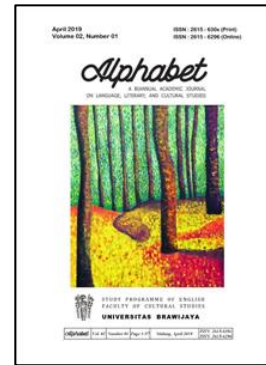


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# Face-Threatening Acts on Illocutionary Utterances in the Third US Presidential Debate of 2016

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## Abstract

This research aims to investigate the face-threatening acts (FTAs) on illocutionary utterances found in a 2016 US presidential debate. A descriptive qualitative approach and document analysis were applied in this research. The data source of this research is the transcript of the last debate of the US presidential election in 2016. The illocutionary utterances were identified and categorized based on the five types of illocutionary utterances in Austin and Searle's theory, and the data were analyzed using Brown and Levinson's theory of FTAs. The result shows the illocutionary utterances that contain most FTAs are expressive illocutionary utterances (40.62%), directive illocutionary utterances (20.83%), assertive illocutionary utterances (17.70%), commissive illocutionary utterances (16.66%), and declarative illocutionary utterances (4.16%). Next, the most common FTAs the debater performs are the speaker's negative face (33 times), followed by the hearer's positive face, the hearer's negative face, and the speaker's positive face. This research has also shown that the speaker's positive face does not always threaten the hearer's positive or negative face, and vice versa.

**Keywords:** Face Threatening Acts (FTAs), Illocutionary Utterances, Rhetoric, Debate.

The basic concept of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) comes from the term "face" which means the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.61). They also differentiate the term "face" into positive face, which means the desire for a self-image that is appreciated or approved of and claimed by others, and negative face, which refers to the individual desire not to be imposed of by others or to have freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Based on these definitions, a face-threatening act (FTA) is an act that damages the interlocutors' desire by being contrary to the person's desire (p.65). FTAs are also divided into positive and negative, where a positive FTA means a speaker or hearer does not care about interlocutors' feelings or wants, while a negative FTA means people want to avoid or not intend to avoid

the interlocutor's freedom of action (p.65-68). Experts have also discussed the notion of the face and face-threatening acts (Goffman, 1967; Grundy, 2000; Yule, 2010; Wardaugh and Fuller, 2015). These conditions could be found in a debate where the debaters do not care about the opponent's positive face either intentionally or unintentionally.

In a debate, debaters perform a lot of acts including informing, promising, warning, claiming, reporting, stating, advising, appointing, threatening, questioning, and even blaming or insulting an opponent. These are called illocutionary acts, which this study refers to as "*illocutionary utterances*". This definition follows Austin (1962, p.108), who stated that the "illocutionary act is the intention of the speaker is saying something such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, etc

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which have a certain (conventional) force". Illocutionary utterances have also been explained by experts such as Searle (1975), Bach and Harnish (1979), Cruse(2000), Allan (2001), Bach (2004), and Ching Hei(2007). Huang (2007) stated, "The most influential systemized taxonomy comes from Searle's (1975) taxonomy" (p.106), as follow:

1. Directive illocutionary acts refer to utterances that show the speaker is attempting to get the hearer to do something.
2. Expressive illocutionary acts refer to utterances that show what the speaker feels. These utterances express the speaker's psychological states such as joy, sorrow, like, or dislike.
3. Commissive illocutionary acts refer to utterances that make the speaker commit to what he/she has said in a future action.
4. Assertive/representative illocutionary acts refer to utterances that commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition.
5. Declarative illocutionary acts refer to utterances that can change the reality by the proposition of the declaration.

A debate consists of contrasting ideas shared between the interlocutors. In a debate, there are many face-threatening acts between the debaters. This is because the debaters are trying to convince the audience by showing the weaknesses of the opponent's ideas. Every proposition uttered by a debater is an attempt to show that weakness and impose the opponent by giving reasoned judgment using a proposition that does not care about the opponent's positive face (Freeley and Steinberg, 2009, p.6). Therefore, this study aims at investigating the face-threatening acts that are found in rhetorical political debates.

Several researchers have studied about face-threatening acts. Some of the previous studies include Herbert and Carlson (1982) on hearer and speech acts, Roberts (1992) on face-threatening acts and politeness in contrasting speeches from supervisory conferences, Murakami (2011) on

compensation for face-threatening acts in service encounters in Japan and the United States, Amundrud (2012) on applying inter-language pragmatics to study FTAs in advanced non-native English speaker emails, and Kedves (2013) on face-threatening acts and politeness strategies in summer school application calls. Two previous studies by Gil (2012) and Maulidiyah (2016) are closely related to this study.

Gil (2012) studied "Face-Threatening Speech Acts and Face-Invasive Speech Acts: An Interpretation of Politeness Phenomena". The data in this study were the illocutionary utterances taken from any kinds of conversations. In this study, Gil applied Searle's theory to analyze the illocutionary acts, and Brown and Levinson's theory to analyze the face-threatening acts in the illocutionary utterances. The study has found (1) a Pragmatic principle of face affection, that all speech acts (all utterances) affect both interlocutor's face; (2) a Pragmatic principle of a face threat, that all polite speech acts threaten, simultaneously but in different grades, the speaker's and the hearer's faces; (3) a Pragmatic principle of face invasion, that all rude speech acts invade, simultaneously but in different grades, the speaker's and the hearer's faces. In this study, Gil did not analyze the frequencies of face-threatening acts performed by interlocutors or focus on how to realize the face-threatening acts performed by interlocutors. Due to this reason, this present study comes to fill the gap of the previous study and focus on analyzing utterances or sentences in a specific discourse that has been set by the host of the debaters.

Another study was conducted by Maulidiyah (2016). This study investigates "Face Threatening Acts and Politeness Strategy Performed by Debaters at Debate.Org Website". In analyzing the utterances containing face-threatening acts and politeness strategy, Maulidiyah follows the steps of data analysis designed by Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, and Razavieh (2010). The study found that the debaters performed 85 times of FTAs. The researcher also found positive and

negative politeness strategy from the whole data, which only 13 times. (Negative politeness was performed 8 times, while positive politeness strategy was performed 5 times).

The similarities between this current study and Maulidiyah's study are that this current study is also looking into the frequency of face-threatening acts performed by debaters and applying Donald Ary's steps of data analysis. However, Maulidiyah analyzed politeness strategies used by debaters at an online website to minimize FTAs, while the present study analyzes FTAs on illocutionary utterances in rhetorical political debate. For the method and theory, the previous research used a descriptive qualitative research method and Brown and Levinson's theory. This current study uses a qualitative method and Austin and Searle's theory to find out the categories of illocutionary utterances and Brown and Levinson's theory to analyze the FTAs on the illocutionary utterances.

In conclusion, this research aims to find out what types of face-threatening acts (FTAs) strategies debaters performs frequently and how the face-threatening acts (FTAs) are realized on each illocutionary utterances in the debate. The US final presidential debate in 2016 is selected because the context and topic focus on some specific issues: debts and rightful authority, immigration, economics, Supreme Court, foreign hotspots, and fitness to be the president of the United States. The main reason is that the final debate contains more data required by the researcher than the two previous debates do.

## METHODS

This study analyzes the transcript of the third debate (the final debate) of the USA presidential election in 2016. The document obtained through a reliable website <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/full-transcript-third-2016-presidential-debate-230063>. This study categorizes the illocutionary utterances performed by the debaters based on Austin and Searle (1969). However,

this research focuses on finding face-threatening acts performed by the debaters by using the theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987) on illocutionary utterances.

The technique employed to collect the data is library research. To collect the data, the researcher carried out these steps: 1) selecting a reliable source of the transcribed utterances from the last presidential debate for the USA presidential election in 2016; 2) downloading the transcribed text document; 3) reading the text document closely and selecting illocutionary utterances containing FTAs; 4) classifying the data based on five kinds of illocutionary utterances; and 5) analyzing the data.

In data analysis, the researcher used the theories by Austin and Searle (1969) and Brown and Levinson (1987) to answer the first research question, and use Hymes (1974) of contexts' theory to answer the second research question. To gain the reliable result of data analysis the researcher also used the stages designed by Ary et al (2010), which are: 1) Familiarizing and organizing data, 2) Coding and reducing data, and 3) Interpreting and representing data. The researcher adopted and modified Gil's (2012) style in presenting the result as follows: categorizing illocutionary utterances and face-threatening acts, matching, and tabulating.

## RESULTS

Thirty-two utterances are analyzed. These thirty-two utterances are illocutionary utterances that contain FTAs based on five categories of illocutionary utterances.

### Directive

The following example is an utterance made by one of the debaters, Hillary Clinton (HC) which is categorized into a directive act that is used for "*suggesting*";

*"And I feel strongly that the Supreme Court needs to stand on the side of the American people. Not on the side of the powerful corporations and the wealthy"*

This utterance indicates that HC impliedly suggested to all American people not to vote for the other candidate, Donald Trump (DT).

case, HC imposes the audience's negative face.

**FTAs Analysis:**

Speaker (+): HC's utterance indicates that it does not threaten her positive face because she has not imposed her face or she has not placed her face on the negative sense toward the hearer (DT).

Speaker (-): Threaten HC's negative face. HC's utterance indicates that she thinks she has a good reason to suggest that the audience not vote for DT. HC's statement indicates that if DT becomes president he will control Americans by using his wealthy and powerful corporate resources.

Hearer (+): Threaten DT's positive face. HC's utterance indicates that she has a negative evaluation of DT. In this case, it implies HC's disapproval toward DT. HC does not want to approve what DT wants such as his personal characteristics and values, and this utterance imposes DT's positive face's want.

Hearer (-): Threaten DT's negative face and the hearer's negative face. HC does not intend to avoid impeding DT's and the hearer's freedom of future action but impliedly she imposes DT's and the hearer's negative face. The hearer here refers to the audience of debate. HC thinks that the audience needs to do some actions in the future in which she impliedly suggests that the hearer not vote for DT. In this

**Expressive**

The following is an utterance made by DT which is categorized into an expressive act that is used for "praising and thanking": "And I don't know if Hillary was saying it in a sarcastic manner but I'm very proud to have the endorsement of the NRA and it was the earliest endorsement they've ever given to anybody who ran for president. So I'm very honored by all of that."

DT expresses his feeling of joy and praising HC in response to HC's previous utterances (utt.5) "But there is no doubt that I respect the second amendment", DT, in a sarcastic manner, also expresses his feeling of joy by thanking HC for saying that he is endorsed by the NRA.

**FTAs Analysis:**

Speaker (+): DT's utterances do not threaten his positive face because he has not placed his face on the negative sense of utterance.

Speaker (-): Threaten DT's negative face. In this case, DT imposes himself to HC by saying "... I'm very proud to have the endorsement ... So I'm very honored by all of that". DT humbles himself before HC because the previous act done by HC unintentionally promotes him.

Hearer (+): Threaten HC's positive face. In this case, DT's statement indicates that he is indifferent toward HC. DT's expression of boasting indicates that he wants to cause HC distress with his statement.

Hearer (-): DT's utterances do not indicate that he commits to future action.

**Commissive**

The following is an utterance made by HC which is categorized into a commissive act that is used for “pledges”;

*“And you're right. I don't want to rip families apart. I don't want to be sending families away from children. I don't want to see the deportation force that Donald has talked about in action in our country”*

HC's statement unintentionally refers to future action. HC commits that she will not break up families and will not deport immigrants in the future.

**FTAs Analysis:**

Speaker (+): Threaten HC's positive face. In this case, HC admits that she wants to do something to benefit the hearer (immigrants in America). In this case, HC imposes or damages her positive face to the hearer (American's immigrants).

Speaker (-): Threaten HC's negative face. HC's statement indicates that she would like to do a future action. In this case, HC also commits and promises to the hearer (American's immigrant) that she will do some positive actions for them. In this case, HC imposes or damages her negative face to the American immigrant.

Hearer (+): Threaten DT's positive face. HC's utterances indicate that she has a negative evaluation towards DT, in which HC thinks that if DT wins the election and becomes president, he will deport undocumented people, which means DT will separate families apart.

Hearer (-): Threaten DT's and immigrants' negative face. In this case, HC commits to some

positive future action toward immigrants in America.

**Assertive/representative**

The following is an utterance made by HC which is categorized into assertive/representatives act that is used for “Stating, Claiming and Accusing”;

*“And you know, look. I understand that Donald has been strongly supported by the NRA, the gun lobby is on his side. They're running millions of dollars of ads against me...”*

HC commits to the truth of her proposition by stating and accusing that DT is strongly supported by the NRA. HC claims that all the people that stand for DT are spending millions of dollars into advertisement against her.

**FTAs Analysis:**

Speaker (+), HC's utterances do not threaten her positive face because she has not placed her face on the negative sense of the utterance.

Speaker (-), Threaten HC's negative face. By accusing DT of getting support from the NRA, it means HC imposes her negative face toward DT.

Hearer (+), Threaten DT's positive face. HC does not care about the DT's feelings and wants. HC has a negative evaluation of DT's positive face by accusing DT of using money against her. HC's utterances also indicate that HC does not care about DT's wants of personal characters, beliefs, and values.

Hearer (-), Threaten DT's negative face. In this case, HC does not intend to avoid impeding of DT's freedom of action. HC warns the audience that NRA supports DT in the gun lobbying. HC's utterances

indicate that HC imposes DT's negative face by accusing him of being supported by the NRA.

**Declarative**

The following is an utterance made by DT which is categorized into a declarative act that is used for "naming/ declaring";

"...because I am pro-life and I will be appointing pro-life judges"

DT's utterances indicate that he names his program "pro-life" and declares that the program will stand for the Americans. It changes the status of the program, which previously had no name.

**FTAs Analysis:**

Speaker (+): DT's utterances do not indicate a threat towards his positive face, because he does not humbles his positive face or does not put his face in the sense of guilt.

Speaker (-): Threaten DT's negative face. DT's imposes his negative face because his utterance impliedly indicates that he has to commit to some future action that will be pro for the life of Americans.

Hearer (+): DT's utterances do not indicate threaten the audience's positive face because the speaker does not care about the hearer's feelings and wants; the speaker expresses his indifference toward the hearer.

Hearer (-): Threaten the audience's negative face. DT's utterances indicate that he imposes his face by promising and offers a pro-life program that he commits to apply in a future action.

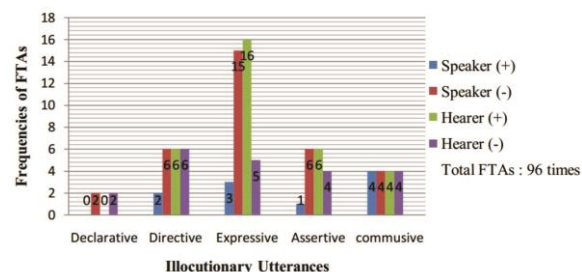
**DISCUSSION**

Based on the research findings, 96 acts threaten the speaker's and the hearer's positive and negative faces. The percentage of FTAs in each illocutionary utterances is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Percentages of FTAs accuracies

No	Illocutionary Utterances	Numbers of FTAs Occur	Percentages
1	Expressive	39/96	40,62%
2	Directive	20/96	20,83%
3	Assertive	17/96	17,70%
4	Commussive	16/96	16,66%
5	Declarative	4/96	14,10%
<b>Total</b>		<b>96/96</b>	<b>100%</b>

Each of the illocutionary utterances that contain face-threatening acts can be viewed in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Illocutionary Utterances containing FTAs

Expressive illocutionary utterances contain the most face-threatening acts. Referring to the debate context, the hearer's positive face is the most threatened because in a debate the speaker tends to demean the hearer's positive face such as by expressing like/dislike; insulting, blaming, disfiguring accusing, etc (see Figure 3). In a debate, a speaker is always positioning his/herself has having a negative evaluation toward the opponent, and that is why this research found that the most expressive illocutionary utterances are related to the hearer's positive face. The expressive

illocutionary utterances also impose the speaker's negative face because when the hearer responds to the speaker, they tend to make confrontation or they think that they have good reasons to embarrass the speaker. However, what commonly happens in a debate is that the debaters commit themselves to future actions, although they want not to fulfill these actions.

Figure 1 also illustrates the numbers of directive illocutionary utterances containing face-threatening acts. Table 1 shows that the speaker negative's face, the hearer's positive face, and hearer's negative face have the same frequency of occurrences. This is because, in a debate, a debater has to commit themselves to some future actions. Debaters also make utterances that can create a confrontation with each other, and sometimes they show no intention of avoiding to impede their opponent's freedom of action. Furthermore, assertive/representative utterances in this debate refer more to the negative sense, as the debaters always commit to the trust of their proposition and have negative evaluations toward their opponent by accusing, negative reporting, stating, etc.

Commissive illocutionary utterances contain face-threatening acts, which is an interesting finding in this research. It shows the consistencies of face-threatening acts for both speaker's and hearer's positive and negative face. (See Figure 1). This part of the finding strongly supports the previous research conducted by Gil (2012). Related to the debate context, a debater certainly performs utterance that leads to making promises, pledges, recommendations. Therefore, face-threatening acts consistently and inevitably affect both the speaker's and the hearer's positive and negative face. Two declarative illocutionary utterances contain face-threatening acts found in this study. It refers to the meaning of declarative illocutionary utterances, it changes the world through utterances, it is because the context of the debate is to declare things but it is more to commit to future action.

As for the answer to the first research question on which types of face-threatening acts (FTAs) do the debaters perform frequently are summarized in Figure 2.

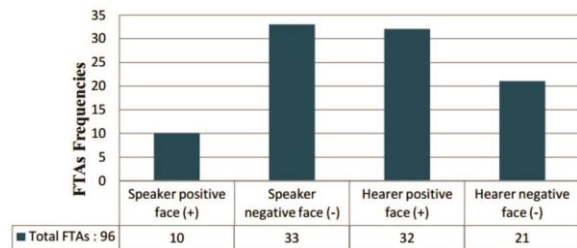


Figure 2. Type of FTAs that the Debaters Perform Frequently

Figure 2 shows that the type of FTAs that the debaters perform most frequently are the speaker's negative face (33 times), the hearer's positive face (32 times), the hearer's negative face (21 times), and the speaker's positive face (10 times). Furthermore, the genres of the utterances used by the debaters can be viewed in Figure 3.

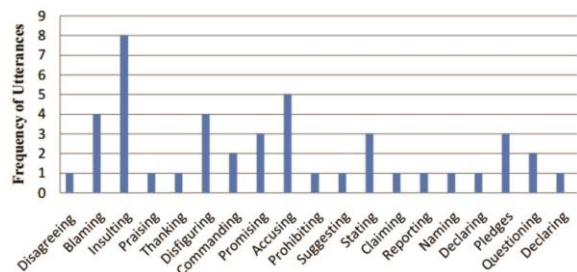


Figure 3. Genres of Utterance Used by the Debaters

This research also has found that there are several stages to analyze FTAs on each illocutionary utterance. The first stage is mastering the theory of five categories of illocutionary utterances. In this stage, it is very important to know the meaning and example of each illocutionary utterance to determine the genre of an utterance. For example, the utterance "I don't want you to help them anymore", belongs to a "directive" utterance because the speaker attempts to get the hearer to do something, particularly to prohibit the hearer of something. The second stage is



understanding the context of the debate. This research applied Hyme's (1974) theory of context, (usually summed to SPEAKING), which includes:

1. Setting and scenes  
To know illocutionary utterances contain FTAs, it important to know the setting and scene where the debate takes place, including its cultural background.
2. Participant  
This refers to all the people involved in the occasion, (speaker-hearer, addressor- addressee, or sender-receiver). It is important to identify to whom the speaker is talking and to determine which one is the speaker and which one is the hearer.
3. Ends  
This refers to a personal goal. In the debate that is observed in this study, it is clear that both the speakers are trying to attract the audience's intention by their proposition to persuade audience vote them, but the tendency that the debaters are more prepared to attack personal appearances than to present their future programs cannot be overlooked.
4. Act sequences  
This refers to the content that is said by debater. It takes individual sensitiveness to understand the many implied messages delivered by each debater. It is important to understand the implied messages to identify positive and negative FTAs.
5. Key  
It refers to the manner of the debaters, how they convey their messages, whether they speak in a loud voice/tone or if they also use nonverbal language.
6. Instrumentalities  
This refers to how the speech is delivered, whether face-to-face, by phone, written, or by using code or register. This debate was delivered face-to-face.

#### 7. Norms of interaction

It refers to specific behaviours such as silence, gaze return and loudness of sound.

#### 8. Genre

It refers to the utterance's type such as editorial, lectures, riddles, poems, *etc.*

All in all, to identify the categories of FTAs in illocutionary utterances, it is also important to understand the context of the debate, where it takes place, the topics or themes, why do debaters join the debate, who the debaters, who are involved in the debate, when the debate takes place, and how the debate is conducted.

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This research has found thirty-two Illocutionary utterances which contain a total of ninety-six face-threatening acts for both the speaker's and the hearer's positive and negative faces. The expressive illocutionary utterances contain FTAs of sixteen hearer's positive face, fifteen speaker's negative face, five hearer's negative face, and three speaker's positive face. The directive illocutionary utterances show FTAs of six speaker's negative face, six hearer's positive face, six hearer's negative face, and two speaker's positive face. In the assertive illocutionary utterances, there are FTAs concerning six speaker's negative face, six hearer's positive face, four hearer's negative face, and one speaker's negative face. In the commissive illocutionary utterances; the researcher has found four speaker's positive face, four hearer's positive face, four speaker's negative face, and four hearer's negative face FTAs, and finally, in the declarative illocutionary utterances, there are two speaker's and hearer's negative face and no speaker's or hearer's positive face found. Moreover, illocutionary genres used are insulting (8 times), accusing (5 times), blaming (4 times), promising (3 times), making pledges(3 times), stating(3 times), commanding(2 times), and questioning(2 times). The other purposes are for declaring,

naming, reporting, claiming, suggesting, prohibiting, thanking, praising, and disagreeing.

Next, the debaters perform 32 speaker's negative face, 32 hearer's positive face, 21 hearer's negative face, and 10 speakers positive face FTAs. Understanding the context of the debate (5 W – what, where, who, when, why + 1 H – how) is crucial in identifying and categorizing the illocutionary utterances found in this debate.

This research generally supports the findings of the previous research of Gil's 2012 study. However, in this debate, the speaker's positive face does not always threaten the hearer's or negative face. Similarly, the hearer's positive face does not always threaten the speaker's positive face or negative face.

The research findings suggest that the 2016 American presidential debate tends to be on the negative side. The debaters tend to impose their opponent by insulting, blaming, accusing, interrupting, *etc.* This leads people to the perception that there is a cultural shift in the presidential debates in America. Such observations may be seen in news headlines in Indonesia which report that Trump's anti-Muslim remarks such as “*Ketika Komentar Cabul dan Kebijakan 'Tolak Muslim' Trump Jadi Pembicaraan Netizen Indonesia*” [Translation: When Trump's Rude Comments and 'Anti-Muslim' Policy Became the Talk of Indonesian Netizens] (2016) or “*Saat Debat Capres AS Memanas, Clinton Tuding Trump Rasis*” [Translation: During the Heated Presidential Debate, Clinton Accused Trump of Racism] (2016). This implies that the debaters now are more focused on talking about their opponents' personalities and not on their programs as presidential candidates. In this case, the researcher suggests that a debater should focus on explaining their programs and not judging their opponent's personality; because in doing so, the debater will impose their own face.

This suggestion is in contrast with previous research by Maulidiyah (2016), which argues that a debater does not need to know the

concept of FTAs. However, this research highly recommends that debaters understand and master the concept of face-threatening acts to maintain and wins their self-image in front of the audience and opponents.

Finally, this research only analyzes transcripts of the debate, so the researcher is not able to observe non-verbal language used by the debaters and analyze its effects on the debaters' face-threatening acts. Therefore, the researcher suggests that further researchers also collect data from the non-verbal language in analyzing a debater's face-threatening acts.

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