



The Construction of Legitimacy through Illocutionary Speech Acts in the Indonesian President's Address at the 2026 World Economic Forum

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Purpose

This study aimed to reveal the types and distribution of illocutionary speech acts and their role in building the legitimacy of Indonesian leadership and economic policies in the speech of the RI President at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Davos 2026 entitled President Prabowo's Concept of Economic Thought

Method

This research employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical design. The data were obtained from the official video recording of the speech observed and transcribed verbatim. The analysis combined Searle's (1979) theory of illocutionary speech acts and van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy framework.

Results/findings

The study found 272 illocutionary speech acts to express different purposes, namely representatives used to convey facts and claims of success, commissive used to show promises or commitments, expressive functioned to express appreciation or pride, directives used to invite or encourage the audience. The legitimacy pattern in this speech used strategies according to van Leeuwen (2007), especially rationalization, moral evaluation, and authorization, as well as a little mytho-poiesis.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the WEF Davos 2026 speech operates as a strategic diplomatic instrument that conveys information, constructs legitimacy, and reinforces Indonesia's position in global political-economic communication. It recommends further research on international political speeches to deepen understanding of how speech acts and legitimacy strategies shape global diplomatic narratives.

Keywords

Diplomacy, Illocutionary speech acts, Legitimacy, Utterance, World Economic Forum.

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Abstrak

Tujuan

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap jenis dan distribusi tindak tutur ilokusi serta perannya dalam membangun legitimasi kepemimpinan dan kebijakan ekonomi Indonesia dalam pidato Presiden RI di Forum Ekonomi Dunia (WEF) Davos 2026 yang berjudul Konsep Pemikiran Ekonomi Presiden Prabowo.

Metode

Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif-analitis. Data diperoleh dari rekaman video resmi pidato yang diamati dan ditranskripsikan secara verbatim. Analisis menggabungkan teori tindak tutur ilokusi Searle (1979) dan kerangka legitimasi van Leeuwen (2007).

Hasil/temuan

Studi ini menemukan 272 tindak tutur ilokusi yang digunakan untuk tujuan yang berbeda, yaitu representatif yang digunakan untuk menyampaikan fakta dan klaim keberhasilan, komisif yang digunakan untuk menunjukkan janji atau komitmen, ekspresif yang berfungsi untuk mengekspresikan apresiasi atau kebanggaan, dan direktif yang digunakan untuk mengajak atau mendorong audiens. Pola legitimasi dalam pidato ini menggunakan strategi menurut van Leeuwen (2007), terutama rasionalisasi, evaluasi moral, dan otorisasi, serta sedikit mitopoiesis.

Kesimpulan

Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa pidato WEF Davos 2026 beroperasi sebagai instrumen diplomatik strategis yang menyampaikan informasi, membangun legitimasi, dan memperkuat posisi Indonesia dalam komunikasi politik-ekonomi global. Studi ini merekomendasikan penelitian lebih lanjut tentang pidato politik internasional untuk memperdalam pemahaman tentang bagaimana tindak tutur dan strategi legitimasi membentuk narasi diplomatik global.

Kata kunci

Diplomasi, Tindak tutur ilokusi, Legitimasi, Ujaran, Forum Ekonomi Dunia.

المخلص

الهدف

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن أنواع وتوزيع الأفعال الكلامية الإنجازية ودورها في بناء شرعية القيادة الإندونيسية والسياسات الاقتصادية، وذلك من خلال خطاب رئيس جمهورية إندونيسيا في المنتدى الاقتصادي العالمي (دافوس 2026) بعنوان "مفهوم الرئيس براوو للفكر الاقتصادي".

المنهج

استخدم هذا البحث منهجًا نوعيًا، معتمدًا على تصميم وصفي تحليلي. تم الحصول على البيانات من التسجيل المرئي الرسمي للخطاب، وتم تدوينه حرفيًا. جمع التحليل بين نظرية سيرل (1979) للأفعال الكلامية الإنجازية وإطار فان ليوين (2007) للشرعية.

النتائج/المخرجات

خلصت الدراسة إلى وجود 272 فعلًا كلاميًا إنجازيًا للتعبير عن أغراض مختلفة، وهي: أفعال تمثيلية تُستخدم لنقل الحقائق ومزاعم النجاح، وأفعال التزامية تُستخدم لإظهار الوعود أو الالتزامات، وأفعال تعبيرية تُستخدم للتعبير عن التقدير أو الفخر، وأفعال توجيهية تُستخدم لدعوة الجمهور أو تشجيعه. استخدم نمط الشرعية في هذا الخطاب استراتيجيات وفقًا لفان ليوين (2007)، لا سيما التبرير والتقييم الأخلاقي والتفويض، بالإضافة إلى قدر ضئيل من بناء الأساطير.

الخلاصة

خلصت الدراسة إلى أن خطاب المنتدى الاقتصادي العالمي في دافوس 2026 يُعد أداة دبلوماسية استراتيجية لنقل المعلومات، وبناء الشرعية، وتعزيز مكانة إندونيسيا في التواصل السياسي والاقتصادي العالمي. وتوصي الدراسة بإجراء المزيد من البحوث حول الخطابات السياسية الدولية لتعميق فهم كيفية تأثير الأفعال الكلامية واستراتيجيات الشرعية على الخطابات الدبلوماسية العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية

الدبلوماسية؛ الأفعال الكلامية الإنجازية؛ الشرعية؛ التصريح؛ المنتدى الاقتصادي العالمي

INTRODUCTION

The speech of the head of state in international forums not only functions as a means of conveying policies, but also as a strategic discursive practice that represents ideological positions, national interests, and legitimacy strategies before a global audience through the use of political language that builds ideology, shapes public opinion, conveys the vision and mission of leadership, creates political narratives, and constructs and confirms the relationship between language, power, and political legitimacy (Aminuddin et al., 2025; Shamim et al., 2025; Sosrohadi et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2025). The language used by state leaders plays an important role in building an image, gaining support, and negotiating national interests through strategic political communication mechanisms, because in political discourse, language selection functions as a persuasive strategy to influence public perception and build support, while also being a force in achieving national and international goals, including in shaping the country's image and negotiating national interests in the context of diplomacy and international relations (Nasution, 2007; Sartini, 2015; Susanto, 2024).

The World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting is one of the most prestigious international forums that brings together world leaders, global economic actors, and strategic policy makers, because this annual meeting in Davos consistently gathers thousands of leaders from government, business, civil society, and academic sectors from more than 130 countries and has become the most influential international dialogue and collaboration platform for more than half a century in discussing global economic, geopolitical, and technological challenges (World Economic Forum, 2026a, 2026b). In this context, the Address of the President of the Republic of Indonesia at the WEF Davos 2026 entitled "*Konsep Pemikiran Ekonomi Presiden Prabowo* [President Prabowo's Concept of Economic Thought]." is a significant political-economic discourse to be studied, because it contains a representation of the direction of national economic policy as well as Indonesia's strategy in positioning itself amidst global economic dynamics (Presidential Secretariat, 2026). As an oral text delivered in the context of formal international communication, the speech is not only informative but also performative. Through his speech, the President not only conveys economic ideas but also carries out specific social actions such as expressing commitment, building trust, guiding audience perceptions, and affirming the authority of Indonesia's leadership. Therefore, linguistic analysis, particularly from a pragmatic and critical discourse perspective, is relevant to uncovering the meaning and social function behind the speech.

Extensive research has been conducted on political speeches by heads of state in international forums, particularly in pragmatics and Critical Discourse Analysis. Previous studies have shown that pragmatic research on speeches by heads of state in international forums is still dominated by descriptive analysis focused on the classification of speech acts, deixis, or politeness strategies separately (Ahmed et al., 2021; Lestari, 2025; Muhammad et al., 2022). These studies have not comprehensively linked the pragmatic strategies used to the geopolitical context, international power relations, and the diplomatic function of speeches as instruments of global politics, as most studies still place the political context as a background, rather than as part of the pragmatic analysis itself (Pokhrel, 2020; Ratnawati et al., 2025). As a result, language in diplomatic speeches tends to be understood as a purely linguistic phenomenon, rather than as a strategic practice in the international political arena. Meanwhile, Critical Discourse Analysis research on speeches by heads of state in international forums generally focuses on revealing ideology, power relations, and linguistic strategies through specific CDA models, such as Fairclough's, Van Dijk's, or Halliday's systemic functional approach (Kadim, 2023; Sarwat et al., 2024; Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015). Most of these studies are still single-case analyses and tend to view speeches as stand-alone texts, without deeply linking them to global geopolitical dynamics, state strategic interests, and the speech's function in building legitimacy and hegemony in the international arena (Aydın-Düzgüt, 2014; Luo, 2021) Furthermore,

CDA studies on speeches by heads of state in international forums rarely integrate discourse analysis with further mediation and representation processes, such as diplomatic translation and global media framing, even though these processes play a crucial role in shaping the meaning and reception of political discourse at the international level (Liang & Li, 2024). Thus, there is a research gap to examine political speeches by heads of state in international forums through a more integrative and contextual approach, positioning language and discourse as strategic social practices in the formation of legitimacy, power, and the negotiation of interests in the global political order.

According to research employing van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy framework, authority, rationalization, morality, and mythopoesis are frequently used to construct legitimacy in political discourse, especially when defending public policy and state ideology (Abdi & Basarati, 2018; Abuelwafa, 2021). Nonetheless, the majority of this research still prefers to keep legitimacy methods and speech act analysis apart.

Research that integratively investigates the relationship between illocutionary speeches and legitimacy techniques in speeches by heads of state in international economic forums is relatively limited, despite the advancements in the study of political speeches and legitimacy. Additionally, there is still relatively little research explicitly looking at the President of the Republic of Indonesia's statements in international forums, especially at the WEF Davos in 2026. In order to understand how language is used as a tool to construct the legitimacy of Indonesian leadership and economic policies at the global level, a study combining Searle's (1979) illocutionary speech act analysis and van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy framework is lacking.

The novelty of this study consists in the combining of two theoretical methods, namely Searle's illocutionary speech act theory and van Leeuwen's legitimacy framework, in studying the President of the Republic of Indonesia's address at the WEF Davos 2026. In addition to identifying the many kinds of illocutionary speech actions, this study connects them to the tactics of legitimacy that these utterances create. Based on this context, this study poses two major questions: examining the types and distribution of illocutionary speech acts used in the President of the Republic of Indonesia's speech at the World Economic Forum 2026, and examining how these illocutionary speech acts contribute to the legitimacy of Indonesian leadership and economic policies in front of the international community.

METHOD

This study is qualitative and descriptive-analytical (Assingkily, 2021; Karmanis & Karjono, 2020). This study uses a qualitative approach to examine the meaning, function, and strategy of language use in heads of state's international political addresses. Illocutionary speech acts are described and analysed to determine Indonesian leadership and economic policy legitimacy using the descriptive-analytical method. This study uses pragmatic studies, specifically Searle's (1979) illocutionary speech act theory, and van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy framework to examine language, power, and legitimacy in international political communication.

This research examines the President of Indonesia's 2026 WEF Annual Meeting speech, "Konsep Pemikiran Ekonomi Presiden Prabowo [President Prabowo's Concept of Economic Thought]." This study uses purposive sampling to investigate a single speech that represents Indonesian economic policies' language strategy, ideology, and legitimacy in global forums.

This study collected data through documentation. Data were acquired from the Presidential Secretariat's YouTube release of the President of Indonesia's speech at the WEF in Davos 2026. Data collection begins with downloading the official speech video. Then, the video was attentively and frequently listened to for comprehension. Next, the President's words were transcribed verbatim for accuracy. Finally, illocutionary speech act utterances were selected and evaluated.

This research relies on humans to collect, code, and analyze data. This study used mul-

multiple systematic steps to analyze data qualitatively and descriptively. The researcher first discovered and classified illocutionary speech behaviors using Searle (1979) categories. Next, each illocutionary speech act was examined for its pragmatic purpose, notably in diplomatic addresses. Next, van Leeuwen's (2007) framework of authority, rationalization, morality, and mythopoesis was used to link the illocutionary speech act to legitimation techniques. Finally, the analysis was evaluated in light of geopolitics, national interests, and the speech's diplomatic role in the global economic forum. Manual analysis was done with systematic recording to ensure uniformity and correctness.

RESULT/FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study show that the number of speech acts recorded was 272 utterances. The data demonstrates differences in the distribution between types of speech acts. Representative speech acts are the most dominant type, followed by commissive, expressive, and directive speech acts, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of Speech Acts in the Indonesian President’s Speech at the 2026 World Economic Forum

No	Type of Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage
1	Representative	171	62.87%
2	Commissive	42	15.44%
3	Expressive	31	11.40%
4	Directive	28	10.29%
	TOTAL	272	100%

Based on Table 1, representative speech acts dominate the data with the highest percentage, namely 62.87%. This type of speech act serves to convey claims, statements, or facts regarding a situation that the speaker believes to be true. Commissive speech acts are in second place with a percentage of 15.44%. This type relates to the speaker’s commitment or promise to carry out an action in the future. Next, expressive speech acts reached 11.40% and are used to express the speaker’s feelings or emotions, such as pride, emotion, appreciation, or gratitude. Meanwhile, directive speech acts have a percentage of 10.29% and function to provide direction, requests, or suggestions to the listener to take certain actions, including commands, instructions, or invitations to collaborate or comply with certain policies. Overall, these findings indicate that the use of language in public and diplomatic communication not only functions to convey information (representative), but also to express commitment (commissive), express emotions (expressive), and provide direction or requests (directive). A more detailed explanation is presented as follows.

Representative Acts

This illocutionary act aims to express a statement or information about the world, usually in the form of a claim or fact. The speaker expresses his or her belief about something.

Data 1

“The IMF recently described Indonesia as, I quote, a global bright spot with strong economic growth amid a challenging external environment.”

In this sentence, the speech act used is representative because the statement conveys information that is considered true or based on fact, namely the IMF’s description of Indonesia as a “global bright spot.” This statement not only conveys information but also functions as a social action in building a positive image of Indonesia before an interna-

tional audience.

Data 1 shows van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy approach of authorization, which derives legitimacy from an authoritative figure, institution, rule, or authority. Citing the globally credible International Monetary Fund (IMF) lends legitimacy. Speaker uses IMF evaluation to support allegation about Indonesia's economic status. Indonesia's reputation as a "global bright spot" is more persuasive because legitimacy is based on a third-party institution, not the speaker's view. The legality of this data comes from institutional authorization, not reasoning or moral appraisal.

Data 2

"Indonesia's economy grew by more than 5 percent every year over the last decade and I'm confident that this year our growth will be higher."

The utterance in data 2 uses a representative speech act (stating a fact or belief). The Indonesian President states facts about Indonesia's economic growth over the past decade and expresses his confidence in the projection of higher economic growth this year.

According to van Leeuwen (2007), The statement "Indonesia's economy grew by more than 5 percent every year over the last decade and I'm confident that this year our growth will be higher" in Data 2 is an instrumental rationalization legitimacy strategy. Rationalization makes activities or policies seem reasonable, useful, or effective. This legitimacy is created by displaying quantitative facts of steady economic development, with "more than 5 percent every year" proving policy effectiveness. This prior performance helps the speaker logically predict growth. "I'm confident" also reinforces the speaker's leadership skills. Thus, fact-based argumentation and measurable consequences define policy legitimacy, showing how statistics rationally generate it.

Data 3

"Peace and stability are the ultimate prerequisites for growth and prosperity."

This utterance uses a representative speech act that states a fact or belief regarding the relationship between peace, stability, and prosperity. The Indonesian President expresses his views on the importance of peace and stability as primary requirements for achieving growth and prosperity.

Data 3 uses van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy procedures of reasoning and moral evaluation. The statement rationalizes peace and stability as a precondition for progress and prosperity. This makes stability a prerequisite for economic growth, using instrumental reasoning to support the program.

The statement also evaluates morality. Peace and stability are framed as technological variables and as universally desirable ideas. The word "ultimate" stresses their centrality and normative value. A policy is morally legitimate when socially accepted ideals justify it, according to van Leeuwen. Combining causal thinking with socially and morally correct values makes this policy seem logical and ethical.

Data 4

"We have saved 18 billion dollars by stopping inefficient and dubious programs from our budget, and redirected this fund, these funds to projects that directly improve livelihoods and impact all of society."

This utterance uses a representative speech act to convey a fact or claim regarding savings in funds and their redistribution to projects that benefit the community more. The Indonesian President stated that the policy of reducing inefficient programs had resulted in significant savings and redirected them to projects more focused on improving community welfare.

According to van Leeuwen (2007), Data 4's speech legitimizes instrumental rationali-

zation. Instrumental rationalization proves acts' purpose, utility, or effects. The figure "\$18 billion," which quantifies the budget efficiency policy's effectiveness, lends respectability. This figure emphasizes objectivity, openness, and accountability, making the government's actions seem rational rather than arbitrary.

By labeling earlier initiatives as useless, "stopping inefficient and dubious programs" justifies their elimination. A problem-solution logic: identify inefficiency, remedy it (program termination), and saving money builds legitimacy. The sentence "redirected these funds to projects that directly improve livelihoods and impact all of society" emphasizes the instrumental aspect, emphasizing immediate benefits and broad societal implications. The policy appears fiscally and socially efficient. Thus, effectiveness, efficiency, and measurable advantages legitimize the government's activities as reasonable, economically and socially optimal.

Data 5

"History teaches us peace and stability are our most valuable assets."

This speech uses a representative speech act that makes a claim about the value of peace and stability as the most valuable assets based on lessons from history. The President conveys his views on the importance of both in national development and prosperity.

Van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy theory's mythopoesis and tradition authorization technique are represented in Data 5. Authorization-wise, "history" is impersonal. History is viewed as a source of collective wisdom with normative authority, suggesting it may "teach" us useful lessons. This historical personification makes its lessons objective, time-tested, and hard to dispute, supporting the speaker's perspective.

The statement's legitimacy comes from a communal past narrative, making it mythopoeitic. Van Leeuwen defines mythopoesis as justifying acts or ideals with stories or narratives, especially from the past. By saying that history "teaches" the necessity of peace and stability, the speaker implies that conflict and instability teach moral lessons, linking peace with historical wisdom. The term "our most valuable assets" reinforces legitimacy by presenting peace and stability as essential, common goods that must be safeguarded. A historical narrative that depicts peace and stability as a reflection of shared experience, not just a pragmatic policy, establishes legitimacy.

Data 6

"Today, 70 million Indonesians receive free medical checkups and they will receive free medical checkups once a year for the rest of their lives."

This sentence uses a representative speech act that conveys facts about government policy regarding health services, namely providing free medical check-ups to 70 million Indonesians that will last a lifetime.

In van Leeuwen's (2007) paradigm, Data 6 shows rationalization and moral evaluation legitimacy strategies. Use of quantitative facts, such as "70 million Indonesians," to demonstrate the policy's reach and efficacy builds legitimacy. "Once a year for the rest of their lives" emphasizes the policy's sustainability and long-term commitment, supporting steady, long-term public planning.

The declaration also moralizes free healthcare as a state responsibility and social welfare value. Healthcare is seen as positive, just, and vital. Virtues like social justice and caring give actions moral legitimacy, according to van Leeuwen. So, legitimacy is built on measurable facts and humanitarian principles.

Data 7

"The duty of a leader is very simple, to ensure that the poor and the weak can smile and laugh."

This utterance uses a representative speech act that expresses a view or principle regarding a leader's responsibilities. The President stated that a leader's primary duty is to ensure the welfare of those most in need, namely the poor and vulnerable.

Van Leeuwen's (2007) legitimacy technique of moral evaluation is shown in Data 7. Moral appraisal legitimizes behaviors or policies using social norms, values, or ethics. This statement emphasizes leadership's moral duties, not its technical skills. Leadership is morally responsible in "The duty of a leader" because "duty" implies a strong normative requirement. The speaker portrays leadership as a moral duty to people's welfare rather than bureaucratic complexity by calling this task "very simple."

"The poor and the weak" emphasize vulnerable social groups in need of protection, harmonizing with humanitarian values and social fairness. Instead than using economic statistics, "smile and laugh" symbolizes happiness and well-being, engaging the audience's emotions. Thus, empathy, social concern, and moral responsibility establish leadership as an ethical profession that protects vulnerable groups and promotes human well-being.

Data 8

"We are creating more than 600,000 jobs, just at the kitchens."

This sentence uses a representative speech act to express the government's achievements or results, namely the creation of more than 600,000 jobs in the kitchen sector. The President highlighted the positive impact of policies aimed at creating jobs.

In Data 8, the statement illustrates the legitimacy strategy of rationalization, specifically instrumental rationalization, within van Leeuwen's (2007) framework. Instrumental rationalization legitimizes actions by focusing on goals, functions, or concrete outcomes. Here, legitimacy is built through the measurable result of creating "more than 600,000 jobs," which serves as objective evidence of the policy's success. The use of quantitative data makes the government's actions appear logical, effective, and results-driven.

The emphasis on job creation highlights the policy's instrumental goal of improving economic well-being by providing employment opportunities. Therefore, legitimacy is derived from rational arguments about tangible economic benefits, rather than moral authority or historical narratives. Through this strategy, the government is positioned as a productive, solution-oriented actor addressing the public's economic needs.

Commissive Acts

This illocutionary act reflects the speaker's commitment to do something in the future. The speaker promises or commits to performing a certain action.

Data 9

"Our policies have been and will always be well calibrated."

This utterance uses a commissive speech act because it expresses a commitment or promise made by the President regarding the policies being implemented. In this case, the President promises that government policies will always be properly and appropriately implemented.

Data 9 combines rationalization and institutional authorization for validity. The phrase "well calibrated" implies that the policy was carefully calculated, emphasizing competence, systematic preparation, and strategic considerations. The policy appears rational and professional since it has a logical base and aims to achieve precise goals.

The temporal structure of "have been and will always be" makes the policy seem stable, consistent, and long-term. According to institutional authorization, "our policies" stress the government's formal authority to formulate and implement policies. Rational design and the state's institutional role as the lawful decision-maker give legitimacy. These techniques reinforce the policy's rationality, professionalism, and consistency with-

in legitimate institutional authority. Public trust in future policies is increased by this image of competent governance.

Data 10

"We will co-invest and grow with you."

The utterance in Data 10 uses a commissive speech act because it expresses the President's promise or commitment to invest together with other parties and grow and develop alongside them. The President promises to participate directly in mutually beneficial investment and progress.

Instrumental rationalization and relational morality are used to legitimize this statement. From a rationalization standpoint, "co-invest" and "grow" indicate definite, mutually beneficial economic goals. Instrumental rationalization legitimizes activities by emphasizing their purpose and desired outcomes, according to van Leeuwen (2007). Co-investment is presented as a sensible option to achieve shared economic prosperity, with action verbs like "co-invest" indicating active engagement.

The term "with you" adds a relational dimension to moral appraisal, creating closeness, solidarity, and equal cooperation between speaker and audience. This partnership emphasizes cooperation and inclusion, reflecting principles of unity and mutual support. Legitimacy is built through economic effectiveness and equal and supportive relationships, especially in international or intersectoral cooperation.

Expressive Acts

This illocutionary act is used to express the speaker's feelings, emotions, or attitude towards a particular situation or event.

Data 11

"Distinguished President and CEO of the WEF, Mr. Borge Brende."

The utterance in Data 11 uses an expressive speech act because it conveys appreciation or respect to someone, in this case, the President and CEO of the WEF, Mr. Borge Brende. This statement does not convey information or a commitment, but an expression of appreciation or respect.

Van Leeuwen (2007) defines Data 11 as a legitimacy approach of personal power authorization. The title "President and CEO of the WEF" underlines the figure's institutional credibility and stature. According to van Leeuwen, legitimacy comes from an individual or institution's authority. Honorifics like "Distinguished" emphasize this authority's symbolic relevance and professional and social validity.

This method establishes the speaker's authority and links them to a credible worldwide network. Referring to personal authority in a formal social framework boosts the speaker's ethos and places them in an international institutional setting. Thus, recognizing the individual's formal and symbolic position strengthens the diplomatic or international interaction's legitimacy.

Data 12

"This is for me, heartwarming because what we are doing is we are empowering the future generation of Indonesians."

This utterance uses expressive speech acts because it conveys the President's feelings or emotions regarding the results or impacts of the policies he has implemented. In this case, the President stated that the government's actions are very encouraging and moving for him, as they relate to empowering Indonesia's future generations.

Data 12's speech combines moral judgment and goal-oriented justification for legitimacy. Use of the phrase "heartwarming" adds emotional elements, describing the activity

as desirable, ethically valuable, and kind. Van Leeuwen (2007) argues that moral judgment legitimizes behaviors based on positive, socially acknowledged qualities like empathy, care, and communal hope. The phrase “empowering the future generation” emphasizes youth empowerment, progress, sustainability, and intergenerational responsibility.

The statement also includes goal-oriented rationalization. Morally excellent and strategically good for the nation's future are offered. Showing a clear aim and long-term benefits strengthens legitimacy. Thus, moral ideals (empathy, hope, sustainability) and goal rationalization frame the activity as ethically correct, socially logical, and future-focused, establishing legitimacy.

Directive Acts

This illocutionary act is used by the speaker to ask or direct the listener to do something. This includes commands, requests, or suggestions.

Data 13

“We must combat corruption, manipulation, maleficence.”

This sentence uses a directive speech act because it suggests or gives directions that aim to encourage certain actions, namely fighting corruption, manipulation and crime. Data 13 uses legitimacy and normative authority to evaluate morality. Van Leeuwen (2007) states that moral judgment justifies behaviors based on a defined value system that distinguishes right and wrong. The deontic modality “must” asserts a binding moral responsibility. Corruption, manipulation, and maleficence are considered wrong, damaging, and against justice and integrity. This contrasts the proper action (combating certain practices) with the wrong action (perpetuating or condoning them).

A strong ethical belief that opposing evil is moral is what legitimizes it. Additionally, using “we” promotes unity and shared accountability, expanding moral obligation to the collective level. This technique builds legitimacy by forming a moral collectivity and inviting the audience to fight immorality. Moral obligation, a clear value dichotomy, and collective solidarity legitimize this statement.

Data 14

“Our social policies must expand productivity and produce growth.”

The utterance in Data 14 uses directive speech acts because it suggests or gives direction regarding the objectives of social policy, namely to increase productivity and generate growth. Data 14 legitimizes instrumental rationalization with institutional authorization. According to van Leeuwen (2007), rationalization justifies an activity based on its purpose, function, or benefits. The statement “expand productivity and produce growth” emphasizes outcome-oriented economic aims and positions social policy as a strategic instrument rather than a normative good.

The modal “must” indicates a technical, not moral, requirement that the policy is needed to meet economic productivity and growth goals. This emphasizes urgency and structure. Associating “our social policies” with institutional power implies that the government is the legitimate actor in policy design and implementation. The policy's legitimacy is institutionally valid and sensible in economic development. This study identifies and analyzes the types of illocutionary speech acts in the speech of the President of the Republic of Indonesia at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Davos 2026.

This study found that in the speech of the President of the Republic of Indonesia at the World Economic Forum (WEF) Davos 2026, there was a dominance of representative speech acts (62.87%), followed by commissives (15.44%), expressives (11.40%), and directives (10.29%). Representative speech acts (assertives) were most often used to convey facts or claims that strengthen Indonesia's image and economic policies before international audiences. This finding is in line with various previous studies that show the domi-

nance of this type of speech act in political discourse. First, Srikandi's (2020) research shows that Donald Trump used assertive speech acts most often in his speech. This dominance is caused by the many statements containing facts, beliefs, or claims that are considered true by the speaker. These results are consistent with Searle's theory that assertives function to bind the speaker to the truth of the proposition being uttered. In line with this, Ramadhani et al. (2019) found that the most dominant assertive categories in Trump's political speeches were statements of fact and assertions, particularly statements of fact containing persuasive elements. They concluded that representative speech acts are central to the persuasive function of political speeches because they are used to represent oneself and convince the public through facts. This strengthens the argument that in international forums, conveying economic facts and data-based claims is a key strategy for building credibility and trust with global audiences.

Minoo et al. (2018), in their analysis of President Obama's speeches regarding ISIS, found that assertive speech was the most frequently used type of speech act. Its primary function was to justify policies (justification of airstrikes) through truth claims. They asserted that truth claims in political discourse operate within a power relationship—dominant discourse both reinforces and is reinforced by legitimized “truths.” Thus, when the Indonesian government uses representative speech to explain economic stability or structural reform, it is not only informative but also legitimizing and strategic in establishing authority in the international sphere. Măda's (2018) research also shows that in the Romanian parliament, the Prime Minister frequently uses an assertive followed by a commissive strategy to state a condition or problem (representative) and then promise a solution. This pattern suggests that representative speech serves as an argumentative basis before political commitments are made. In the Indonesian economic context, representations about macroeconomic achievements can form the foundation for investment commitments, bilateral cooperation, or subsequent policies announced to international audiences. Hussan (2024) found that in the speeches of Martin Luther King Jr. and Winston Churchill, assertive speech acts played a significant role in establishing the ideological foundation and urgency of action. Churchill demonstrated a high level of assertiveness in war, while King used assertive speech to emphasize fundamental beliefs about equality. These findings reinforce that in various political and cultural contexts, representation serves as a primary tool for constructing discursive realities and influencing audience perceptions. Thus, the finding that representative speech acts are most often used to strengthen Indonesia's image and economic policies before international audiences does not stand alone, but is consistent with a general trend in global political discourse that makes representation a primary instrument of legitimacy, persuasion, and credibility building.

In addition, commissive speech acts, which accounted for 15.44%, served to demonstrate the President's commitment to achieving specific goals, such as investment and international collaboration. This aligns with various previous studies that emphasized the primary function of commissives as markers of political commitment to future actions. Kohar et al. (2018) identified that the most common form of commissive in presidential election debates was promises, which directly represent the candidate's actions to commit to the public regarding future steps, and serve to convince the audience based on the vision, mission, and ideas offered. Similarly, Marklund (2023) emphasized that promises are a vital rhetorical tool for the president to convey political and administrative direction during his term, as they not only bind the speaker to future actions but also build trust and project policy direction. Dylgjeri (2017) also found that commissives are an important characteristic of victory speeches, particularly in delivering promises and demonstrating commitment to realizing projects promised to voters. Furthermore, Al-Bantany (2013) shows that commissives such as promise and guarantee are used to express strong commitment to future actions, and guarantee tends to be chosen because it implies a stronger sense of seriousness. Irwandika (2021) also emphasizes that politicians' tendency to use commissives in campaigns reflects their level of commitment to voters, so the frequency of their use can reflect the seriousness of the political agenda being conveyed. Further-

more, Respati (2014) shows that commissives such as promise and challenge are used by political leaders to demonstrate commitment to rebuilding the nation, while also emphasizing the pragmatic role of language in achieving political goals. Thus, the use of commissive speech acts, which amounted to 15.44%, can be understood as a pragmatic strategy to emphasize the President's commitment to the investment and international collaboration agenda, while simultaneously building legitimacy and trust among the public and global partners in the direction of the policies to be implemented.

Expressive speech acts (11.40%) were used to express feelings or pride in Indonesia's achievements, providing emotional nuances that strengthen relationships with global audiences. This is in line with various previous studies that emphasize the strategic function of expressiveness in political discourse. Fathoni et al. (2025) showed that expressive speech acts such as expressions of gratitude and pride are strategically used by political figures to strengthen national identity and public image, while simultaneously managing public relations and building social cohesion; pragmatically, expressiveness displays the speaker's psychological attitude towards a situation. In line with this, Nuraini et al. (2020) emphasized that expressive speech acts in political discourse function to express psychological feelings such as gratitude, praise, approval, or pride, which are inherently related to the emotional dimension of political communication. Bumi et al. (2024) also found that expressive forms such as thanking, congratulating, praising, and flattering are used in campaign speeches to express psychological attitudes while building emotional closeness with the audience. Furthermore, Abbas et al. (2021) showed that in political debates, expressions such as praise, apologies, or disagreement not only reflect personal feelings but also serve as communication strategies in political competition. Thus, the 11.40% use of expressive language can be understood as a pragmatic strategy to display pride in national achievements, build a positive image of Indonesia, and create emotional bonds that strengthen the legitimacy and acceptance of messages globally.

Finally, directive speech acts, recorded at 10.29%, directed audiences to support Indonesian policies and collaborate in achieving common goals, such as cooperation in facing global challenges. This is reinforced by various previous studies that emphasize the persuasive and mobilizing functions of these speech acts in political discourse. Amalia and Prayitno (2025) explain that directives such as requests, invitations, orders, suggestions, and prohibitions are effective tools used by public leaders to influence public behavior and opinion and encourage actions aligned with their political vision and mission. In the context of political debate, Pratika (2025) shows that directives are used to challenge opponents, force policy clarification, and manage voter perceptions by directing attention to strategic issues. Ramanathan et al. (2020) also found that directives, along with commissives, play a crucial role in discursive strategies to strengthen the relationship between politicians and citizens, create a sense of community, and indicate the direction of future policies. Meanwhile, Hisham and Hashim (2022) revealed that directive speech acts in political speeches are used to persuade, persuade, and motivate audiences to act and participate in political change. Therefore, the 10.29% use of directives in presidential speeches can be understood as a pragmatic strategy to persuade and mobilize international audiences to support Indonesian policies and collaborate in achieving shared goals, particularly in addressing global challenges.

Meanwhile, the legitimacy patterns in the discourse studied show a strong tendency towards the use of legitimacy strategies according to van Leeuwen's (2007) framework, particularly rationalization, moral evaluation, authorization, and, in some cases, mythopoeisis. Legitimacy is most dominantly constructed through instrumental rationalization, namely the justification of actions and policies by emphasizing effectiveness, goals, and measurable results. This pattern is consistent in assertive speech acts containing quantitative data such as economic growth, budget savings, job creation, and health policy coverage. These figures serve as empirical evidence that conveys the impression of objectivity, transparency, and accountability, thus positioning policies as logical, rational decisions oriented toward outcomes. In other words, the discourse builds performance-based legiti-

macy, where government success is demonstrated through concrete, verifiable achievements.

A major limitation of this study is the use of data from a single speech by the Indonesian President at the WEF Davos 2026. This limits the generalizability of the research results to other speeches or to speeches by heads of state at other international forums. Furthermore, this analysis focuses solely on the speech text and does not account for non-verbal elements or direct audience responses, which can have a significant impact on political communication.

This research makes important practical and theoretical contributions to understanding the language strategies used by state leaders in international forums. Practically, the findings demonstrate how diplomatic speeches are utilized as strategic instruments to build legitimacy, create a positive image, and support and communicate Indonesia's economic policies at the global level. Analysis of the speeches of the President of the Republic of Indonesia demonstrates that language functions not only as a means of conveying information but also as a tool of power that shapes perceptions, strengthens credibility, and constructs Indonesia's position in the international diplomatic arena. Therefore, the results of this study can serve as a reference for studies of political communication and international diplomacy, particularly in understanding how legitimacy is constructed through discursive practices.

CONCLUSION

This study examined Indonesia's President's illocutionary speech acts at WEF Davos 2026 and how they shape Indonesia's image and political legitimacy. Representative speech acts predominated (62.87%), followed by commissive (15.44%), expressive (11.40%), and directive (10.29%). Representative speech acts, which highlight “facts,” were used to boost Indonesia's global image and economic policies. Commissive speech acts showed the President's dedication to worldwide collaboration, while expressive acts showed emotional nuances to strengthen global contacts. Directive speech helped promote global aims. The discourse relied on instrumental rationalization to demonstrate economic growth, job creation, and health policy effectiveness. These personalities established Indonesia's policies as rational, effective, and responsible through performance-based legitimacy. Authority came from international organizations and historical narratives, while moral evaluations emphasized peace and stability. This study shows that diplomatic language shapes legitimacy and perceptions, making political rhetoric a strategic tool of power. However, this study has drawbacks. One speech was analyzed, restricting its applicability to other political addresses or international platforms. Only linguistic variables were considered, excluding non-verbal cues and audience responses that could affect the speech's effectiveness. To better comprehend international political communication, future studies should include various speeches and non-verbal factors. This study illuminates state leaders' global language techniques, advancing political communication and international diplomacy. It shows how speeches establish credibility, trust, and worldwide positioning. This research can be expanded by studying diplomatic speech acts and global power relations.

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Received (06-03-2026)

Accepted (01-04-2026)

Published (15-04-2026)