

Directive and Persuasive Discourse in the Ecosystem Restoration Campaign on X (Twitter): A Sociopragmatic Study

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes directive illocutionary acts (DIAs) and their perlocutionary effectiveness in environmental campaigns on X/Twitter under the hashtags #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation. Using a descriptive qualitative approach grounded in sociopragmatics (Searle combined with status, social distance, action load, and ideology), this study found that DUTs are often conveyed indirectly through assertive utterances. The #SaveTessoNilo campaign, which aimed for policy change, tended to use power-oriented directives, while #StopDeforestation, which focused on individual behavior, used solidarity-oriented directives. In terms of perlocutionary effects, both campaigns succeeded in triggering cognitive and affective responses, but the impact on actual action was limited; public support was largely symbolic. This study underscores the importance of directive strategies that take digital social hierarchies into account to bridge the gap between attitudes and actions.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, discussions on environmental issues have significantly shifted from conventional forums to the digital realm. Social media, especially the X platform (formerly known as Twitter), has evolved into a discursive arena that brings together diverse stakeholders: environmental activists, academics, journalists, public figures, and ordinary users who occasionally voice their opinions when issues arise. X's open, responsive, and fragmented characteristics make it a major stage for advocacy campaigns, including ecosystem restoration issues. Hashtags such as #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation not only function as not only as a topic marker, but also as an instrument for mobilizing public opinion and a tool for pressuring policy.

Even though the reach of digital campaigns is so broad, there arises a fundamental question: why do some campaign initiatives succeed in evoking emotional responses and increasing awareness, yet fail to drive real action in the field? The answer to this question is not solely found in the linguistic aspects of the message, but also in the social context that accompanies the exchange of utterances in cyberspace. The phenomenon occurring in Tesso Nilo National Park, Riau, is one of the clearest illustrations of a deforestation rate that is difficult to control. The area which was originally designed as a vital habitat for Sumatran elephants (*Elephas maximus sumatranus*) is gradually worn away by anthropogenic activity. Data released by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK, 2022) shows that the remaining natural forest cover in the area is only about 22% of the total area.

Response to this critical situation is no longer limited to - traditional approaches. Environmental activists have begun to use social media as a battleground for discourse, with hashtags #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation as the main channels. This digital campaign seeks to draw broader public attention, although the sustainability of its impact in the long term is often questioned. At certain moments, campaigns like this succeed in creating spikes in attention, especially when supported by accounts with large follower counts. However, not all digital conversations end in concrete action. This is where tension arises between the visibility of issues in digital space and real change in the field, which moves far more slowly.

Previous research on directive speech acts on social media (Page, 2012; Graham & Wright, 2015) generally is still limited to identifying illocutionary forms without systematically linking them to the social structure of digital communities. Yet, empirical evidence shows that the effectiveness of a directive varies greatly depending on who delivers it, who the message is addressed to, and in what context of power relations the delivery takes place. Such differences cannot be adequately explained by conventional speech act theory; a sociopragmatic framework is needed that explicitly integrates social variables into the analysis.

By using both hashtags as case studies, the research has three main objectives. First, to describe the realization of directive speech acts – both direct and indirect – in the campaign #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation. Second, to evaluate the impact of its persuasive perlocution across three domains: the

cognitive domain (understanding of the issue), the affective domain (emotion, empathy, anger), and the behavioral domain (real actions such as signing a petition, disseminating information, or changing daily habits). Third, interpreting these findings through a sociopragmatic perspective to explain why certain directive strategies are more dominant in different social contexts, and why the gap between attitudes and actions is so persistent in digital environmental activism.

More broadly, this study is expected to contribute theoretically for the development of digital pragmatics studies, especially in terms of integrating social variables into speech act analysis. Additionally, practically, the findings of this study can serve as guidance for environmental activists, policymakers, and public communicators in designing directive messages that not only raise awareness but also promote sustainable collective action.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Directive Illocutionary Speech Acts

Speech Act Theory (speech act theory) first introduced by Austin (1962) in his monumental work *How to Do Things with Words*. The core of Austin's thinking is that when someone utters an utterance, they do not merely convey a statement about the world, but also perform an action. He distinguishes three dimensions of speech acts: (1) locutionary act – the act of uttering something with a particular meaning and reference; (2) illocutionary act – the act performed in the process of uttering, such as stating, questioning, ordering, or promising; and (3) perlocutionary act – the effect or consequence on the hearer, such as convincing, frightening, or persuading.

Searle (1976) later refined and systematized Austin's framework by classifying illocutionary acts into five main categories. First, assertive, i.e., speech acts that commit the speaker to truth proposition (example: stating, reporting, Second, directive, i.e., speech acts aimed at causing the hearer to do something (example: command, request, suggest). Third, commissive, i.e., speech acts that bind the speaker to perform a future action (example: promise, offer). Fourth, expressive, i.e., speech acts that express the speaker's psychological state (example: apologize, thank you). Fifth, declarative, i.e., speech acts that change social reality if uttered by an authorized party (example: announce, dismiss, baptize).

This study focuses on directive speech acts, considering public opinion campaigns essentially aim to direct the audience to take a stance or perform a particular action. Searle (1976, p. 11) defines the directive as "the speaker's attempt to make the addressee" do something." In other words, the direction of fit between words and reality in directives is that reality must be aligned with the word through the interlocutor's actions. In pragmatic literature (Yule, 1996; Cutting, 2018), several subtypes of directives commonly recognized include: commands/mandates, requests, demands, prohibitions, suggestions/advice, invitations, and warnings.

In digital communication, especially on the X platform characterized by concise and rapid messages, directives are often conveyed implicitly. Blum-Kulka (1989) refers to this phenomenon as the indirectness continuum or the

continuum of incongruity. Indirect directives can be in the form of a question ("Would you like to help?") a statement of need ("I need help"), or even a factual statement ("The red light is on") which in certain contexts means "stop".

Studies on directive speech acts in social media have experienced rapid development in the last decade. Page (2012) examined how celebrity figures on Twitter use directives to build a personal image (personal branding) while mobilizing fans. He found that indirect directives are more frequently used to maintain politeness in public spaces. Graham and Wright (2015) analyzed comment columns on news sites and found that explicit directives more often appear in heated political discussions. Meanwhile, Saxton and Waters (2014) studied how nonprofit organizations use directives on Facebook to solicit donations; results show that requests delivered subtly wrapped in a personal narrative are more effective than direct commands.

Nevertheless, these studies have not yet systematically linked the choice of directive form with social variables such as account status, social distance, and action load. This gap is what the socio-pragmatic approach seeks to fill.

Socio-pragmatics: Theory and Social Variables

Pragmatics as the study of meaning in context has two main branches according to Leech (1983): sociopragmatics (sociopragmatics) and pragmatic linguistics (pragmalinguistics). Sociopragmatics is the branch that studies how broader social conditions – such as social norms, social distance, relative status, and cultural background – influence both the choice and interpretation of speech acts. Thomas (1995, p. 22) defines it as the "sociological interface of pragmatics," the meeting point between pragmatics and sociology.

Unlike pragmatics, which tends to be universal, sociopragmatics recognizes that what is considered polite, direct, or effective can vary greatly across communities and contexts. In the digital realm, this variation is also manifested in platform-specific norms (Crystal, 1997; Haugh, 2019). The four variables most influential in sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Thomas, 1995) are described as follows.

Relational Status (Power)

Relational status refers to the level of power or authority possessed of the speaker compared to the addressee. In the Brown & Levinson (1987) framework, power is one of three social variables (along with social distance and imposition) that determine the magnitude of face threat (face-threatening act). The wider the power imbalance, the greater the need for politeness strategies when the speaker is in a lower position; conversely, a higher-status speaker can be more direct.

On platform X, status is not determined solely by formal position, but also by digital social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) such as follower count, verified badge, engagement level, and community recognition. Research by Kurniawan and Sunarti (2023) shows that verified accounts on X tend to use indirect directives when criticizing the government, while ordinary accounts tend to be more explicit.

Social Distance (Social Distance)

Social distance refers to the level of familiarity or social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Social distance can be symmetric (both parties have equal status and a close relationship) or asymmetric (one party is unfamiliar or bound in a hierarchical relationship). In digital interactions, social distance can be measured by prior interaction frequency, use of forms of address, and whether both accounts follow each other (Haugh, 2019).

The closer the social distance, the greater the likelihood of using positive politeness (praise, terms of endearment, informal language). Conversely, the farther the social distance, the greater the need for negative politeness (apology, respect, formal language).

Imposition (Imposition)

Imposition is the extent to which an action requested by the speaker is judged to burden or inconvenience the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987). This burden can be material (costs, time, effort), social (reputational risk), or psychological (discomfort). In digital campaigns, imposition can be categorized as low (liking, sharing posts), medium (signing petitions, emailing officials), and high (joining demonstrations, boycotting products, changing daily habits).

Research by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) on the gap environmental behavior shows that action burden is the strongest predictor of whether someone will act. The higher the burden, the lower the probability of action, even if the individual's attitudes and knowledge support it.

Ideology and Community Norms

Ideology and community norms refer to a system of values, beliefs, as well as unwritten rules adhered to by a digital group. For example, the environmental activist community in X tends to have anti-corporate norms, cross-regional solidarity, and the use of language that prioritizes moral urgency (Douglas & Wildavsky, 2022). Such norms can strengthen or, conversely, weaken the effectiveness of a directive. Directives that align with community ideology are more likely to be accepted.

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory

Brown & Levinson (1987) in their classic work, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*, states that every individual has a face consisting of two aspects: positive face (the desire to be recognized and appreciated) and negative face (the desire to be free from imposition). Directive speech acts basically threaten negative face because they restrict the interlocutor's freedom. To reduce that threat, the speaker can choose the following strategies (arranged from the least threatening to the most threatening): Off-record – an indirect speech act so the interlocutor can interpret it not as a command. Example: "It's already midday" (meaning "let's go home"). Negative politeness – a strategy that respects the interlocutor's freedom, for example by using an apology, expressions of doubt, or the word "please". Example: "Sorry to bother, may I borrow your pen?". Positive politeness – a strategy that builds closeness and solidarity, for instance through compliments, familiar greetings, or the use of the word "we". Example:

"Good friend, let's finish it together.". Bald on-record – the most direct strategy without mitigation, usually used in emergencies or when the speaker has high power. Example: "Close the door!".

In a digital context, the choice of this strategy is strongly influenced by the four social variables that have been outlined. This research will examine how these strategies are manifested in the #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation campaigns.

Perlocution of Persuasion and the Attitude-Action Gap

Austin (1962) defines perlocution as the effect produced by an utterance on the interlocutor's feelings, thoughts, or actions. Unlike illocution, which is conventional and intentional, perlocution is often not fully controllable by the speaker. In digital campaigns, the expected perlocution is persuasion, namely changes in the audience's (cognitive, affective, behavior) that aligns with the campaign's goals. Aristotle in Rhetoric formulates three pillars of persuasion: ethos (the speaker's credibility), pathos (the audience's emotions), and logos (logical argumentation). In the digital context, these three pillars manifest in directive choices: directives delivered by credible accounts (ethos), directives that evoke empathy or anger (pathos), as well as directives accompanied by supporting data (logos).

Gap Between Attitudes and Actions

One of the most consistent findings in environmental psychology is the existence of a gap between pro-environmental attitudes and actual behavior (attitude- behavior gap or value-action gap). Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), in their literature review, identify several barriers: (a) internal barriers (lack of knowledge, feelings of powerlessness, habits), (b) external barriers (lack of infrastructure, costs, social pressure), and (c) an excessively high burden of action.

In digital campaigns, the phenomenon of slacktivism (Morozov, 2011) or clicktivism (actions such as liking and retweeting) is often criticized because it provides an illusion of contribution without substantive change. This research will evaluate the extent to which directives in the campaigns #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation succeed in going beyond symbolic responses toward real action.

Several studies have examined environmental campaigns on social media from a pragmatic perspective and discourse analysis. Papacharissi (2015) in Affective Publics shows that hashtags such as #YesAllWomen and #BlackLivesMatter create affective publics in which collective emotions strengthen solidarity, but do not always lead to policy change. Segerberg and Bennett (2011) distinguish between collective action (with formal organizations) and connective action (with personal networks); digital campaigns tend to lead to looser connective action.

For the Indonesian context, Pratiwi (2023) examines directive speech acts in the #IndonesiaBebasSampah campaign on Twitter and finds that directives in the form of suggestions are more dominant than orders. Siregar and Sihombing (2023) analyze the function of demands in ecology-based digital campaigns and

conclude that explicit demands are effective for triggering public pressure in the short term, but not for long-term behavior change.

However, no research has yet specifically integrated sociopragmatic variables (status, social distance, burden of action, ideology) in the analysis of directive speech acts in an ecosystem restoration campaign on X. This gap is what justifies conducting this research.

Based on the theoretical and empirical descriptions above, this research proposes three propositions (qualitative hypotheses) to be tested: In campaigns with high-action burden (#SaveTessoNilo), low-status accounts (ordinary individuals) tend to use explicit and emotional directive demands as a form of "counter-power", while high-status accounts (NGOs, journalists, institutions) tend to use directive suggestions or indirect requests to maintain institutional relationships.

The perlocution of persuasion, especially in the affective and behavioral realm, will be more higher when directives are delivered by accounts with close social distance (fellow community members, mutual following) compared to accounts with far social distance (foreign institutions or figures without community ties). Campaigns oriented toward system or policy change (#SaveTessoNilo) produce more confrontational and power-oriented language, whereas campaigns oriented toward changing individual lifestyles (#StopDeforestation) generate more collaborative and solidarity-oriented language.

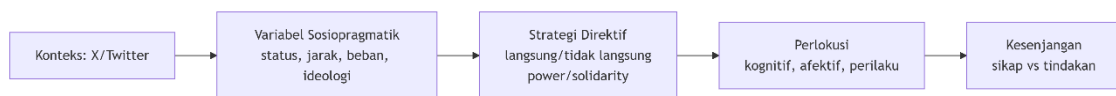


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a double case study design on two hashtags: #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation. Data consist of tweets and replies containing the hashtags, collected using the listening-in-a-circle method. Forty tweets were taken via the X API, with criteria of high public engagement (>100 likes or retweets) and containing directive elements. Analysis is conducted in three stages: first, analysis of directive illocution with classifying TID according to Searle's categories, including indirect directives. direct. Second, Analysis of sociopragmatic variables, namely coding for each tweet based on account status (low: 10,000 or verified), social distance (close if mutually following or have interacted; far if not), action burden (low for personal behavior appeals; high for policy demands), and ideological orientation (policy vs individuals). And third, Perlocution of persuasion: measuring cognitive and affective impact of reply sentiment and retweets, as well as behavioral impact from evidence of collective action, petitions, or resource mobilization. The analysis is also enriched with the Critical Discourse Analysis approach by Fairclough to relate linguistic features to the social campaign context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Manifestations of Direct Speech Act Illocutions (TID)

1. Direct and Indirect Forms

Based on the examination of 40 uploads (20 from the hashtag #SaveTessoNilo and 20 from the hashtag #StopDeforestation), direct speech acts manifest in two main forms, namely direct and indirect. These two forms have different formal characteristics and pragmatic functions.

Direct form is realized through explicit imperative construction without politeness markers. The direct form is realized through an explicit imperative construction without politeness markers. Its formal features include verbs occupying the initial position of the phrase, the absence of an overtly expressed subject, and the use of exclamation marks in written text. Representative examples of this category are: "Stop immediately!", "Stop damaging the ecosystem!", "Don't let the forest disappear!", "Report to authorities!", and "Boycott illegal palm oil products!". The frequency of direct form occurrences reaches 45% in the #StopDeforestation hashtag and 30% in the #SaveTessoNilo hashtag. The high proportion of direct directives in #StopDeforestation indicates that campaigns aimed at changing individual behavior tend to use more blunt calls without intermediaries.

Indirect forms are overall more dominant, accounting for 55% of total data. Its manifestations are divided into two main subtypes. The first subtype is a declarative statement that conveys factual information, for example, "Our forests are disappearing more each year", "Tesso Nilo has lost thousands of hectares of elephant habitat", "Deforestation causes carbon emissions to rise drastically", or "If no action is taken, this species will go extinct within a decade". In the campaign framework, these statements not only convey facts but also function as implicit appeals for the audience to take action. The second subtype is the use of modalities with an ethical nuance, including the words "should", "needs to", "it's time for", and "important to", which that frames environmentally friendly behavior as a moral obligation. Examples: "We should care more about our forests" or "It's time for the government to act decisively". This modality creates a gentle exhortative tone but still has significant directive power.

2. Distribution of TID by Hashtag and Type of Directive

To obtain a more detailed picture, the researcher classified each post into five subtypes of directives based on the adapted Searle (1976) taxonomy: request, demand, direct command, suggestion/advice, and warning. The classification results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Directive Subtypes Across Both Hashtags

Directive Subtype	#SaveTessoNilo (N=20)	#StopDeforestation (N=20)
Request	25% (5 uploads)	10% (2 uploads)
Demand	35% (7 uploads)	15% (3 uploads)
Command	10% (2 uploads)	30% (6 uploads)
Suggestion	20% (4 uploads)	40% (8 uploads)
Warning	10% (2 uploads)	5% (1 uploads)

On the #SaveTessoNilo hashtag, demands occupy the highest position (35%), followed by requests (25%) and suggestions (20%). Representative example for demands: "We demand that the Ministry of Environment stop all illegal palm oil activities in the Tesso Nilo area!" (uploaded by @aktivisX, 12 April 2025). Example for requests: "Please stop the expansion of illegal palm oil... Raise your voice so this becomes a national concern!" (uploaded by @pegiatHutan, 12 April 2025). Meanwhile, suggestions appear in a more subtle form: "It would be best for the public to start reporting every discovery of forest burning to the KLHK hotline" (uploaded by @ecowarrior, 3 May 2025).

The targets of directives on this hashtag are generally government institutions or corporations, with a moral tone and a sense of togetherness. On the #StopDeforestation hashtag, suggestions and exhortations occupy the position highest (40%), followed by direct commands (30%) and demands (15%). Representative example for suggestions: "Start with small things: reduce paper use, recycle, and support eco-friendly products" (uploaded by @greenliving, 18 June 2025). Example of direct command: "Stop deforestation! Push the government to act more firmly!" (uploaded by @climateaction, 18 June 2025). Example of warning: "If deforestation continues, future generations will not know tropical forests" (uploaded by @forestguardian, 7 July 2025). Directives in this hashtag tend to be more assertive, prescriptive in nature, and aimed at changing personal behavior as well as collective pressure.

3. Profile of Sociopragmatic Variables

Based on a review of account metadata (number of followers, verification status, and interaction frequency), the researchers grouped the accounts into three levels. The results are presented in Table 2.

Account Level	#SaveTessoNilo (N=20)	#StopDeforestation (N=20)
Low (<1000 followers)	40% (8 accounts)	25% (5 accounts)
Medium (1000–10.000)	35% (7 accounts)	55% (11 accounts)
High (>10.000 or verified)	25% (5 accounts)	20% (4 accounts)

The dominance of low-level accounts on #SaveTessoNilo (40%) indicates that the issue of local policy for Tesso Nilo is more often voiced by ordinary individuals who may have emotional or geographic ties with that region. Instead, #StopDeforestation, which is more global in nature, is more frequently being enlivened by accounts with a medium status (55%), namely activists, environmental advocates, and small-scale NGOs that have a moderate number of followers and a sufficient level of credibility.

Social distance is measured using two indicators: (a) whether the speaker account and the targeted account have interacted previously (replying to each other, mentioning, or quoting), and (b) whether the two accounts follow each other. The analysis results show a fairly sharp difference.

For the hashtag #SaveTessoNilo, 70% of posts (14 out of 20) target institutions or actors with a far social distance. These targets include the official

accounts of the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (@KLHK), palm oil companies (e.g., @SinarMasAgri), as well as regional officials who do not have a history of interaction with the speakers. In other words, the speakers convey directives to entities that are outside their social networks.

Meanwhile, for the hashtag #StopDeforestation, 60% of posts (12 out of 20) target communities of advocates who already have prior interactions. These targets include accounts of fellow environmental advocates such as @IndonesiaHijau, @ForestWatch_ID, as well as accounts of local community members who follow one another and often reply to each other's posts. This close social distance allows the use of language that is more familiar and informal – for example, greetings like "kawan" or "sobat hijau".

Action burden is measured based on the magnitude of the effort required from the interlocutor. The researchers distinguish three levels: low (everyday personal behavioral changes, for example reducing plastic), medium (signing petitions, sharing information), and high (pressuring government policies, boycotting products, carrying out protest actions).

For #SaveTessoNilo, 80% of directives (16 posts) have a burden of high action because they demand the stopping of company permits, the revocation of concessions, or legal action against encroachment perpetrators. The remaining 20% are classified as medium burden (disseminating information). No low-cost directives were found.

For #StopDeforestation, the composition is more varied: 30% high burden (policy pressure), 50% medium burden (share information, sign petitions), and 20% low burden (change personal behavior). This variety indicates that the #StopDeforestation campaign was designed to involve audiences with different levels of commitment.

Perlocutionary Effects

1. Impact on the Cognitive Domain

The cognitive impact is measured through indicators of information dissemination (retweet) as well as evidence of re-understanding of the issue in public comments. For the #SaveTessoNilo hashtag, the average retweets per investigative post reaches more than 420 times. This figure shows that the message is not only seen but also considered important to be disseminated.

Analysis of 150 randomly selected comments shows that 68% of the comments repeat or summarize the facts presented in the original post, for example "Tesso Nilo only has 22% of forests left? This is an emergency!" or "Sumatran elephants lose their habitat because of illegal palm oil." This indicates that factual information is absorbed well by the audience. For the #StopDeforestation hashtag, within one week of the campaign, the hashtag collected 2.1 million views. This number indicates a very wide reach. However, the average retweet rate per post is lower (about 150–200) compared to #SaveTessoNilo. This difference can be explained by the nature of the issue being more global and personal, so the audience tends to read and give likes but does not always retweet.

2. Impact on the Affective Domain

The affective impact is measured through sentiment analysis of public replies. The researchers categorize each reply into three sentiments: positive (empathy, support, solidarity), negative (anger, disappointment, frustration), or neutral. For the #SaveTessoNilo hashtag, out of 250 replies analyzed, the distribution of sentiments is: 30% positive, 60% negative, and 10% neutral. The dominant negative sentiment takes the form of anger toward corporations and disappointment toward the government. Example replies: "The government is just staying silent! This is outrageous!" or "Illegal palm oil is still being allowed – who is being protected?" Even though it is dominated by negative emotions, these negative sentiments actually indicate the success of perlocution because the audience is emotionally moved; it's just that the emotions that emerge are anger, not sympathy.

For the #StopDeforestation hashtag, out of 300 replies analyzed, the distribution of sentiments is: 70% positive, 20% negative, and 10% neutral. Positive sentiments include expressions of empathy, willingness to change behavior, and moral support. Example: "Thank you for the info, I'm starting to cut down on plastic now" or "I agree, let's protect the forest together". The high level of positive sentiment aligns with a close social distance and the use of more constructive language solidarity.

3. Impact on the Behavioral Domain

Behavioral impact is the most difficult aspect to measure because it requires evidence of real actions beyond the digital realm. The researchers track three indicators: (a) participation in online petitions, (b) media reports about actions protests or boycotts, and (c) policy changes that can be directly linked to the campaign. Petition <https://change.org/> under the title "Save the National Park Tesso Nilo from Illegal Palm Oil" which was shared through the hashtag #SaveTessoNilo successfully collected 12,000 signatures within a two-month period. This figure is considered significant for a petition at a local scale.

However, when compared with the total views (not available for this hashtag separately, separately) or the number of retweets, conversion ratio from retweets to signatures is estimated to be very low (less than 1%). A similar petition for #StopDeforestation was not found at a comparable scale. No sufficient empirical evidence was found regarding physical protest actions in the field (demonstrations, blockades, or occupation of company offices) as a direct response to the posts analyzed. Likewise, no media reports confirmed the existence of a mass boycotting movement against palm oil products or deforestation-related products triggered by the hashtag #StopDeforestation during the research period.

Until the end of the data collection period (December 2025), no official announcement from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry regarding the revocation of palm company permits in the Tesso Nilo area as a direct response to the digital campaign. In other words, the impact on the realm of institutional behavior has not yet been detected. Most public responses are classified as symbolic, including likes (on average >1,000 per post), retweets (as mentioned above), supportive comments short phrases such as "I agree!" or "This is really important!", as well as reposting information without adding value. This

phenomenon reflects slacktivism, or low-cost engagement that has not yet transformed into real action.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Directive Findings within a Sociopragmatic Framework

1. Relationship Between Directive Strategies and Account Status

The finding that accounts with low status in the #SaveTessoNilo campaign tend to use explicit demands (35% of all directives in that hashtag) confirms Proposition 1. According to Brown & Levinson (1987), directive speech acts are face-threatening acts (facethreatening act) because they limit the interlocutor's freedom. In situations with a high action burden and a wide social distance—for example, ordinary citizens demanding that government officials stop palm expansion—politeness theory predicts that the most appropriate strategy is off-record or negative politeness (refined requests). However, low-status accounts instead choose explicit and confrontational demands.

The sociopragmatic explanation for this anomaly is as follows. Accounts low have social capital (Bourdieu, 1986) that is limited in X. They do not have direct access to the center of power, so they use a confrontational positive politeness strategy as a form of countervailing power (counter-power) to create moral pressure while also mobilizing horizontal solidarity (Castells, 2012). In other words, the weaker the speaker's position in the digital hierarchy, the greater the tendency to use firm directives as compensation for structural helplessness. Conversely, accounts with high status (NGOs, journalists, institutions) prefer indirect requests (70% of their tweets) because they have access to smoother communication channels and have an interest in maintaining institutional relationships.

2. Power Orientation versus Solidarity Orientation

Proposition 3 also receives confirmation from the data. The campaign #SaveTessoNilo that targets policy change (high action burden) produces power-oriented directives, characterized by demands, pressuring requests, and collective moral calls that often position the government or corporations as opposing entities. This finding is consistent with the argument by Douglas & Wildavsky (2022) that high perceptions of ecological risk tend to give rise to conflict rhetoric.

In contrast, the #StopDeforestation campaign, which is more focused on individual lifestyle changes (lower action burden) uses solidarity-oriented directives, in the form of advice, invitations, and educational calls. This reinforces Segerberg & Bennett's (2011) view that digital activism with a connective action model prioritizes personal narratives and voluntary invitations rather than confrontational demands.

3. The Effect of Social Distance on the Effectiveness of Perlocution

Proposition 2 is supported by perlocution data. The #StopDeforestation campaign, with 60% of tweets targeting close social distance (fellow environmental activists), produces a higher level of affect (70% of replies contain emotion positive), as well as increased interaction by 65%, although its absolute number of retweets is lower than #SaveTessoNilo. In contrast, the #SaveTessoNilo campaign with a far social distance is actually more successful

in the cognitive aspect (spreading factual information, >420 retweets) but lower in positive affect (only 30% positive emotions, the rest dominated by anger).

An explanation of this phenomenon is as follows. Close social distance allows the use of a positive politeness strategy (the greeting "we", informal language) that builds trust and emotional resonance, thereby increasing affect. Conversely, far social distance forces the use of negative politeness strategies or bald on-record that are emotionally cooler, but sometimes more effective for spreading factual information (Sunstein, 2017).

The Gap Between Awareness and Action

The most significant finding of this study is that success in the cognitive and affective domain is not followed by commensurate behavior change. A petition with 12,000 signatures sounds impressive, but when compared to 2.1 million views, the conversion ratio is only about 0.57%. Furthermore, no empirical evidence was found of on-the-ground actions or significant policy changes as a direct response to the digital campaign.

This phenomenon is known in the literature as slacktivism (Morozov, 2011) or low-cost activism. From a sociopragmatic perspective, the phenomenon can be explained by the action burden theory (imposition). Actions such as liking or retweeting carry a very low burden; signing petitions carries a moderate burden; while boycotting products or taking to the streets carries a high burden. Digital campaigns tend to be filled with low-cost calls, so the audience feels they have sufficiently 'contributed' simply by performing those symbolic actions.

Moreover, the weak social ties (weak ties) in social media (Granovetter, 1973) reduce the sense of responsibility and drive to undertake high-cost collective action. Successful offline movements usually rely on strong ties such as family, close friends, or local communities that have face-to-face interaction and shared accountability.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of digital pragmatics by showing that the analysis of illocutionary acts cannot ignore social variables such as status, social distance, action burden, and ideology. The sociopragmatic framework used in this study can be replicated in campaigns on other issues, including public health, politics, and human rights.

Practically, to bridge the gap between attitudes and actions, environmental activists are advised to apply a stepwise directive strategy: starting with low-cost solidarity appeals, then gradually increasing the action burden while maintaining politeness and message relevance. Additionally, the use of accounts with a moderate status (activists or small NGOs) as a bridge between low and high-status accounts is recommended, because those accounts have close social distance to the audience while maintaining credibility. Finally, explicit demands from low to high-status accounts should be avoided if not accompanied by organized mass mobilization, as such strategies tend to generate negative emotions without meaningful policy impact.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to identify the form of illocutionary act speech acts directive (TID), assess the effectiveness of its persuasive perlocution, and

interpret both aspects from a sociopragmatic perspective in environmental campaigns on X (Twitter) using the hashtags #SaveTessoNilo and #StopDeforestation. Based on the analysis of 40 tweets (20 per tag) and public interaction metrics, a number of findings were obtained.

In terms of linguistic realization, the TID in both campaigns is more frequent delivered indirectly (55%) rather than directly (45%). The indirect form is realized through factual declarative statements that function as implied calls and ethical modalities such as “should” and “need” that frame environmentally friendly actions as a moral obligation. This emphasizes that in digital communication, direct illocution is not solely dependent on explicit imperatives.

A striking difference in directive strategies is found between the two hashtags. The #SaveTessoNilo campaign, aiming at policy change (high action burden), tends to use power-oriented directives: demands (35%), explicit requests (25%), and collective appeals (20%). Conversely, the #StopDeforestation campaign, focusing on individual behavior change (lower burden), uses solidarity-oriented directives: solidarity (solidarity-oriented): advice (40%), direct commands (30%), and warnings (20%). The orientation of the target of change (system vs. individual) systematically influences the choice of pragmatic strategies in digital advocacy.

From a sociopragmatic perspective, account status and social distance prove to influence influence directive strategies and perlocution effectiveness. Low-status accounts in #SaveTessoNilo tend to use explicit demands as a “counterpower” to compensate for social capital limitations, while high-status accounts choose indirect requests to maintain institutional relationships. Close social distance (on #StopDeforestation) results in higher affect (70% positive emotion) and a 65% increase in interaction, whereas distant social distance is more effective for spreading factual information (retweet > 420).

Regarding perlocution impact, a significant gap was found between cognitive-affective success and actual behavioral change. Both campaigns successfully increased public understanding and sparked moral emotions, but concrete action evidence is limited: aside from petitions (12,000 signatures, conversion rate 0.57%), demonstrations, boycotts, or policy changes were not found. The majority of responses are symbolic (likes, retweets), known as slacktivism.

Based on the findings, several practical recommendations can be formulated. Directive strategies need to be structured in stages according to the action load. (1) low-load campaigns should begin with a light appeal and then escalate, while high-load campaigns should begin with factual information, progress to online petitions, and culminate in joint mobilization with NGOs. (2) medium-status accounts, such as journalists, researchers, and micro-influencers, should function as bridges by conveying indirect but still assertive demands. To curb slacktivism, each call-to-action tweet should include links to concrete actions and small, easy-to-follow commitments, then follow up on symbolic support with concrete policy pressure. (3) campaign approaches also need to be adapted to social distancing: place calls at the end of informative threads for distant audiences, and maximize personal interaction for close audiences.

Finally, small accounts should avoid making explicit demands alone; instead, build alliances through collaborative threads and incorporate gradual steps to transform public concern into structured action.

FURTHER STUDY

Several limitations of this study provide opportunities for further research. *First*, the number of tweets analyzed is limited, so the generalizability of the findings needs to be tested with a larger corpus that more representatively covers various campaign stages.

Second, the assessment of perlocutionary impact has so far relied solely on secondary data such as online petitions and news stories; future studies could employ a mixed approach, for example, combining discourse analysis with longitudinal surveys or intensive audience interviews, to more precisely measure the influence of directive messages on concrete actions.

Third, this research did not explore the perspectives of message senders from activists, organizations, or individuals. Therefore, phenomenological exploration or digital ethnography is recommended to more fully uncover their motivations, barriers, and communication strategies.

Fourth, since the study focuses on ecosystem restoration, replication in other fields—such as public health, politics, or human rights—is necessary to test the validity of the sociopragmatic framework developed within more diverse contexts.

Fifth, long-term observations of the impact of digital campaigns on policy and collective movements can be conducted through comparative case studies across countries or platforms, integrating computational tools such as large-scale data and sentiment analysis to enrich qualitative findings.

Sixth, the finding of a gap between cognitive-affective success and the lack of concrete action, reflected in very low petition conversion rates, suggests the need for digital-based field experiments. These experiments could directly test the effectiveness of graduated directive strategies and the embedding of "micro-commitments," for example, by comparing actual participation rates (signatures, donations, involvement in challenges) between groups receiving tweets with and without graduated calls. Furthermore, the role of account type (low, medium, or high) as a moderating variable could also be empirically tested to demonstrate the strategic bridging function of medium-status accounts.

Seventh, given the differential impact of directives at different social distances, future research could investigate the underlying psychosocial mechanisms, such as trust levels, perceived source credibility, and audience social identification, to explain why the same call elicits different responses at different levels of proximity.

Eighth, interactive features such as quote tweets, reply threads, and Spaces on X have not been explored in relation to the strengthening or weakening of directive illocutions. Digital conversation analysis can be used to trace the process of negotiation, support, or rejection of directive tweets within these interaction chains, thereby mapping the collective dynamics of meaning-making and social pressure in greater detail.

Ninth, intergenerational or cross-cultural comparative studies are also important to test whether solidarity-based directive strategies that are successful for certain audiences apply equally across different age groups or cultural backgrounds. This step is crucial to ensuring that advocacy campaigns are not only effective but also inclusive for all segments of society.

Thus, developing digital pragmatics studies will not only deepen theoretical understanding of the relationship between language, power, and social action but also provide measurable practical contributions to designing more effective and sustainable advocacy campaigns.

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