

## **Pragmatic Analysis of Hate Speech Directed at Transgender People on Selected YouTube and TikTok Channels**

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### **Abstract**

*Hate speech presents significant challenges to social cohesion, the protection of fundamental human rights, and democratic values, particularly in rapidly circulating digital media. While existing scholarship has examined online hate speech against various marginalised groups, comparatively limited attention has been paid to hate speech targeting transgender individuals on video-based platforms such as YouTube and TikTok. To address this gap, this study investigates 20 purposively selected video excerpts (12 from YouTube and 8 from TikTok), chosen for their relevance to discussions of transgender issues and the presence of potentially hateful discourse. The videos were transcribed and analysed using a qualitative descriptive design informed by Searle's (1969) framework of illocutionary speech acts to examine speakers' communicative strategies and intentions. Findings show that the videos predominantly employ assertive, expressive, and directive acts to convey negative attitudes, reinforce stereotypes, and promote discriminatory viewpoints toward transgender individuals. The analysis also identifies recurring features across both platforms, including derogatory expressions, demeaning characterisations, and exclusionary rhetoric, illustrating how hate speech is discursively constructed and normalised in user-generated content.*

**Keywords:** *Transgender, hate speech, YouTube, TikTok, speech acts, illocutionary acts.*

## **Introduction**

Hate speech undermines societal cohesion, democratic values, and human rights, fostering intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination (Scutari, 2012). It is increasingly pervasive in online spaces such as Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube, where it dehumanises and bullies individuals or groups based on perceived differences. Wulandari (2022) likens hate speech on social media to “the internet rifle,” and Banks (2010) notes that the anonymity and mobility of the internet make harassment commonplace. Social media can propagate sexual assault, stalking, harassment, and hate speech both online and offline (Kennedy & Taylor, 2010). Scholars have highlighted its harmful effects (Citron, 2011; Bliuc et al., 2018; Gagliardone et al., 2016; Willard, 2007; Meibauer, 2013).

Video-based platforms like YouTube and TikTok are particularly vulnerable to hate speech. Chen (2021) and Barnett (2007) argue that video facilitates the spread of hate content, while research shows that YouTube videos frequently contain abusive materials (Doring & Mohseni, 2019; Kopecky et al., 2020; Moor et al., 2010). TikTok also hosts content that discriminates against marginalised groups, including violent white supremacy, which remained largely unnoticed until recent reports (Christopher, 2019; Chen, 2021; Weimann & Masri, 2020). Politically motivated hate speech is especially destructive, promoting exclusion, discrimination, and even violence (Kinney, 2008).

Transgender individuals are common targets of hate speech, including insults, slurs, mockery, and dehumanisation, leading to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and self-harm (But et al., 2022; Grant et al., 2011). Hate speech also restricts access to healthcare, jobs, and education, exacerbating social inequalities. United Nations (2020) identifies hate speech as encompassing discrimination, incitement, defamatory language, hostility, prejudice, bullying, and demeaning language. Balancing the right to free speech with protection against hate speech is complex but essential, particularly for vulnerable groups like transgender people.

Historically, transgender individuals held respected roles in many communities as spiritual leaders, healers, and teachers (Feinberg, 2013), but have faced stigmatisation, exclusion, and demeaning labels (Joseph, 2016). Recently, linguistic scholars have increasingly examined hate speech from a pragmatic perspective (Alabi & Ayeloja, 2017; Dhayef & Ali, 2020; Culpeper, 2021; Oktaviani & Alam, 2022; Benki et al., 2022). Pragmatic analysis allows an understanding of how hate speech

functions in context, such as performing harmful acts, reinforcing stereotypes, and inciting violence, while revealing communicative strategies, forms, and intentions behind it.

Despite the growing body of research on social media hate speech against transgender individuals (But et al., 2022; Stefanita & Buf, 2021; Silva & Silva, 2021; Kalia, 2022; Yuliyanti et al., 2020), studies examining the pragmatic aspects of such hate speech on YouTube and TikTok remain limited. While some research has investigated extreme forms of hate speech (O'Connor, 2021), cross-cultural patterns (Jaszczyk-Grzyb et al., 2023), or covert/ironic expressions (Baider & Constantinou, 2020), little attention has been given to the communicative strategies employed by creators of hate speech videos on these platforms. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the pragmatic strategies of hate speech targeting transgender individuals on YouTube and TikTok, using a qualitative approach to systematically identify, analyse, and interpret such content. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature on pragmatics, online communication, hate speech, and transgender studies.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to investigate hate speech directed at transgender people in selected YouTube and TikTok videos from a pragmatic lens, to identify the communicative strategies used to perpetuate hate speech. To achieve this aim, the specific objectives are:

1. To identify and analyse hate speech directed at transgender people in selected YouTube and TikTok videos.
2. To analyse the communicative strategies employed in the selected YouTube and TikTok videos that perpetuate hate speech against transgender people from the point of view of Searle's Illocutionary Acts.

### **Studies on Hate Speech against Transgender People**

Huertas Medina (2021) examined how British newspapers represent transgender identities using Critical Discourse Analysis and found that derogatory expressions such as "fake woman" and "abomination" were recurrent, positioning transgender people as deviant and illegitimate. While this study usefully demonstrates how transphobia is discursively constructed in traditional media, it remains primarily concerned with patterns of representation at a macro-discursive level and pays limited attention to the micro-pragmatic mechanisms through which such meanings are enacted in

interaction. Furthermore, its focus on print journalism overlooks the dynamic, multimodal, and interactional nature of contemporary digital communication, where speakers actively perform hate through strategic speech acts. Unlike Huertas Medina's reliance on CDA alone, the present study complements critical concerns with a pragmatic perspective by employing Searle's speech act framework to examine how illocutionary force, rather than representation alone, functions in the production and circulation of hate speech on YouTube and TikTok.

But et al. (2022) analysed Pakistani television comedy shows to examine how humour frames transgender people and concluded that comedic discourse frequently portrayed them as unintelligent and socially marginal. While the study provides useful evidence of how humour can function as a vehicle for stigma, its reliance on scripted broadcast performances limits its ability to account for the spontaneous, interactive, and unpredictable nature of online communication, where meanings are negotiated in real time among diverse audiences. Consequently, the study offers limited insight into the pragmatic mechanisms through which hostility is enacted in everyday, user-generated discourse.

Kalia (2022) extended the investigation of transgender representation into digital culture by analysing memes on Instagram and Reddit through a multimodal discourse framework, demonstrating how irony and humour contribute to the normalisation of stereotypes. Although this study is methodologically closer to the present research in its focus on digital media, it remains primarily concerned with visual-semiotic and humour-based interpretation rather than the pragmatic force of utterances. As a result, it does not fully explain how hostility is linguistically performed through illocutionary acts in interactive platforms such as TikTok and YouTube.

From a socio-political perspective, Stakic (2011) showed that Serbian nationalist discourse constructs transgender and LGB identities as threats to national cohesion, while Silva and Carvalho (2023) argued that covert hate in Portugal, often masked as humour or backhanded compliments, can be more damaging than overt attacks. These studies make important contributions to understanding the ideological foundations of hate speech; however, they operate largely at a macro-discursive level and do not systematically examine the micro-pragmatic strategies through which such ideologies are enacted in everyday online communication.

In addition to representational and ideological analyses, research has also focused on the consequences of hate speech. Stefanita and Buf (2021) demonstrated that exposure to online hate increased depression, anxiety, and social isolation among transgender individuals, while Akmes

and Deniz (2017) linked hostile media portrayals to real-world discrimination, violence, and even murder. Although these studies compellingly establish the psychological and social harm of transphobic discourse, they are primarily outcome-oriented and do not interrogate the linguistic and pragmatic structures through which hostility is produced in the first place.

In all, existing scholarship has significantly advanced understanding of how transgender people are represented in media, how ideology shapes transphobia, and how hate speech affects lived experiences. However, these studies tend to privilege either ideological analysis, multimodal interpretation, or psychological consequences at the expense of a detailed examination of the pragmatic mechanisms that make hate speech actionable and persuasive in interaction. Addressing this gap, the present study adopts Searle's (1969) speech act framework to analyse how hate is not merely represented but actively performed through illocutionary strategies in purposively selected YouTube and TikTok videos.

### **Studies on Hate Speech on Social Media**

Existing research on online hate speech provides valuable insights into the forms, ideological underpinnings, and consequences of hostility directed at transgender individuals. Silva and Silva (2021), for instance, investigated Facebook comments using content analysis and categorised hate into insults, mockery, discrimination, and victimisation. Their study offers a useful typology of online hostility; however, it remains primarily descriptive and does not employ a theoretical framework that interrogates the illocutionary force of comments. Unlike the present study, which adopts Searle's (1969) speech act theory to analyse how hostility is pragmatically constructed, Silva and Silva's work does not examine how specific linguistic strategies perform or reinforce prejudice.

On YouTube, Yuliyanti et al. (2020) applied speech act theory to analyse comments on political content, finding that assertive and expressive acts dominated hostile discourse. Wulandari (2022) similarly focused on political debates, highlighting the use of declarative moods and explicit evaluations to delegitimise opponents. While both studies share the present study's pragmatic orientation, they differ theoretically in that their primary concern is political communication rather than identity-based hostility, and methodologically in that they focus on political comment threads rather than transgender-directed hate on social media platforms. TikTok has also been studied as a site of online hostility. O'Connor (2021) identified extremist ideologies, threats, and calls to violence circulating on the platform; Ria and Setiawan (2023) categorised TikTok hate into insults,

slander, and humour; Alfarisi (2023) highlighted mockery, defamation, and taboo expressions; and Suha and Sudarwati (2021) explored how parody and memes embed hate speech in popular culture. While these studies demonstrate the prevalence of hostility on TikTok, they are largely descriptive, lacking a theoretical framework that addresses the pragmatic mechanisms of speech. By contrast, the current study applies speech act theory to examine how illocutionary strategies actively construct transgender-directed hate, combining a theoretical lens with methodological attention to multimodal social media interactions.

Other studies have focused on covert or responsive strategies in online discourse. Baider and Constantinou (2020) argued that irony can function as covert hate, masking prejudice beneath humour, and Sim et al. (2020) demonstrated that counter-speech on YouTube may deter hate, depending on the speaker's perceived authority. While these studies are theoretically aligned with discourse and interactionist perspectives, they differ from the present research because they neither centre transgender-directed hate nor systematically analyse the illocutionary strategies that make online hostility persuasive and socially reinforced.

Research has also addressed the consequences of hate speech. Stefanita and Buf (2021) demonstrated that exposure to online hate increases depression, anxiety, and social isolation among transgender individuals, and Akmese and Deniz (2017) linked hostile media portrayals to real-world discrimination, violence, and even murder. Although these studies highlight the seriousness of online hostility, they differ from the present study both theoretically and methodologically: they focus on psychological and social outcomes rather than the pragmatic linguistic structures that generate hostility, whereas the current research investigates how speech acts function to perform and perpetuate hate on YouTube and TikTok.

Overall, these strands of literature indicate that transgender individuals are targeted through overt (insults, slander, threats) and covert (humour, parody, irony) forms of online hate. While some prior studies have applied speech act theory, they have largely focused on political discourse or descriptive typologies, and few have examined transgender-directed hate on interactive, multimodal platforms. The present study addresses these gaps by integrating Searle's (1969) speech act framework with a focus on transgender-directed hostility to analyse how illocutionary strategies operate in real-time social media communication and thereby extend both the theoretical and methodological scope of online hate speech research.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Speech Act Theory**

Most pragmatists believe that the study of speech acts is central to pragmatics; hence, any consideration of language in context is influenced by this theory for the sake of explicitness. As one of the major theories of pragmatics, speech act theory was founded by J. L. Austin in 1962 and further developed after his death by J. Searle in 1969. Pragmatics, in explaining underlying meanings of context-related features of language, incorporates concepts such as the cooperative principle, relevance theory, and speech acts. Of these, *speech acts* have been isolated for the present study because they account for how assumptions and ideas are interpreted in relation to discourse participants and the linguistic choices that constrain, structure, and influence communication. As a subfield of pragmatics, speech act theory examines how words are used not only to present information but also to perform actions. The theory holds that utterances can achieve locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary functions in both spoken and written texts. The concept of speech acts has been described differently by various scholars. Ezeifeke (2018) notes that researchers accept that expressions themselves constitute activities with profound consequences for the listener (p. 50). Similarly, Birner and Betty (2013) argue that uttering something is equivalent to doing something, with conveyed utterances being essential to the actions performed. In the same vein, Mey (2001) posits that verbal actions alter the existing state of affairs (p. 95). By uttering an expression, speech is performed, and this can trigger an action in the hearer's mind.

Scholars have also explored the application of the theory. Jacobs (1989), for instance, examined speech acts in relation to arguments, emphasising that they provide a favourable framework for studying the practical organisation of arguments (p. 346). He further affirmed that Searle developed *felicity conditions* to classify, analyse, and evaluate speech acts, thereby improving language performance and meaning (Searle, 1969, 1975). These conditions are essential in determining the illocutionary point, the central meaning the speaker intends to convey.

### **Searle's View on Speech Act Theory**

John Roger Searle expanded Austin's concept of speech acts in 1969. He argued that speaking a language is essentially performing a speech act. According to Searle (1969), such acts include making statements, issuing commands, asking questions, and making promises. These are guided by specific rules that govern the use of linguistic elements (p. 16). He noted that every linguistic

communication encompasses speech acts, with the basic units of communication being not symbols or words in isolation, but their formation within the performance of a speech act (p. 16). Searle explained that a speech act consists of propositional content (used to refer and predict) and illocutionary force, which together define communication. He further asserted that saying something in a particular context and for a particular purpose constitutes a speech act (Searle, 1969, p. 19).

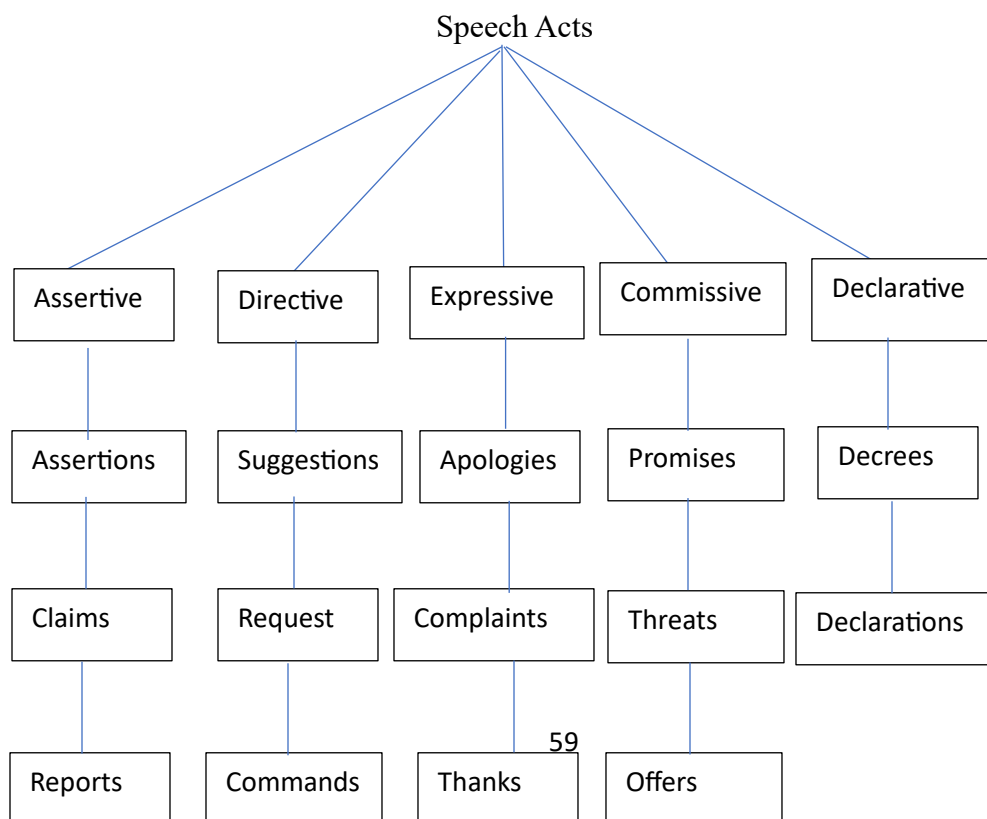
### Searle's Classification of Speech Acts

According to Searle, cited in Sihombing et al. (2021), there are three main types of speech acts:

1. Locutionary acts (the act of making a meaningful utterance)
2. Illocutionary acts (the act performed in saying something, i.e., the intention of the speaker)
3. Perlocutionary acts (the consequential act of saying something)

Austin (1962) noted that all utterances could simultaneously accomplish these three functions. For illocutionary acts, however, Searle (1983) and Usman (2017, p. 14) emphasised that they must be performed *intentionally*.

Austin (1962) also proposed a taxonomy of illocutionary acts, dividing them into verdictives, expressives, commissives, behabitives, and exercitives. Searle later revised this framework, classifying them into assertives (or representatives), directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations.



(Searle, 1976)

- Assertive/Representative: binds the speaker to the truth of what is said, informing listeners of facts or persuading them of certain beliefs. It involves utterances based on observation or conviction. Verbs include *predict, report, describe, inform, assert, deny, claim, conclude, suggest, and believe* (Hidayat, 2016).
- Directive: performed by the speaker with the intention that the listener takes action, such as *asking, demanding, suggesting, or challenging*. Akinwotu (2013, pp. 48–49) explains that directives seek to get the hearer to do something, including acts such as *commanding, warning, disagreeing, and pleading*.
- Commissive: commits the speaker to a future action, typically involving *promises, pledges, threats, or offers*. These are common in both educational and non-educational contexts, with verbs like *promise, vow, swear, and pledge*.
- Expressive: conveys the speaker's psychological state or attitude, such as *thanking, apologising, congratulating, or condoling*.
- Declarative: changes the external status of a situation solely by being uttered. Schane (2008) notes that declaratives often operate within institutional contexts, such as *blessing, firing, baptising, or excommunicating*. For instance, "Bless you that you are still safe from tragedy" implies divine preservation despite danger.

This theoretical framework is justified for the present study because it provides a nuanced understanding of illocutionary forces and communicative intentions underlying hate speech. It reveals how language is employed to assert, direct, declare, commit, and express attitudes or emotions that perpetuate harm and discrimination against transgender individuals. By applying this framework, the study seeks to uncover the complex mechanisms of hate speech and its impact on the targeted community.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Population of the Study and Research Design**

The study population comprises hate speech videos directed at transgender individuals on YouTube and TikTok, from which a purposive sample of 20 video excerpts, consisting of 12 from YouTube and 8 from TikTok, was selected for analysis. A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted

to provide an in-depth examination of how these platforms are used in the construction and circulation of hate speech. The study is anchored in Searle's (1969) taxonomy of illocutionary speech acts, which guided the pragmatic analysis of the selected videos.

### **Data and Sampling Technique**

The videos were selected through purposive sampling based on their explicit manifestation of hate speech directed at transgender individuals. The dataset comprises a total of 20 video excerpts, consisting of twelve from YouTube and eight from TikTok. The YouTube excerpts include multiple videos from @Mattwalsh specifically addressing transgender issues, as well as one video from @candaceowen. The TikTok excerpts were drawn from the accounts of @amalaekpunobi, @ryan\_upchurch, @joeybtoonz, @piersmorgan, @michaelknowles, alongside other relevant creators whose content met the inclusion criteria. All selected videos were downloaded, carefully transcribed verbatim, and systematically prepared for interpretation and analysis. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for this study, as it facilitated the deliberate selection of data that directly aligned with the research objective of examining hate speech against transgender individuals on YouTube and TikTok.

Although the sample consists of 20 video excerpts (12 from YouTube and 8 from TikTok), this study prioritises depth of analysis over breadth. In qualitative pragmatic and discourse-based research, smaller, carefully selected datasets are appropriate for detailed interpretation of communicative. The selected excerpts were therefore sufficient for identifying recurring patterns in the use of illocutionary acts in hate speech directed at transgender individuals.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The analysis was conducted within a qualitative descriptive framework, a flexible and exploratory approach well suited for practice-based research. Hate speech instances in the videos were identified using the United Nations' (2020, pp. 10-16) categorisation, which includes: (a) discrimination, (b) incitement, (c) defamatory language, (d) hostility or violence, (e) prejudice, (f) demeaning or insulting language, and (g) bullying. In addition, Searle's (1969) classification of illocutionary speech acts was applied to examine the communicative strategies underlying the expression of hate speech.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Given the sensitive nature of transgender identity and the harmful content analysed in this study,

several ethical considerations were observed. First, the study relies solely on publicly available YouTube and TikTok videos, which were accessed without interacting with content creators or audiences. No private or personal data was collected. Second, the analysis critically examines hate speech without endorsing or reproducing it uncritically; all offensive language is reported strictly for academic and analytical purposes. The findings are therefore framed with sensitivity to the lived experiences of transgender people and to contribute to scholarly understanding of online hate speech rather than perpetuate it.

### **Data presentation**

For data presentation and interpretation, the study integrates the United Nations’ (2020) categorisation of hate speech with Searle’s typology of illocutionary acts- assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative- applied to selected YouTube videos from @MattWalsh and @CandaceOwens and TikTok videos from @amalaekpunobi, @ryan\_upchurch, @joeybtoon, @piersmorgan, and @michaelknowles.

**Table 1: Identification of the Types of Hate Speech on YouTube Videos and their Communicative Strategies**

S/N	Excerpts	Identification of Hate Speech	Communicative Strategies
1	All of that is completely bogus; they’re not denied any of that at all... they are just attention-seeking narcissistic people.	Defamation	Assertive/Expressive
2	And the way to signal this allegiance is to constantly make gender-benders visible	Derogatory slurs	Assertive/Expressive/Directive
3	They're psychologically damaged. You can compare them to, you know, people who want to have sex with animals, literally.	Defamation	Assertive/Expressive

4	You can compare them to, you know, people who want to have sex with animals, literally.	Defamation/Dehumanization	Assertive/Expressive
5	She's an idiot, and she's an idiot for hire	Insult	Assertive/Expressive
6	which is how I know that Jeffery Marsh's Bottomless stupidity is unusual and possibly an indication of some sort of brain disease or trauma	Insult/Defamation	Assertive/Expressive
7	But in the meantime, what I can say is that ladyboy is cancelled and that'll do it for us for this portion of the show.	Derogatory slur	Declarative/Expressive
8	I don't even want to imagine what he'll look like when he's at his ugliest, documenting his creepy fetishised version of what it means to be a girl	Insult/Derogatory	Assertive/Expressive
9	That's because transgenderism runs exclusively on falsehoods, bad faith and emotional blackmail, and Mulvaney exemplifies all three.	Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive
10	I mean, it's complete and utter gibberish, and this is what happens when the transgender, perverted mindset runs riot. This is what it leads to: complete and utter insanity.	Derogatory slur/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive
11	You are weird and artificial, you are manufactured and lifeless, you are unearthly and eerie, you are some types of human deepfake.	Insult/Derogatory/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive

12	You are a man deprived of all the best qualities of men, but without any of the best qualities of women. Even your personality as a tranny is contrived; everything about you is fake.	Insult/Derogatory/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive
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**Table 2: Identification of the Types of Hate Speech on TikTok Videos and their Communicative Strategies**

S/N	Excerpts	Identification of Hate Speech	Communicative Strategy
13	I am not putting up with these transvestites	Insult/Derogatory/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive/Directive
14	It does say that you are inherently confused and a freak	Insult/Dehumanization/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive/Directive
15	Like what! You get an award for being confused. It's fucking weird.... With their weird voices	Insult/Mockery/Derogatory/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive/Directive
16	It seems like trans people have a lot of mental problems. It seems very hard to find a transgender person who is mentally stable. It seems like the entire community is insanely plagued with perversion. And sadly, I don't think they can ever get help.	Insult/Mockery/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive/Directive

17	These degenerates have a high sense of entitlement; they are practically suffering from self-delusion.	Derogatory slur/Stereotype	Assertive/Expressive/Directive
18	For the good of society, transgender people and transgenderism must be eradicated from public life.	Discriminatory/Stereotype	Directive/Assertive/Expressive
19	I'm sick of these men in dresses pretending to be women, all in the name of transgenderism. We need to stop playing their mental games.	Insult/Derogatory/Stereotype	Assertive/Directive/Expressive
20	The pronoun cult is a perverted community	Stereotype	Assertive

### **Discussion and interpretation of hate speech and its communicative strategies on YouTube**

Across the 20 video excerpts analysed, three dominant patterns emerged in the use of illocutionary acts. First, assertive acts were most frequently employed to present negative claims about transgender individuals as factual and unquestionable. Second, expressive acts were consistently used to convey contempt, ridicule, and moral condemnation. Third, directive and declarative acts appeared less frequently but were strategically used to discourage acceptance of transgender identities and symbolically exclude them from legitimacy. These patterns suggest that hate speech against transgender individuals on YouTube and TikTok is not random but systematically constructed through recurring pragmatic strategies.

#### **Excerpt 1**

“All of that is completely bogus; they’re not denied any of that at all... *they are just attention-seeking narcissistic people.*”

### **Defamation, Assertive, and Expressive Functions**

In Matt Walsh's YouTube video "Budlight Boycott," transgender people are generalised as narcissistic and attention-seeking, a harmful and inaccurate characterisation. Such labelling constitutes **defamation**, as it attacks reputation, scorns, and humiliates, aligning with Wulandari's (2022) definition of defamation as a form of character or reputation assassination.

The excerpt primarily functions as an **assertive illocutionary act**, presenting Walsh's claim that transgender marginalisation is "completely bogus" and framing the group as "attention-seeking narcissistic people" as factual rather than open to discussion. Simultaneously, it contains an **expressive element**, conveying contempt and disdain toward transgender individuals.

The communicative intention is twofold: to express scepticism about transgender visibility in brand endorsements and to discredit transgender individuals by portraying their claims as baseless and motivated by narcissism. Through these combined assertive and expressive acts, Walsh conveys his perspective while persuading his audience to dismiss transgender people, ultimately reinforcing prejudice and delivering a derogatory portrayal.

### **Excerpt 2: Derogatory Slur and Illocutionary Analysis**

In the statement, "*And the way to signal this allegiance is to constantly make gender-benders visible,*" the term "gender-benders" functions as a derogatory slur, framing transgender individuals as distorting or violating gender norms. Such language dismisses their gender identity, mocks nonconformity, and reinforces harmful stereotypes, reflecting transphobic attitudes and contributing to marginalisation.

The utterance primarily operates as an **assertive illocutionary act**, conveying the proposition that allegiance to transgender individuals is signalled by making them visible. Walsh presents this claim as factual, portraying transgender visibility as excessive, artificial, and ideologically imposed, thereby delegitimising recognition of transgender identity. Simultaneously, the statement carries **expressive force** through the slur "gender-benders," communicating ridicule, disdain, and contempt. It portrays transgender identity as invalid, laughable, or grotesque, revealing the speaker's negative attitude.

The utterance also contains an implied **directive act**. By framing visibility as the measure of allegiance, Walsh indirectly prescribes a course of action for audiences, corporations, or allies, suggesting that support is coerced conformity. This subtle directive discourages endorsement or normalisation of transgender visibility.

Overall, the statement combines assertion, ridicule, and indirect prescription, which creates a layered strategy that strengthens its derogatory effect, reinforces transphobic narratives, and undermines public acceptance of transgender identity.

### **Excerpt 3: Defamation, Dehumanisation, and Illocutionary Analysis**

The statement, *“They're psychologically damaged. You can compare them to, you know, people who want to have sex with animals, literally,”* is both **defamatory** and **dehumanising**. It falsely portrays transgender individuals as mentally unstable and equates their identity with criminal and immoral behaviour, harming dignity, reinforcing stigma, and perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Primarily, the utterance functions as an **assertive illocutionary act**, presenting the claim that transgender people are “psychologically damaged” as factual. This misrepresentation commits the speaker to the truth of a statement that is inaccurate and stigmatising.

Simultaneously, the comparison to bestiality carries **expressive force**, conveying contempt, disgust, and ridicule. This negative emotional attitude aims to delegitimize transgender identities and influence audience perception. By coupling a false assertion with a degrading analogy, the speaker employs a dual strategy: misrepresenting identity while expressing deep disapproval, encouraging prejudice, reinforcing stereotypes, and sustaining discriminatory narratives.

### **Excerpt 4: Defamation, Dehumanisation, and Illocutionary Analysis**

In Candace Owens’s YouTube video “The Worst,” the statement, “You can compare them to, you know, people who want to have sex with animals, literally,” constitutes severe **defamation and dehumanisation**. By equating transgender individuals with people who engage in bestiality, the speaker delegitimises their identity, undermines dignity, and reinforces harmful stereotypes that position them as deviant or immoral.

Primarily, the utterance functions as an **assertive illocutionary act**, presenting the comparison as a factual proposition, despite being inaccurate and offensive. Simultaneously, it carries **expressive force**, conveying disgust and contempt, ridiculing and demeaning transgender individuals. By combining assertive and expressive acts, the speaker creates a powerful discursive effect: the assertion misrepresents transgender identity, while the expressive component heightens contempt, inviting the audience to adopt a dismissive and hostile stance. This dual strategy legitimises prejudice and sustains discriminatory narratives, making the statement a particularly harmful example of online hate speech.

### **Excerpt 5: Insult and Illocutionary Analysis**

In Candace Owens's YouTube video "The Worst," the statement, "She's an idiot, and she's an idiot for hire," exemplifies a **speech act of insult**. The repetition of "idiot" intensifies the attack on the target's intelligence, while "for hire" implies willingness to degrade oneself for financial gain or publicity. As Fortuna et al. (2020) note, insults are inflammatory comments aimed at undermining an individual's character and credibility.

The utterance functions primarily as an **assertive illocutionary act**, presenting Owen's judgment as a factual evaluation of Logan Brown, a transgender man, rather than a personal opinion. The use of indicative language reinforces this assertive quality. Simultaneously, it carries **expressive force**, as the repetition and addition of "for hire" convey disdain and contempt, signalling a strong negative attitude. By combining assertive and expressive acts, the statement performs a dual function: it asserts a claim about Brown's character while expressing contempt. This mixture of proposition and emotion strengthens the insult's impact, contributing to the wider discourse of marginalisation by portraying transgender individuals as unintelligent, disingenuous, or undeserving of respect.

### **Excerpt 6: Insult, Defamation, and Illocutionary Analysis**

In Candace Owen's YouTube video "*The Worst*," the statement, "*Jeffery Marsh's bottomless stupidity is unusual and possibly an indication of some sort of brain disease or trauma*," exemplifies both **insult and defamation**. The phrase "bottomless stupidity" directly ridicules Marsh's intelligence, while the suggestion of "brain disease or trauma" extends into defamatory territory by falsely attributing a serious condition. Such remarks demean Marsh's dignity and perpetuate harmful stereotypes portraying transgender individuals as mentally unstable.

The utterance functions as an **assertive act**, with Owen presenting her negative evaluation as though factual, giving her insult the appearance of credibility. Simultaneously, it carries **expressive force**, as the language communicates contempt and disdain rather than neutral observation. By merging assertion with ridicule, the statement creates a hybrid speech act: it asserts a pseudo-diagnosis while expressing strong disapproval. This dual strategy not only demeans its subject but also reinforces broader narratives of abnormality and pathology, sustaining the delegitimisation of transgender identities in public discourse.

### **Excerpt 7: Derogatory Slur, Declarative and Expressive Force**

In the statement, *“ladyboy is cancelled, and that’ll do it for us for this portion of the show,”* the term **“ladyboy”** serves as a derogatory slur that mocks and diminishes transgender women or gender non-conforming individuals. Declaring the subject “cancelled” symbolically erases and delegitimises their identity, reinforcing exclusion and transphobia by trivialising their existence.

The utterance functions as a **declarative speech act**, attempting to enact symbolic exclusion by proclaiming “cancellation,” even without institutional authority. At the same time, it carries **expressive force**, conveying disdain and ridicule that invites audience amusement or agreement.

By combining declarative and expressive elements, the statement ridicules, stigmatises, and symbolically silences transgender identity. It goes beyond a neutral remark, operating as a deliberate act of marginalisation within the wider discourse of transphobic rhetoric.

### **Excerpt 8: Insult, Assertive and Expressive Force**

The statement *“I don’t even want to imagine what he’ll look like when he’s at his ugliest, documenting his creepy fetishised version of what it means to be a girl”* constitutes targeted hate speech against Dylan Mulvaney. Terms such as “ugliest,” “creepy,” and “fetishised” attack her appearance, demean her behaviour, and portray her gender identity as pathological. This framing not only insults Mulvaney but also perpetuates transphobic stereotypes that invalidate transgender expression as deviant or inauthentic.

The utterance functions as an **assertive speech act**, as Walsh commits to the claim that Mulvaney’s identity is merely a “fetishised version” of girlhood. By presenting this judgement as fact, he positions her self-expression as inherently invalid and seeks to persuade his audience to adopt the same negative view.

It also carries **expressive force**, conveying Walsh’s disgust and contempt. Phrases like *“I don’t even want to imagine”* reveal his revulsion and refusal to recognise Mulvaney’s gender identity as legitimate. Overall, the statement combines insult, assertion, and expressive disdain to strip Mulvaney of dignity while reinforcing broader narratives that frame transgender identities as abnormal, illegitimate, or morally objectionable.

### **Excerpt 9: Stereotype, Assertive and Expressive Force**

The statement *“that’s because transgenderism runs exclusively on falsehoods, bad faith and emotional blackmail, and Mulvaney exemplifies all three”* constitutes stereotyping. It generalises

all transgender people as deceitful, insincere, and manipulative, erasing individual diversity and perpetuating harmful misconceptions that fuel stigma and discrimination.

It functions as an **assertive speech act**, since Walsh presents his sweeping judgement as fact. The emphatic use of “*exclusively*” frames transgender identity as entirely illegitimate, leaving no space for nuance and aiming to persuade the audience of its supposed falsity.

The utterance also carries **expressive force**, revealing Walsh’s disdain and moral disapproval. By singling out Mulvaney as the embodiment of these traits, he intensifies ridicule and contempt. Overall, the statement merges stereotyping, categorical assertion, and emotional hostility to delegitimise transgender identity and reinforce discriminatory narratives.

#### **Excerpt 10: Derogatory Slur, Stereotype, Assertive and Expressive Force**

The statement “*it’s complete and utter gibberish... when the transgender, perverted mindset runs riot... complete and utter insanity*” employs **derogatory slurs** that depict transgender identity as deviant, chaotic, and irrational. Phrases such as “*perverted mindset*” and “*utter insanity*” stigmatise transgender people and reinforce harmful narratives that delegitimise their experiences. It also reinforces a **stereotype**, generalising all transgender individuals as morally corrupt and unstable. This sweeping categorisation erases diversity and casts transgender identity as inherently threatening.

As an **assertive speech act**, Walsh presents his claims as objective truth. The categorical phrasing “*this is what happens*” asserts that embracing transgender identity inevitably leads to “insanity,” leaving no space for alternative interpretations.

Finally, the statement carries strong **expressive force**. Words like “*gibberish*” and “*insanity*” convey Walsh’s contempt and disgust, making his utterance not just a judgement but an emotional rejection. Together, these elements merge derogation, generalisation, and hostility to delegitimise transgender identities and reinforce prejudice.

#### **Excerpt 11: Insult, Derogatory Language, Stereotype, Assertive and Expressive Force**

The statement “*You are weird and artificial... manufactured and lifeless... unearthly and eerie... some type of human deepfake*” is a direct **insult** aimed at stripping transgender individuals of dignity by portraying them as unnatural and unworthy of legitimacy.

It employs **derogatory language**, with terms like “*artificial*,” “*lifeless*,” and “*deepfake*” reducing transgender people to fabricated imitations rather than authentic human beings. Such imagery dehumanises, delegitimises lived experiences, and reinforces exclusionary narratives.

The utterance also functions as a **stereotype**, generalising all transgender people as abnormal, eerie, and fraudulent. This essentializes a diverse group into a single negative frame, perpetuating harmful social misconceptions.

As an **assertive speech act**, the statement presents these descriptors as categorical truths about transgender identity, committing the speaker to a worldview that denies its authenticity.

Finally, it carries strong **expressive force**: words like “*weird*” and “*eerie*” reveal Walsh’s disdain and contempt, transforming the claim into an emotional rejection. Together, the insult, derogation, stereotype, and expressive hostility work to dehumanise and delegitimise transgender existence.

### **Excerpt 12: Insult, Derogatory, Stereotype, Assertive and Expressive Force**

The statement “*You are a man deprived of all the best qualities of men but without any of the best qualities of women, even your personality as a tranny is contrived, everything about you is fake*” constitutes a clear **insult**, directly attacking the target’s dignity. The slur “*tranny*” and the claim that “everything... is fake” aim to humiliate by dismissing the person’s entire existence as fraudulent.

It also functions as **derogatory speech**, systematically denying transgender authenticity. By presenting the subject as lacking both masculine and feminine virtues and reducing their identity to a “contrived” performance, the statement portrays transgender existence as artificial and unworthy of recognition.

The utterance further reinforces a **stereotype** by generalising transgender people as deficient “in-betweens” who embody neither gender’s positive traits. This frames them as inherently inauthentic and illegitimate, sustaining harmful cultural narratives.

As an **assertive illocutionary act**, the speaker makes categorical claims, presenting “contrived” and “fake” as factual judgements rather than opinions. This commits him to the truth of these assertions and positions his evaluation as unquestionable.

Finally, the utterance carries **expressive force**. Words like “contrived,” “fake,” and the slur itself reveal contempt, disgust, and rejection. These expressive elements amplify the insult and derogatory content by exposing the speaker’s deeply negative emotional stance.

In all, the utterance combines insult, derogation, stereotyping, assertion, and expressive hostility to deny transgender authenticity and reinforce stigma.

### **Discussion and Interpretation of Hate Speech and Its Communicative Strategies on TikTok**

#### **Excerpt 13: Insult, Derogatory, Stereotype, Assertive, Expressive and Directive Force**

The statement “*I am not putting up with these transvestites*” is a direct **insult**, dismissing transgender people as intolerable and unworthy of respect. The use of the slur “*transvestites*” intensifies the harm, as the term is outdated and pejorative, historically used to stigmatise those who defied gender norms. Its use here functions as **derogatory language**, denying transgender people the right to self-identify and framing their existence as burdensome. The utterance also perpetuates a **stereotype** by portraying transgender individuals as inherently problematic and socially unacceptable. Such sweeping dismissal erases individuality and sustains cultural narratives that paint transgender identity as deviant.

As an **assertive illocutionary act**, the speaker makes a categorical claim of rejection, presenting intolerance as a factual stance. At the same time, it carries strong **expressive force**, revealing emotions of disdain and hostility through the phrase “*not putting up with.*”

Finally, the utterance contains an **implied directive**: by publicly rejecting transgender people, the speaker encourages others to adopt similar exclusionary attitudes. Thus, the statement performs multiple functions: asserting belief, expressing contempt, and implicitly directing collective rejection, reinforcing prejudice and legitimising intolerance.

#### **Excerpt 14: Insult, Dehumanisation, Stereotype, Assertive, Expressive and Directive Force**

The utterance “*It does say that you are inherently confused and a freak*” is a clear **insult**, ridiculing transgender identity by equating it with abnormality and confusion. The words “*confused*” and “*freak*” function as **dehumanising labels**, stripping individuals of dignity and presenting them as less than human. This fosters an “us versus them” mentality that normalises exclusion.

The statement also perpetuates a **stereotype**, portraying transgender people as unstable or psychologically deficient. Labelling them “*freaks*” reinforces cultural myths of strangeness and monstrosity, delegitimising authentic identities.

As an **assertive act**, the speaker projects prejudice as though it were factual truth, while the emotionally charged language reveals an **expressive function**, communicating disgust and disdain.

At the same time, the utterance carries an **implicit directive**: by framing transgender people as confused and freakish, it subtly encourages rejection and marginalisation.

Overall, the communicative intention is to delegitimise and stigmatise transgender individuals by presenting them as abnormal and unworthy of respect, while reinforcing societal prejudice.

### **Excerpt 15: Insult, Derogatory Language, Stereotype, Assertive, Expressive and Directive Force**

The utterance “*Like what! You get an award for being confused; it’s fucking weird... with their weird voices*” functions as a direct **insult and mockery**, trivialising transgender experiences as attention-seeking and ridiculing both identity and speech. The repetition of “*weird*” dismisses their authenticity and turns their voices into objects of derision.

This choice of words represents clear **derogatory language**, framing transgender people as abnormal and unworthy of recognition. The claim that they are “confused” echoes a long-standing **stereotype** of instability, while mocking “weird voices” reinforces the false perception of transgender individuals as unnatural or deviant.

The utterance operates as an **assertive act**, presenting prejudice as fact, while the expletive and mocking tone reveal its **expressive function**, conveying disdain and ridicule. It also carries an **implicit directive**, signalling to the audience that transgender identities should not be respected or celebrated.

The overall communicative intention is to delegitimise and humiliate transgender individuals, positioning them as laughable and undeserving of recognition, while encouraging negative audience attitudes towards them.

### **Excerpt 16: Insult, Stereotype, Assertive, Expressive and Directive Force**

The utterance “*It seems like trans people have a lot of mental problems... the entire community is insanely plagued with perversion... I don’t think they can ever get help*” contains clear **insults**, portraying transgender individuals as irredeemable and morally corrupt. Phrases such as “*plagued with perversion*” and “*can never get help*” dehumanise them and mock their dignity.

It also promotes damaging **stereotypes** by equating transgender identity with mental instability and deviance. Claims that they “have a lot of mental problems” or that it is “hard to find a transgender person who is mentally stable” perpetuate the false notion that transgender existence is inherently pathological. The statement is primarily **assertive**, with sweeping generalisations

framed as factual observations, extending prejudice from individuals to the entire community. Its wording also carries an **expressive force**, revealing disgust and pity through phrases like “*insanely plagued*” and “*sadly.*”

Finally, the conclusion that transgender people “can never get help” functions as an **implicit directive**, discouraging supportive action and legitimising social inaction. The overall communicative intention is to delegitimise transgender identities by portraying them as unstable, perverse, and beyond help, thereby fueling stigma and reinforcing exclusion.

#### **Excerpt 17: Derogatory, Stereotype, Assertive, Expressive, and Directive Force**

The utterance “*These degenerates have a high sense of entitlement; they are practically suffering from self-delusion*” employs a **derogatory slur** through the word “*degenerates.*” This term dehumanises transgender people, portraying them as morally corrupted and undeserving of dignity. The claim of “*self-delusion*” further invalidates their identities as irrational or imaginary.

It reinforces **stereotypes** by generalising that transgender individuals are entitled, unreasonable, and disconnected from reality. Such broad assumptions erase individuality and cast the group in a negative light. The statement is framed as an **assertive speech act**, presenting prejudiced claims as factual judgements. Embedding a slur within this assertive form lends false credibility to bigotry by disguising it as reasoned evaluation. The **expressive force** is evident in the contempt communicated through terms like “*degenerates*” and “*self-delusion,*” which reveal disgust and scorn.

Finally, the utterance carries an implicit **directive** by discouraging recognition or respect for transgender identities, signalling to the audience that such individuals should be dismissed or marginalised. The communicative intention is to delegitimise transgender identities by framing them as corrupt, delusional, and socially problematic, thereby fueling stigma and justifying exclusion.

#### **Excerpt 18: Discrimination, Stereotype, Directive, Assertive, and Expressive Force**

The statement “*For the good of society, transgender individuals and transgenderism must be eradicated from public life*” is explicitly **discriminatory**, as it advocates the exclusion of transgender individuals from all public domains. The choice of “*eradicated*” dehumanises them, framing their existence as a societal threat that must be removed rather than recognised.

It draws on **stereotypes** by portraying transgender identity as inherently harmful, reducing diverse lives to a single narrative of disruption or moral corruption. This stereotype casts transgender people as incompatible with social well-being. The utterance functions primarily as a **directive speech act**. The phrase “*must be eradicated*” conveys compulsion, framed as a moral duty “*for the good of society*.” This transforms prejudice into an apparent collective responsibility, intensifying the command by insisting on *total exclusion* from public life. There is also an **assertive dimension**, as the statement presents as fact the claim that society can only flourish by eliminating transgender visibility. Though rooted in bias, it positions this view as objective truth, giving bigotry a veneer of legitimacy.

Finally, the utterance carries an **expressive force**. The emotionally loaded term “*eradicated*” reveals deep hostility and contempt, moving beyond policy suggestion to outright rejection of transgender existence. The communicative intention is clear: to delegitimise transgender identity and incite its removal from public participation. By disguising exclusion as a moral necessity, the speaker both expresses hostility and pressures the audience to accept systemic erasure.

#### **Excerpt 19: Insult/Derogatory, Stereotype, Assertive, Directive, Expressive**

The statement “*I’m sick of these men in dresses pretending to be women all in the name of transgenderism; we need to stop playing their mental games*” is both **insulting** and **derogatory**. The phrase “*men in dresses*” reduces transgender women to caricatures, mocking their authenticity and denying their self-identified gender. Labelling them as “*pretending to be women*” frames their identities as fraudulent rather than genuine, while dismissing transgenderism as “*mental games*” pathologises and trivialises their existence. Together, these elements dehumanise transgender people by portraying them as inauthentic and socially disruptive.

The utterance also relies on **stereotypes**. It draws on the false image of transgender women as cross-dressing men, casts their identities as deceptive performances, and frames transgenderism as instability or manipulation. These stereotypes erase individuality and perpetuate damaging myths that undermine transgender legitimacy. The statement functions primarily as an **assertive speech act**, presenting the speaker’s beliefs as fact. Claims such as “*men in dresses*” and “*pretending to be women*” are delivered categorically, leaving no space for alternative interpretations. By asserting that transgenderism is a “*mental game*,” the speaker portrays it as inherently irrational and deceptive. It also carries a **directive force** in the phrase “*we need to stop playing their mental games*.” This is not merely a personal opinion but a prescriptive call to collective action. The use

of “*need to*” conveys obligation and urgency, urging the audience to reject transgender identities as a moral or social duty.

Finally, the utterance has an **expressive function**, most evident in “*I’m sick of.*” This reveals the speaker’s frustration, disgust, and rejection of transgender individuals. The expressive dimension intensifies the derogatory message by attaching strong personal hostility. The communicative intention is clear: to delegitimise transgender identities, pathologise their existence, and mobilise the audience toward intolerance. By blending insult, stereotype, and directive force with emotional disdain, the statement encourages exclusion and resistance to transgender inclusion.

### **Excerpt 20: Insult/Derogatory, Stereotype, Assertive, Directive, Expressive**

The utterance “*The pronoun cult is a perverted community*” is both **insulting** and **derogatory**. The phrase “*perverted community*” functions as a moral slur, casting transgender and gender non-conforming people as corrupt or immoral. Likewise, “*cult*” implies secrecy, irrational devotion, and manipulation, stripping the group of legitimacy and dignity. It also perpetuates **stereotypes** by equating transgender advocacy with a “cult,” portraying it as obsessive, irrational, and dangerous. Labelling the group as “perverted” reinforces the stereotype that gender diversity is immoral or deviant. Such sweeping generalisations erase individuality and reduce the community to caricatures of corruption and extremism.

The utterance is primarily an **assertive speech act**, treating prejudice as fact. Declaring that transgender communities form a “perverted cult” presents categorical claims rather than opinions, framing them as pathological rather than valid. Although presented as an assertion, it carries **directive force**. By branding the group as a “cult” and “perverted,” the speaker implicitly instructs listeners to reject and shun transgender people and their advocacy. The implication is: do not align with or legitimise them.

Finally, the statement is also **expressive**, revealing contempt and moral outrage. The inflammatory terms “*cult*” and “*perverted*” communicate disgust and revulsion, making the hostility both personal and public. The communicative intention is to **delegitimise** and **stigmatise** transgender identity and pronoun advocacy by framing them as irrational, dangerous, and immoral. Beyond description, the utterance seeks to persuade listeners to adopt exclusionary attitudes and justify discriminatory behaviour.

The dominance of assertive and expressive illocutionary acts in the data can be attributed to their persuasive and affective functions. Assertive acts allow speakers to present transphobic claims as

objective truths rather than personal opinions, thereby enhancing their credibility among like-minded audiences. Expressive acts, on the other hand, serve to mobilise emotions such as disgust, contempt, and ridicule, which strengthen in-group solidarity among transphobic audiences while further dehumanising transgender individuals. This combination makes hate speech both cognitively convincing and emotionally charged, increasing its potential social impact.

Although similar illocutionary strategies were found across both platforms, there were notable differences between YouTube and TikTok. On YouTube, hate speech tended to be more elaborated, argumentative, and ideological, often embedded in longer political or cultural commentary, particularly in videos by Matt Walsh and Candace Owens. In contrast, TikTok excerpts were generally shorter, more direct, and relied more heavily on ridicule, mockery, and emotionally charged language, reflecting the platform's emphasis on brevity, virality, and performative expression.

## **Conclusion**

This study extends scholarship on hate speech by investigating how it is directed at transgender individuals on YouTube and TikTok through the lens of Speech Act Theory. The findings reveal that hate speech across both platforms manifests through defamation, mockery, stereotyping, discriminatory remarks, and derogatory comparisons. On YouTube, figures such as Matt Walsh and Candace Owens employed assertive, expressive, and directive illocutionary acts to portray transgender people as attention-seeking, narcissistic, or morally deviant. On TikTok, speakers including Amala Ekpunobi, Ryan, Joey, Piers Morgan, and Michael Knowles similarly drew on assertives, expressives, and directives, often using stereotypes and dehumanising slurs to frame transgender people as unstable, confused, or perverse. Despite contextual differences, the communicative intent across both platforms remained consistent: to stigmatise, marginalise, and invalidate transgender identities.

These findings confirm and extend existing literature in several ways. Prior research has shown that hate speech frequently operates through derogatory labelling, humour, and stereotyping (Huertas Medina, 2021; But et al., 2022; Kalia, 2022). The current study reinforces these observations, but it goes further by revealing the pragmatic strategies, assertives, expressives, and directives through which such negativity is enacted in digital discourse. The results also resonate with socio-political framings in studies such as Stacic (2011) and Silva and Carvalho (2023), which highlighted how cultural ideologies sustain prejudice, including covert hate disguised as humour.

However, while those works focused on macro-level ideology, the present research demonstrates how such framings materialise in everyday online interaction. In addition, whereas earlier studies (e.g., Stefanita & Buf, 2021; Akmese & Deniz, 2017) emphasised the psychological and social consequences of hate speech, this study contributes by uncovering the pragmatic mechanisms that generate such hostility in the first place.

Ultimately, this research underscores that transgender individuals face persistent hostility in online spaces, consistent with broader findings on hate speech across both traditional and digital media. Yet it advances the field by foregrounding the illocutionary force of hate speech, showing how linguistic acts themselves function to legitimise prejudice. By situating this analysis within the fast-moving environments of YouTube and TikTok, the study not only affirms patterns identified in earlier scholarship but also offers new insights into how hate is pragmatically performed in contemporary digital interaction.

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