in which the speaker commits to a future course of action. Acts such as promising, offering, or swearing are included in this group. The illocutionary point here is the speaker's pledge to carry out a particular act in the future.

Expressives include utterances that communicate the speaker's psychological state or emotional response to a given situation. Examples include expressions of gratitude, apologies, congratulations, or condolences. The purpose of expressives is to articulate the speaker's internal attitudes or feelings.

Declarations comprise utterances that bring about a change in social or institutional status by the very act of being spoken, assuming the speaker is in a position of authority and the context is appropriate. Illustrative examples include pronouncing someone married, delivering a legal verdict, or terminating employment. In this case, the speech act itself creates a new reality.

Searle explains that this classification is based on the practical use of language. He highlights that each type of speech act is shaped by what the speaker intends to do and the situation in which the words are spoken. His system provides a straightforward approach to studying how people use language not only to share information but also to take action and interact with others in social settings.

Assertive Speech Acts

An assertive speech act is a type of illocutionary act in which the speaker expresses a belief or opinion about a specific situation. In this kind of act, the speaker is not just saying something, but also showing that they believe what they are saying is true. This means the speaker is taking responsibility for the truth of the statement and is committed to what they are expressing (Izar et al., 2020).

According to Searle, assertive speech acts include statements, explanations, descriptions, informing, and reporting. Each has a slightly different purpose: stating shares information, telling gives details or events, suggesting gives ideas or advice, expressing pride shows a sense of achievement, and reporting shares facts, often with a reason or next step in mind (Searle et al., 2012).

Additionally, assertive speech acts demonstrate the speaker's confidence in what they are discussing. When someone makes this kind of statement, they are usually confident that it is true. However, the statement reflects the speaker's perspective on the situation. While Searle identifies key assertive functions such as stating, reporting, informing, and describing, real-world communication, particularly on digital platforms, demonstrates that assertive speech acts can take on a broader range of expressions. These may take the form of claiming, predicting,

or even complaining, as long as the speaker expresses a belief and exhibits a commitment to the reality of what is being said (Izar et al., 2020).

Historical Background of YouTube

YouTube has become one of the most popular digital platforms today, known for both sharing videos and facilitating public interaction. It was initially created to simplify the process of uploading and sharing videos online. YouTube was officially launched in 2005 by three former PayPal employees: Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim. Hurley had a background in design from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, while Chen and Karim studied computer science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Their idea quickly gained attention, and YouTube's first office was set up in a small space above a Japanese restaurant and pizza place in San Mateo, California (Sahu, 2019).

As the platform quickly gained users and widespread attention, it soon attracted the interest of major technology companies. On November 13, 2006, Google officially acquired YouTube for approximately \$ 1.65 billion in stock. At that time, this was Google's second-largest acquisition and a significant step toward integrating user-generated content into major online platforms. Even before the sale, YouTube had already begun working with media companies to address copyright issues and build content partnerships. These early efforts helped create a stronger and more organized video-sharing system after joining Google (Sahu, 2019).

Today, YouTube is part of Google and offers various interactive features that make it a leading platform for global communication. People can upload videos, watch content, give likes, share links, report problems, leave comments, and subscribe to channels. Although everyday users create many videos, well-known media companies such as CBS, BBC, Vevo, and Hulu also upload content through the YouTube Partner Program. The platform hosts a wide range of video types, including TV segments, music performances, documentaries, movie previews, personal video blogs, educational content, and live broadcasts (Sahu, 2019).

In terms of accessibility, YouTube distinguishes between registered and unregistered users. People without an account can only watch videos. In contrast, users with a registered account can upload as many videos as they want, leave comments, and utilize personalized tools such as creating playlists and subscribing to channels. Some content that is considered unsuitable for all viewers is restricted and can only be viewed by registered users who confirm that they are 18 years of age or older (Sahu, 2019).

YouTube as a Space for Communication and Public Interaction

YouTube is a popular online platform where people can watch, upload, and share videos. It is not only used for entertainment but has also become an important source of information and a space for sharing ideas. Users can create their channels and post content on different topics, which supports personal expression and helps people connect with others. In many ways, YouTube functions like a vast digital library, providing easy access to a diverse range of videos for various types of viewers. In the field of education, YouTube can also serve as a valuable tool to support teaching and engage students in creative and meaningful ways (N.L.A. Puspitawati, 2022).

In this study, YouTube is understood not only as a platform for sharing videos but also as a public space where people can interact and share their opinions. The comment section, in particular, plays a vital role by allowing users to provide feedback, discuss, and connect with others who may share similar or different views. For instance, in the ABC News video titled “*Democratic Candidates Debate: Education*,” many viewers shared their thoughts about the candidates' ideas by posting comments. These responses demonstrate how platforms like YouTube facilitate open conversations, offering people opportunities to use language to inform, persuade, critique, and engage in broader societal discussions.

This research applies John Searle’s speech act theory to gain a deeper understanding of how people communicate through YouTube comments. According to Searle, speech acts can be grouped into five categories: assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. This study focuses on assertive speech acts, which are used when someone expresses something they believe to be true. Examples include stating facts, making claims, reporting events, and giving information. By utilizing this framework, the study aims to investigate the types of assertive speech acts people employ and their functions in online conversations. Searle’s theory is helpful because it shows how language is used not only for speaking, but also for sharing opinions, agreeing or disagreeing, and participating in discussions on social media platforms.

Several earlier studies have examined how speech acts are employed in various forms of digital communication. Nirmala, Kardana, and Pratama investigated speech acts found in Instagram captions and described how the content creators used various types (Putu Nindhya Nirmala et al., 2021). Rahayu and Amri focused on illocutionary acts in WhatsApp conversations, highlighting how speech reflects ethical and social interaction in private messaging (Sri Rahayu & Yusni Khairul Amri, 2023). In another study, Yunanda and colleagues explored speech acts in spoken content from Fiersa Besari’s YouTube videos,

identifying several types, including assertive, directive, expressive, and commissive acts (Yunanda et al., 2022). Although these studies offer valuable insights and use a pragmatic approach, they did not concentrate on assertive speech acts in public online discussions. For this reason, the current research aims to explore how assertive speech acts are used in YouTube comment sections, particularly in conversations related to educational issues.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative method with a focus on content analysis to investigate assertive speech acts found in YouTube comment sections. A qualitative approach is appropriate for this study because it allows the researcher to explore how language is used and understood in real online communication. By using content analysis, the study aims to understand how people share their opinions and take part in discussions through assertive language in a digital setting. The data for this study come from the comments on a YouTube video titled "Democratic Candidates Debate: Education," which was published by ABC News on September 13, 2019. The comments selected were written between 2019 and 2020 and include both direct and indirect responses to the candidates' statements about the education system, especially focusing on issues related to public and charter schools. The comments were chosen based on how relevant they were to the topic discussed in the video and how clearly the users expressed their thoughts.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examines how people use assertive speech acts in the comment section of an ABC News YouTube video called "*Democratic Candidates Debate: Education*." The research examines the various types of assertive statements viewers make when responding to the video. The data for this study comes from one YouTube video that features a political discussion focused on education policy in the United States.

The analysis showed that 14 different user accounts posted comments containing assertive speech acts. By applying John Searle's speech act framework, which encompasses actions such as stating, explaining, describing, informing, and reporting, the study found that users also employed other types of assertive language commonly used in daily conversations. These included utterances that involved **claiming, stating, reporting, complaining, concluding, describing, and informing**. In total, **24 assertive utterances** were identified and categorized into several subtypes, as detailed in the table below.

Table 1. Assertive Speech Acts Found in YouTube Comments.

Assertive Type	Utterance	Frequency	Percentage
Claiming	"Yang was the ONLY one that accurately brought up the main problem with k-12 education." @WildRhymer	11	45,83%
	"Only Yang mentions the real issues." @tobinator999		
	"Yang is so right about school and education." @chavue6009		
	"Andrew Yang is the only person who makes any freaking sense at all." @fstop313		
	"Yang has it right on standardized tests." @northwoodstreker8067		
	"On YouTube, no one cares about other candidates but Yang." @Sebby96xoxo		
	"Andrew Yang was the closest to actually answering the question." @shauryapandya1662		
	"Yang has the LEAST amount of time to speak but always has the MOST to say." @mestephan20		
	"When he says he is running for President to make the nation and the world a better place for his children, I think he means it." @HeyoSpeaker		
	"We spend more on education than all countries and we still rank low on education.. Black people support private school and charter school options." @EddieGee-cc4us		
Stating	"Yang is right about correcting the critical mistake of underpaying teachers, improving children's lives outside of the classroom as well as within, and getting rid of the awful standardized testing system that does more harm than good." @misternightstar	2	8,33%
	"If a child is NOT being nurtured at home they will have a hard time succeeding in school!!" @WildRhymer		
Reporting	"It's true that environment plays a heavy role and teachers by all means need (not should) be held to a much higher standard and be paid much more." @shauryapandya1662	3	12,50%
	"Yang answered in 45 seconds and the rest took forever to be done with their answers." @Showstimes365		
Complaining	"He's done this publicly a few times when talking about his kids, and it seems genuine." @HeyoSpeaker	4	16,67%
	"Biden picked the woman who called him racist." @Joeyblondewolf2		
	"The biggest problem with that thinking is that in order to qualify for state money, it forces teachers to teach to the test, not to the knowledge." @northwoodstreker8067		
	"Idk if it's just me but I get so annoyed when politicians recall some rehearsed sob story about hardship and 'starting from nothing' instead of answering the question directly." @Lenin941FN		
	"But he addressed standardized testing-the very object that ruined the system into gamification and faux meaning." @shauryapandya1662		

Assertive Type	Utterance	Frequency	Percentage
Concluding	"As a black parent who's seen first hand the failure of public schools I agree with Andrew Yang... We need competition in education.. We need options in education." @EddieGee-cc4us	1	4,17%
	"We live in an education system in which how you do means nothing-that needs to change." @shauryapandya1662		
Describing	"0:36 It sounds like Yang had to suppress a minor emotional breakdown right after mentioning how he missed his son's first day of school." @HeyoSpeaker	1	4,17%
Informing	"Developing countries like Vietnam rank higher in math than the USA." @EddieGee-cc4us	2	8,33%
	"This, in addition to his plans concerning debt forgiveness, expansion of guided higher education, and a modernization of our overall view of college as one of many paths forward, are among the reasons why Yang has my vote." @misternightstar		

After analyzing the YouTube comments on the video "Democratic Candidates Debate: Education", it became clear that viewers used various assertive speech acts to express their views. The most frequent type of assertive act observed was claiming, which accounted for nearly 46% of the total examples. This chapter examines each type of assertive speech act found in the YouTube comments section. The conversation is organized according to assertive personality type.

Each paragraph focuses on one category, with one example sentence drawn from the findings to demonstrate how the act is carried out in context. These utterances, which range from strong claims about Andrew Yang's ideas to complaints about the educational system and factual debate reports, show that language is used not only for communication but also as a form of social action, positioning the speaker ideologically and emotionally within public digital discourse.

Claiming

Claiming was the most frequently used type of assertive speech act in the comment section. This type expresses the speaker's firm belief in a proposition and is often used to persuade or influence others. An example is the comment:

"We spend more on education than all countries and we still rank low on education...

Black people support private school and charter school options." (@EddieGee-cc4us).

In this comment, the speaker presents a strong personal evaluation of the U.S. education system while asserting demographic support for alternative models, such as charter schools. This kind of speech act shows the speaker's commitment to what they believe is true. This aligns with what Searle (1979) defines as an affirmation of belief in which the speaker

commits to the reality of the proposition. In digital political debate, such affirmations express personal views and contribute to the creation of ideological identity and attitude (Ashfira & Hardjanto, 2021).

Stating

Some comments share widely accepted views or facts that sound more like declarations than opinions. An example:

“It’s true that environment plays a heavy role and teachers by all means need (not should) be held to a much higher standard and be paid much more.” (@shauryapandya1662).

The user firmly believes that environmental factors and teacher quality greatly affect student success. This type of statement is characteristic of assertive speech, where the speaker presents their belief as obvious or self-evident.

Reporting

Some users contributed to the conversation by reporting events or recalling specific facts that were either mentioned in the debate or related to the political context. An example:

“Biden picked the woman who called him racist.” (@Joeyblondewolf2).

This statement might seem like a simple factual statement. However, the underlying tone suggests a critical stance, inviting others to reflect on Biden’s political choices and the apparent contradiction. This type of speech act helps shape how others perceive and evaluate what happened, especially in a politically charged context.

Complaining

Complaints frequently appeared in the comments, typically directed at education policies, political speeches, or broader issues within the system. For example:

“I don’t know if it’s just me but I get so annoyed when politicians recall some rehearsed sob story about hardship and ‘starting from nothing’ instead of answering the question directly.” (@Lenin941FN).

In this comment, the person clearly expresses their frustration with politicians who use emotional stories that seem insincere or avoid giving straightforward answers.

Concluding

Users joined the discussion by concluding, often after reflecting on the points made in the video or considering broader trends in education. For example:

“We live in an education system in which how you do means nothing—that needs to change.” (@shauryapandya1662).

This statement criticizes the current education system. The use of conclusive language reveals how users make sense of information and take firm positions, often finishing with a suggestion for change.

Describing

Some users chose to describe what they noticed during the debate, focusing on emotional moments or their reactions. One such comment is:

“0:36 It sounds like Yang had to suppress a minor emotional breakdown right after mentioning how he missed his son’s first day of school.” (@HeyoSpeaker).

This type of expression relies on careful observation and interpretation, using descriptive language to evoke empathy or convey sincerity.

Informing

Informing is another vital function found in comments, where users share facts or statistics to support their opinions or provide additional background information. For example:

“Developing countries like Vietnam rank higher in math than the USA.” (@EddieGee-cc4us).

In this case, the commenter uses comparison data to highlight what they perceive as weaknesses in the U.S. education system. Informing is a type of assertive speech act in which the speaker provides information to support their point of view.

Through various assertive speech acts, such as reporting, complaining, concluding, describing, and informing, users engage with a video in more ways than just responding to it. They actively help shape public opinion, create a sense of community, and encourage reflection or change. In this way, YouTube becomes more than just a platform for watching videos. It becomes a space for online conversations where language is used to take action, express opinions, protest, and build identity. These speech acts demonstrate that communication on digital platforms has absolute power. What people write in the comments can support shared beliefs, inspire new ideas, or question those in authority.

Besides using assertive speech acts like stating, complaining, and concluding, some users also shared information or described things to explain why they agreed or disagreed with what the speakers said. This connects to Grice’s Maxim of Quantity, which suggests that people try to give enough details to make their message clear and reasonable. It shows that YouTube comment sections are not just filled with opinions but can also include thoughtful and informative discussions.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study examined how people use assertive speech in the comment section of the YouTube video titled "Democratic Candidates Debate: Education." The results show that commenters expressed their ideas using different kinds of assertive speech, including claiming (11 utterances), reporting (3), complaining (4), stating (2), informing (2), describing (1), and informing (1). Of all these categories, the claiming subtype is the most dominant, accounting for 11 out of 24 utterances, or approximately 45.83% of the total data analyzed. This indicates that many users strongly agreed or believed in the candidate's statement.

These different types of speech acts demonstrate how YouTube users actively participate in online discussions to share their opinions, support their ideas with facts, express concerns, or provide information to others. Many comments included personal experiences, responses to the candidates' statements, and suggestions for improvement. This shows that YouTube is more than just a site for watching videos, it is also a space for open and active public conversations. It becomes a place where people use language to express who they are, connect with others, and participate in broader discussions about important issues, such as education policy.

Additionally, this study only examined assertive speech acts, so it would be beneficial to investigate other illocutionary acts, such as directives, expressions, or commissives. Future researchers can also use more comments or compare different videos to gain a better understanding of how people express their opinions on online platforms. This can also be used in language or communication classes. Since people use various platforms today, such as TikTok, Twitter, or Instagram, it would also be interesting to see how language use differs across these platforms.

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