

The Formation of Indonesian VTuber Digital Identity: A Study of Expressive Speech Act

Anggreani Puspitasari Siswanto^{1*}, Wira Kurniawati²

¹Master of Linguistics, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

²Department of Language and Literature, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

anggreanipuspitasariswanto2001@mail.ugm.ac.id^{1*}, wirakurniawati@ugm.ac.id²

Article History:

Submission
January 14th, 2026

Accepted
January 28th, 2026

Published
January 30th, 2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how expressive speech acts in Indonesian contribute to digital identity formation by an Indonesian Virtual YouTuber (VTuber). The research focuses on Mikazuki Arion, a VTuber on the YouTube platform, and aims to analyze how expressive speech acts such as praise, gratitude, greetings, complaints, and humor function in constructing a distinctive digital persona. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a sociopragmatic approach, data were obtained through observation and note-taking from Mikazuki Arion's live broadcasts. The analysis examined the forms, functions, and pragmatic features of expressive speech acts that support self-representation in virtual communication. The findings show that expressive speech acts serve three key functions in constructing VTuber identity: (1) establishing emotional intimacy and social bonds through repetition and affective language, (2) demonstrating authenticity and self-reflection via humor, irony, and stance softening, and (3) enhancing audience engagement through inclusive and performative interaction. These strategies enable Mikazuki Arion to present an appreciative, humorous, and relatable digital persona, reinforcing parasocial relationships and community belonging. The study concludes that expressive speech acts are not merely emotional expressions but pragmatic tools for identity negotiation and relationship-building in digital interaction. Language thus becomes a central medium for performing self-representation and maintaining authenticity in Indonesian VTuber culture, contributing to broader discussions of sociopragmatics and digital identity.

Keywords: expressive speech acts; identity formation; digital interaction; sociopragmatics; VTuber

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of Virtual YouTubers (VTubers) represents a form of digital cultural development that combines technology, entertainment, and social communication within online networks. VTubers are virtual figures controlled by humans behind the screen using motion capture and digital animation technology, to allow the avatar to mimic facial expressions, voices, and body movements in real-time. The presence of VTubers shows a new form of identity performativity in the virtual world, with the boundaries between reality and representation becoming increasingly blurred (Ahn et al., 2025; Fauziah et al., 2025).

In this context, language plays a central role as the primary means of forming social relationships and self-representation. Through the utterances produced during live streaming, a VTuber conveys information, expresses emotions, builds intimacy, and displays a distinctive persona. One of the most dominant forms of language in this context is expressive speech acts,

which are utterances that reflect the speaker's attitude or feelings towards the addressee. According to Searle (1969), expressive speech acts serve to reveal the speaker's psychological state, such as gratitude, humor, sympathy, or apology. In interactive and spontaneous live streaming, expressive speech acts play a crucial role in fostering social closeness and strengthening emotional bonds between VTubers and their viewers.

Mikazuki Arion is an Indonesian male VTuber who made his debut in 2022, with a current YouTube subscriber count of 600,000 (VTuberpost.com, 2025). He is known for his expressive and humorous communication style. Arion's statements during live streams serve not only as entertainment but also as a performative expression of his digital identity. His use of language through laughter, light teasing, familiar greetings, or expressions of gratitude embodies a charismatic digital persona that is close to the audience and reflective of the norms of casual online interaction. Thus, expressive speech acts in VTuber broadcasts can be understood as pragmatic actions that simultaneously construct identity.

Regarding pragmatic actions, classical speech act theory by Searle (1969) and Leech (1983) provides a basis for understanding the expressive illocutionary function and the principle of politeness in communication. However, to understand the dimension of identity in linguistic practice, this study uses the *Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction* (RPIC) framework (refer to Agus & Iswandi, 2025). The RPIC framework is not a separate theory, but rather a synthesis of a number of classical sociopragmatic theories, such as the concept of facework by Goffman (1967), politeness theory by Brown and Levinson (1987), relational work by Locher and Watts (2005), and face constituting theory by Arundale (2021). By integrating these various perspectives, RPIC position language not merely as a tool of communication, but as the primary means of forming relational identities that are situational and dynamic. Through strategies such as stance-taking, humor, mitigation, and the use of epistemic markers, speakers form and negotiate their social positions contextually. From this perspective, the digital identity of VTubers is formed through linguistic practices that are relational, performative, and situational, depending on how speakers adapt to their audience and the context of online communication.

Various studies on pragmatics have highlighted expressive speech acts in various communication contexts. Ngasini et al. (2021) analyzed expressive speech acts in *The Ellen Show* interview with Billie Eilish and found that acts such as *thanking, praising, and apologizing* were dominant, serving to build interpersonal rapport and a positive public image. Assidik et al. (2023) also examined expressive speech acts in thread writing, showing how emotional expression and social evaluation are utilized in online discourse to build the writer's ideological position. Meanwhile, research on expressive speech acts by Afitasari et al. (2025) emphasizes the importance of expressive function in maintaining social relationships and solidarity among teenagers. Similar studies also appear in entertainment media, such as the film *Penyalin Cahaya* (Cahyarani & Kusuma, 2024), *Imperfect* (Nur Fariza, 2022), and *Stand-Up Comedy Indonesia* (Jaya & Ramdhani, 2023), which show the emotional, moral, and social functions of expressive speech acts as a form of character representation and contextual meaning.

While numerous studies have examined expressive speech acts in traditional and media-based interactions, meanwhile, research on digital identity and virtual performance has developed in a related but distinct direction. Scholars such as Widodo & Jacky (2025), Wan & Lu (2024) and Chincilla & Kim (2024) have explored how VTubers and digital streamers perform identity through multimodal interaction, embodiment, and social presence. Likewise, Hermawan et al., (2024) and Hariadi and Budiwaspada (2023) emphasized the cultural and affective dimensions of VTuber-audience relationship, showing how digital personas are maintained through emotional engagement and performativity.

Although these studies do not explicitly analyze expressive speech acts, they collectively demonstrate that language use and interactional style play crucial roles in constructing digital identity. This highlights a research gap in understanding how specific linguistic forms, such as expressive speech acts, function within VTuber communication as mechanisms of identity formation.

To address this gap, the present study adopts the Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) framework (refer Agus & Iswandi, 2025) to conceptually bridge pragmatic theory and digital identity studies. RPIC integrates classical pragmatic theories to explain how relational identities are continuously negotiated through language use. Within this framework, language functions not merely as a communicative tool but as a relational act through which speakers and audiences co-construct meaning and identity in digital contexts.

To date, studies on expressive speech acts or VTuber communication have rarely employed the RPIC framework. Therefore, this research extends the theoretical application of RPIC to the domain of digital pragmatics, particularly in analyzing how expressive speech acts operate as relational and performative strategies in online self-presentation. This theoretical positioning strengthens the study's novelty and establishes its contribution to the intersection between pragmatic theory and digital discourse analysis.

By combining RPIC with expressive speech act theory, this study bridges classical pragmatics and digital discourse analysis, emphasizing that digital identity is dynamically performed and contextually negotiated through pragmatic strategies such as humor, stance-taking, and mitigation. Consequently, expressive speech acts are positioned as performative resources for digital self-presentation and relationship-building within Indonesian VTuber culture.

Building upon these theoretical perspectives, the present study empirically explores how expressive speech acts contribute to the formation of digital identity by an Indonesian VTuber, Mikazuki Arion. Specifically, the research examines the forms, functions, and pragmatic features of expressive utterances observed in live broadcasts and analyzes how these linguistic practices contribute to digital persona construction in online interaction. This focus provides the conceptual bridge between the theoretical framework discussed above and the methodological approach presented in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach combined with sociopragmatic analysis to examine the forms, functions, and strategies of expressive speech acts in digital interaction. The qualitative method was selected because the research aims to explore meaning-making processes, contextual language use, and the relational dimensions of communication rather than to measure frequency or numerical correlation. As expressive speech acts are inherently subjective and context-dependent, a qualitative design allows for an in-depth and interpretive understanding of linguistic data within natural digital settings.

Furthermore, the sociopragmatic approach aligns with the study's theoretical framework, the Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC), which emphasized how speakers negotiate social identity through pragmatic interaction. This approach enables the researcher to analyze not only the structural forms of expressive utterances but also their interpersonal and relational functions within VTuber audience communication. In this way, the chosen method is most appropriate for capturing the performative and identity building aspects of expressive speech acts as they occur spontaneously in online contexts.

The focus of this study is on how Mikazuki Arion builds his digital identity through expressive speech acts in live broadcasts on YouTube. The data in the form of Mikazuki

Arion's speech was taken from his YouTube live broadcast videos. Data selection was carried out using purposive sampling, considering two main criteria: (1) the broadcast featured active verbal interaction between Arion and the audience, and (2) the context of the conversation was spontaneous without a narrative script. In this study, the data source was taken from Mikazuki Arion's live stream video titled "[Grow A Garden] Day 1 Planting in Roblox" and accessed on November 20, 2025. The video was transcribed manually after being copied using *Kome.ai*, then verified to ensure accuracy of meaning, intonation, and context.

Data was collected through the listen and note method, which involved listening to all the utterances in the video and taking down the parts that contained expressive speech. This process was followed by data classification based on the type of expression (compliment, joke, sarcasm, or thanks) and the surrounding social context. Each utterance was then coded to facilitate the analysis of pragmatic strategies and identity formation patterns that emerged.

The analysis was conducted in two main stages. The first stage used socio-pragmatic analysis, which examined the form and function of expressive speech acts by considering the social context and interactions between Mikazuki Arion and his audience. This analysis is based on the theories of Searle (1969) and Leech (1983) to identify illocutionary and politeness aspects and is reinforced by the concepts of Yule (1996), Cutting (2002), and Holmes (2013) regarding the social function of expressive speech. The second stage uses Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) analysis (refer to Agus & Iswandi, 2025)) to interpret key pragmatic features found, such as the use of humor, positive politeness, mitigation, and stance-taking, which play a role in the formation of Mikazuki Arion's digital identity. This analysis connects sociopragmatic results with the relational identity dimensions that emerge in interactions, in line with the RPIC view that identity is the result of pragmatic negotiation between the speakers, audience, and digital context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Based on observations of Mikazuki Arion's live broadcast content, 51 utterances were classified as expressive speech acts. All of this data was analyzed to identify the forms, functions, and pragmatic characteristics that appeared in the context of digital communication. From the entire data set, ten utterances were selected that were considered the most representative and had similar patterns to the other data. The selection of this data was based on considerations of the uniformity of pragmatic function and the frequency of occurrence of certain forms of expression so that the ten data points could represent the main variations of the overall expressive utterances analyzed.

TABLE 1. Forms, Function, and Key Pragmatic Features

No	Speech Data	Expressive Acts Form	Speech	Expressive Acts Function	Speech	Key Features	Pragmatic
1.	"Wow, amazing, beautiful. Ini yang papa cari selama ini!" (‘Wow, amazing, beautiful. This is what Papa has been looking for all this time!’)	Compliment		Expressing admiration		Affective interjection, intensification of lexical	
2.	"Asik, asik, asik!" (‘Cool, cool, cool!’)	Expression of joy		Expressing enthusiasm		Repetition, intensification	
3.	"Selamat wisuda!" (‘Congratulations on your graduation!’)	Congratulatory remarks		Providing support	social	Expressive formulaic	
4.	"Maafkan aku. Aku tidak sengaja." (‘I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to’)	Apology		Showing regret		Stance softening, mitigation	

5.	<i>"Wah, terima kasih, terima kasih ya..."</i> (‘Wow, thank you, thank you so much...’)	Expression of thanks	Expressing appreciation	Repetition, affective affiliation
6.	<i>"Kenapa duit kita dikit kali, guys?"</i> (‘Why do we have so little money, guys?’)	Complaints	Expressing dissatisfaction	Negative evaluation, rhetorical question
7.	<i>"Thank you for the suppa "</i>	Expression of thanks	Expressing appreciation and recognition for the audience’s support	Expressive formulaic, affective affiliation
8.	<i>"Hai, halo, selamat malam, selamat datang di stream!"</i> (‘Hi, hello, good evening, welcome to the stream!’)	Greetings	Opening interaction and familiarity	Expressive formulaic, inclusive
9.	<i>"Damn! I can do that. What is wrong with me?"</i>	Expression of surprise	Reflective self-evaluation	Self-deprecation, negative self-evaluation, interjection.
10.	<i>"Punya 34 juta doang ini, kata dia guys!"</i> (‘He only has 34 million, guys!’)	Evaluative complaints	Ironically diminishing	Irony, hyperbole, negative self-evaluation

Based on the analysis of the expressive speech acts data, various forms of expressive speech acts were found that demonstrate the diversity of functions and pragmatic features in building social relationships between VTubers and their viewers. The forms of expressive speech acts that emerged of gratitude, complaints, greetings, and expressions of surprise. This variety of forms shows how Arion builds his digital identity as an expressive, friendly, and communicative figure through emotional and performative linguistic strategies.

PRAISE AND EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

Expressions of praise and thanks can be seen in data (1), (5), and (7), which are the most prominent and frequently seen expressive forms in Mikazuki Arion’s speech data. For instance, the utterance *"Wow, amazing, beautiful. Ini yang papa cari selama ini!"* (‘Wow, amazing, beautiful. This is what Papa has been looking for all this time!’) contains affective interjections and lexical intensification that emphasize admiration and enthusiasm. This finding is in line with Sudaryanto and Akbariski (2022), who argue that affective interjections function to express the speaker’s emotions, such as admiration, surprise, and excitement, while lexical intensification serves to strengthen emotional expression so that the message becomes more vivid and engaging.

Similar patterns are also found in other utterances that employ repetition and intensification as markers of praise, such as *"Anjas, rapi banget, rapi banget, rapi banget"* (‘Dang, super neat, super neat, super neat’) and *"Oh, amazing, mantap mantap mantap guys"* (‘Oh, amazing, awesome awesome awesome guys’). These utterances mainly occur when Mikazuki Arion respond to visual appearances, gameplay outcomes, or in-game elements that he considers satisfying or impressive. In this context, praise functions not only to express admiration but also to share positive emotions with the audience. Therefore, the use of repetition and positive evaluation is not incidental, but appears repeatedly within the context of gameplay experiences.

Likewise, the utterances “*Wow, terima kasih, terima kasih ya...*” (‘Wow, thank you, thank you so much...’) and “*Thank you for the suppa*” display patterns of repetition of formulaic expressions that are characteristic of VTuber interactions with viewers. In the data, such expressions consistently appear when Mikazuki Arion receives financial support from viewers, either through YouTube’s *super chat* feature or donation platforms such as *Trakteer*, marking a context of appreciation toward audience contributions. In addition, short expression such “*Terima kasih sayang*” (‘Thank you, dear’) are also used as affective and personal forms of appreciation. This finding supports Yin et al., (2025), who state that the use of repeated utterances and formulaic expressions in online interaction functions to enhance emotional engagement while maintaining the rhythm of interaction in virtual space. These forms serve not only to express sincere feelings but also to reinforce the emotional closeness between Arion and his audience, particularly on response to viewer support and participation.

Through the repeated use of intensification and affective affiliation in contexts of praising gameplay experiences and appreciating audience support, expressions of praise and gratitude contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion’s identity as an appreciative streamer.

GREETINGS

Expressions of congratulations and greetings seen in data (3) and data (8) demonstrate the strong social function of language in initiating interaction and maintaining closeness with the audience. Expressions such as “*Selamat wisuda*” (‘Congratulations on your graduation!’) and “*Hai, halo, selamat malam, selamat datang di stream*” (‘Hi, hello, good evening, welcome to the stream!’) serve to build intimacy and familiarity. These greeting and congratulatory expressions do not appear in isolation, but recur across different live-stream session of Mikazuki Arion.

In addition to these examples, congratulatory expressions are also realized in utterances such as “*Happy birthday Gipi, wish you all the best*” which are used to viewers’ personal achievements or special occasions. In the data, expressions like “*Selamat wisuda*” (‘Congratulations on your graduation’) and “*Happi birthday*” commonly appear when Mikazuki Arion receives donations through platforms such as *Trakteer* that include messages about viewers’ achievements or celebrations. In this context, congratulatory expressions function as forms of social recognition and appreciation, reinforcing emotional bonds between the VTuber and his audience.

Meanwhile, greeting expressions such as “*Hai, halo, selamat malam, selamat datang di stream*” (‘Hi, hello, good evening, welcome to the stream!’) and “*Hai, hai hai, halo semuanya*” (‘Hi hi hi, hello everyone’) consistently appear at the beginning of the stream as part of the opening interaction and collective greeting to viewers. This pattern remains relatively stable across different broadcasts and thus becomes a characteristic feature of Mikazuki Arion’s communication style. On the other hand, personalized greetings such as “*Selamat datang Akemi, selamat datang, selamat datang*” (‘Welcome Akemi, welcome, welcome’) emerge when another VTuber enters the stream and leaves a comment in the YouTube *live chat*. Such greetings may occur at the beginning, middle, or even toward the end of the stream, depending on the timing of the other VTuber’s presence.

This type of expressive formulaic forms is inclusive in nature and affirm Arion’s position as a friendly and open figure. In the context of live broadcasting, this strategy is important because it helps maintain audience engagement and strengthens Arion’s image as a figure who is “close” to his fans, even though it takes place in a digital space. This is in line with Page’s (2012) opinion that in the digital context, the use of expressive formulas can be a

marker of social identity and as a strategy for building parasocial closeness in online environments.

Through the recurrent use of greetings and congratulatory expressions in stream openings, donation responses, and the welcoming of other participants, these linguistic practices contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion's identity as a friendly and affiliative streamer.

APOLOGY

Expression of apology found in data (4), such as "*Maafkan aku, aku tidak sengaja*" ('I'm sorry. I didn't mean to'), shows Arion's pragmatic awareness of politeness and face management. Through the use of mitigation strategies and stance softening, Arion displays humility and responsibility, which contribute to the formation of an empathetic and non-authoritative self-image. Holmes (1984) emphasizes that mitigation reflects social awareness and pragmatic responsibility in interaction. Similarly, Hyland (2005) argues that stance softening functions as a way to reduce the force of a speaker's position so that it does not appear authoritative or imposing. From this perspective, these strategies can be understood as linguistic maneuvers oriented toward maintaining politeness and interpersonal balance in discourse.

Beyond this initial example, patterns of apology were also identified in several other utterances that serve a mitigative function in situations involving potential disagreement with the audience. For instance, the utterance "*Maaf ya aku beli semua ya teman-teman ya, karena aku anak baru jadi harus beli semuanya*" ('Sorry, I'm going to buy everything, friends, because I'm new here so I have to buy them all') was produced when Arion made an in-game decision that could invite disagreement from audience. Similar patterns appear in utterances such as "*Maaf ya, tapi lelaki yang harus dipegang adalah omongannya*" ('Sorry but a man should stand by his words') and "*Sorry ya teman-teman, tapi jangan kirimkan permintaan pertemanan terlebih dahulu ya*" ('Sorry friends, but please don't send friend requests yet'), which were delivered when Arion chose to maintain a particular stance or rule while simultaneously providing reasons that could be accepted by the audience.

In these contexts, apologies do not function merely as admissions of wrongdoing, but as pragmatic strategies to soften potential tension and preserve interactional harmony when the speaker needs to assert a decision or personal position. By using apologies as a prefatory move, Arion mitigates the force of his stance so that it is less likely to be perceived as dominant or authoritative by audiences.

Through the recurrent use of mitigation and stance softening in situation involving decision-making and the management of differing opinions, these apology practices contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion's identity as an empathetic, responsible, a friendly and affiliative streamer, particularly in contexts where negotiation and relationship maintenance with the audience are required.

COMPLAINTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF SURPRISE

The utterances in the form of complaints and expressions of surprise seen in data (6), (9), and (10) show the reflective and humorous dimensions of expressive speech acts in Mikazuki Arion's live streams. Utterances such as "*Kenapa duit kita dikit kali guys?*" ('Why do we have so little money, guys?') or "*Punya 34 juta doang ini, kata dia guys*" ('He only has 34 million, guys!') use irony, hyperbole, and negative self-evaluation to create humor and emotional closeness with the audience. Through such expressions, Arion constructs a digital persona that is not merely ideal or perfection-oriented, but also human and relatable.

Expressions of surprise also recur across various utterances produced when Arion encounters situations that fall outside his expectations during gameplay. Utterances such as “*Gila, gede banget*” (‘That’s crazy, it’s so big’), “*Damn, I can do that? What is wrong with me?*”, “*Anjay, amazing, damn, damn*” and “*Oh my God, the name is so hard to spell, to read*” are used to convey amazement, shock, or confusion toward game elements that are perceived as impressive, valuable, or unexpected. In these contexts, expressions of surprise function as a means of sharing spontaneous reactions with viewers, making the gameplay experience more vivid, expressive, and interactive.

In addition to surprise, complaints are consistently observed in the data, particularly when Arion faces difficulties or limitations during gameplay. Utterances such as “*Ah, gila banget, susah banget guys, susah banget*” (‘Ah, this is insane, it’s so hard, guys, so hard’), “*Aduh, tidak simetris anjay*” (‘Ugh, it’s not symmetrical’), “*It mahalnya, ih najisnya mahal banget guys*” (‘it’s so expensive, ridiculously expensive, guys’), and “*Guys, kenapa jadi ajang donasi gini? Udah kayak traktiran kan..*” (‘Guys, why does this turn into a donation event? It’s like a treat already’), reflect complaints delivered through hyperbole and light negative evaluation. In most cases, these complaints relate to limited in-game currency or Arion’s inability to perform certain actions as intended. Rather than creating distance or tension, such complaints tend to elicit laughter and empathy from viewers, as they are framed humorously and are not directed in an aggressive manner.

In expressing complaints and surprise, Arion frequently employs self-deprecation as a strategy for interpersonal closeness. This strategy allows viewers to perceive the on-screen character as authentic, emotionally expressive, and spontaneous. As explained by Dynel (2009), humor that involves negative self-evaluation and exaggerated emotional reactions can strengthen social solidarity and convey emotional authenticity in interaction.

Through the recurrent use of complaints and expressions of surprise marked by hyperbole, negative self-evaluation, humorous framing, and emotional interjections, these linguistic practices contribute to the construction of Mikazuki Arion’s identity as a playful and chaotic streamer, emphasizing spontaneity, expressiveness, and emotional engagement in digital interactions.

EXPRESSIONS OF JOY

Expressions of joy, such as in data (2), namely “*Asik, asik, asik!*”, demonstrate the use of repetition and intensification as linguistic strategies to convey enthusiasm. Repetition in this utterance functions to emphasize positive emotion while simultaneously strengthening emotional engagement with the audience. This finding aligns with Tannen (2007), who argues that repetition not only serves as a form of repetition but also as a means of emphasizing emotions and building engagement between the speaker and the listener.

Lexical intensification is also evident in other expressions of joy, such as “*Kita mendapatkan emas, anjay keren banget keren banget*” (‘We got gold, anjay, that’s really cool, really cool’) and “*Anjay terong only adik-adik, gila banget, pecah banget pecah*” (‘Anjay, terong only, guys, that’s crazy, totally awesome’). The use of hyperbolic evaluative expressions and lexical repetition in these utterances reflects the support Goddard (2014) view that lexical intensification, through markers of high emotional intensity, represents the speaker’s enthusiasm and emotional involvement in verbal interaction.

In the data, such expressions of joy reappear when Mikazuki Arion obtains something valuable, successfully performs an action, or encounters in-game elements that strongly capture his interest and preference. In these contexts, expressions of joy function as spontaneous emotional responses that are openly shared with viewers, transforming the gameplay experience from an individual activity into a more collective and participatory interaction.

From an illocutionary perspective, utterances such as “*Asik, asik, asik!*” (‘Cool, cool, cool!’) and similar joyful expressions are not produced to achieve a specific communicative goal, but rather to express the speaker’s psychological state. Accordingly, these utterances are categorized as expressive speech acts, in line with Searle’s (1969) opinion that expressive speech acts are speech acts that function to express the psychological state of the speaker towards a situation or event.

Through the recurrent use of repetition and intensification in expression of joy, these linguistic practices contribute to the reinforcement of Mikazuki Arion’s identity as an enthusiastic, emotionally engaged, and friendly as well as affiliative streamer in digital interactions.

Overall, the analysis shows that Mikazuki Arion strategically uses expressive speech acts to build social closeness with the audience. These expressive forms not only reveal personal emotions but also function as performative tools in shaping an appreciative, humorous, and authentic digital persona in the online space.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of expressive speech acts in Mikazuki Arion’s live broadcasts, it was found that the use of various forms of expressive speech acts contributed significantly to the formation of Mikazuki Arion’s digital identity as an Indonesian VTuber. The analysis of the form, function, and key pragmatic features of expressive speech acts shows that every linguistic expression used by Mikazuki Arion not only serves as a tool for emotional communication but also contains an identity dimension that represents their digital persona. This is in line with the opinion of Agus and Iswandi (2025) that key pragmatic features in speech function as markers of relational identity that emerge through certain linguistic strategies towards speech partners. Therefore, to understand more deeply the relationship between expressive strategies and identity construction, the researcher presents the following table that maps the dominant speech acts, the accompanying pragmatic features, and the digital identity that is constructed through these language practices.

TABLE 2. Digital identity construction

The Most Frequently Occurring Expression Speech Acts	Key Pragmatic Features	Digital Identity
Praise and gratitude	Intensification, affective affiliation	Appreciative streamer
Hyperbolic complaints	Negative evaluation, humor, interjections	Playful/chaotic streamer
Greetings and apologies	Expressive formulaic, stance softening	Friendly/affiliative
Self-irony	Self-deprecation, irony, hyperbole	Self-mocking

Based on the mapping in the table, the form, function, and pragmatic characteristics of expressive speech acts in Mikazuki Arion’s live broadcasts show that language plays a role not only as a medium of communication but also as a means of self-representation in the digital space. The context of VTubers is relevant for expanding the scope of speech act theory because this phenomenon presents a complex and multimodal form of linguistic interaction in the digital space. The context of VTubers is relevant for expanding the scope of speech act theory because this phenomenon presents a complex and multimodal form of linguistic interaction in the digital space. In live broadcasts, a VTuber’s speech not only serves to convey linguistic messages but also displays emotional expressions and digital persona performances constructed through virtual avatars. The interaction between the speaker and the audience takes place synchronously, with the support of technology that enables the negotiation of meaning and expression in real time. Within this framework, expressive speech acts are no longer understood

merely as a reflection of the speaker's psychological state, but also as performative actions that negotiate identity and social closeness in the online space.

The relationship between the form, function, and pragmatic features of expressive speech acts and the type of digital identity formed shows a systematic integration between language choices and the representation of the persona displayed by the speaker. Forms of praise and expressions of gratitude accompanied by lexical intensification reinforce the identity of an appreciative streamer who is communicative and empathetic towards the audience. Conversely, hyperbolic complaints and ironic humor reflect a playful or chaotic persona that displays spontaneity and social closeness. Politeness strategies through stance softening in greetings and apologies reinforce a friendly and inclusive identity, while the use of self-deprecating humor indicates an authentic and human self-mocking persona. This connection shows that the form and function of expressive speech acts not only serve an emotional purpose but also become a linguistic mechanism in constructing and affirming digital identity in a relational, performative, and contextual manner. It can be observed that each form of expressive speech act used by Mikazuki Arion has a different contribution in constructing and affirming his digital identity.

APPRECIATIVE

The identity of an appreciative streamer is formed through the use of speech acts in the form of praise and expressions of gratitude. Such utterances in Mikazuki Arion's expressive speech analysis data are characterized by key pragmatic features such as lexical intensification and affective affiliation, for example, in the expressions "*Wah, terima kasih banyak, kalian luar biasa,*" ('Wow, thank you so much, you guys are amazing,') or "*Wow, amazing, beautiful*". The use of intensification and positive interjections portrays Arion as a figure who is full of appreciation and emotional openness towards the support of his audience. Pragmatically, this form presents Arion as a performer who not only entertains but also appreciates audience participation, thereby strengthening social relationships and virtual intimacy. This appreciative identity is at the core of Arion's communicative, positive, and highly empathetic digital persona toward his audience community.

PLAYFUL/CHAOTIC

The playful/chaotic streamer identity emerges through the use of hyperbolic complaints accompanied by pragmatic features such as negative evaluations, humor, and interjections. Examples that represent this category are statements such as "*Kenapa duit kita dikit kali guys?*" or "*Punya 34 juta doang ini, kata dia guys?*" ('Why do we have so little money, guys?'). Although semantically negative, these expressions actually have a humorous effect because they are delivered hyperbolically and accompanied by a light intonation. This strategy serves to build social closeness and display a spontaneous, relaxed persona with an entertaining sense of humor. This is in line with the opinions of Attardo (2001) and Dynel (2009) that irony and hyperbole serve to mark humorous intent that strengthens social closeness. This chaotic identity shows that Mikazuki Arion uses language as entertainment, with complaints not being expressions of true frustration, but rather a means of building a funny, ironic communication style that invites emotional responses from the audience.

FRIENDLY/AFFILIATIVE

A friendly/affiliative identity emerges through the use of greetings and apologies that have key pragmatic features in the form of expressive formulas and softening stances. Utterances such as "*Hai, halo, selamat malam semuanya!*" ('Hi, hello, good evening everyone') or "*Maaf ya,*

aku nggak sengaja,” (‘Sorry, I didn’t mean to’) show Mikazuki Arion’s pragmatic awareness of the importance of maintaining a polite and empathetic image in the digital space. These expressive forms show Arion’s efforts to present himself as a humble, friendly, and approachable figure. From the perspective of digital identity theory, this friendly streamer persona strengthens interpersonal relationships with viewers and creates an inclusive online community. Thus, the strategy of greetings and apologies becomes a key element in building familiarity and viewer loyalty toward his virtual character (Yin et al., 2025)

SELF-MOCKING

Self-mocking identity or reflective-ironic persona is demonstrated through expressive speech acts that contain ironic self-evaluation, with pragmatic features such as self-deprecation, irony, and hyperbole. Examples of speech acts such as *“Damn, I can do that? What is wrong with me?”* display a form of negative self-evaluation packaged humorously. This strategy shows Mikazuki Arion’s ability to laugh at himself, which socially increases emotional closeness with the audience. This identity reflects a form of authentic vulnerability, which is an open attitude towards one’s imperfections that makes digital personas appear more human and relatable. In the context of digital culture, this self-deprecating humor strategy is an effective way to balance the position between “virtual public figure” and “online peer” (Cao et al., 2025).

Thus, the results of this analysis show that speech act theory can be expanded to explain linguistic practices in a digital context that is oriented towards performativity and social relations. Through a study of VTuber live broadcasts, it can be seen that linguistic expression is not only an instrument of communication but also a medium for representing identities that are dynamic, interactive, and rooted in Indonesian digital culture.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that the expressive speech acts, a case study by Mikazuki Arion, in live broadcasts on YouTube serve not only as a means of expressing emotions or psychological attitudes, but also as a pragmatic strategy in shaping his digital identity as an Indonesian VTuber. Through expressive forms such as praise, greetings, complaints, and reflective humor, Arion presents a digital persona that is appreciative, friendly, and authentic. Linguistic strategies such as intensification, stance softening, and the use of humor serve acts in this context that do not merely convey emotional meaning but become a sociopragmatic practice that negotiates relationships and identities in an interactive digital communication space.

These findings directly address the research aims of this study by demonstrating how expressive speech acts function not only in terms of their forms and communicative purposes, but also through their pragmatic features in the construction of digital identity. The analysis reveals that expressive speech acts such as praise, gratitude, greetings, apologies, complaints, expression of surprise, and joy operate as relational and performative resources that shape an appreciative, friendly/affiliative, and playful digital persona in VTuber live-stream interactions. In line with previous studies on pragmatics and digital discourse, expressive language in online environments plays a crucial role in negotiating applying the Relational-Pragmatic Identity Construction (RPIC) framework, this study extends earlier pragmatic research that primarily focused on speech acts as expressions of psychological states or politeness strategies (Searle, 1969; Holmes, 1984), by situating expressive speech acts within the broader process of digital identity formation and online performativity.

REFERENCES

- Afitnasari, C., Ulinsa, U., Tyas, A. P., Yunidar, Y., & Asrianti, A. (2025). Tindak tutur ekspresif dalam interaksi remaja di Desa Sibado [Expressive speech acts in adolescent interactions in Sibado Village]. *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa, Dan Sastra*, 11(4), 4369–4376. <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v1i4.7136>
- Agus, C., & Iswandi, F. (2025). Constructing and negotiating identity in talk-in-interaction: A sociopragmatic framework for analyzing pragmatic strategies. *Journal of Pragmatics and Discourse Research*, 5(2), 189–206. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.51817/jpdr.v5i2.1320>
- Ahn, D., Park, S., Lee, S., Cho, J., & Lim, H. (2025). I Stan Alien idols and also the people behind them: Understanding how Seams between virtual and real identities engage VTuber fans – A case study of PLAVE [Paper Presentation]. *Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3714218>
- Al Jufri, Moh. I., & Wargadinata, W. (2022). Variasi dan fungsi tindak tutur dalam ceramah KH. Marzuki Mustamar (Kajian Pragmatik) [Variations and functions of speech acts in the sermons of KH. Marzuki Mustamar (A pragmatic study)]. *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 5(4), 807–820. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30872/diglosia.v5i4.491>
- Arundale, R. B. (2021). *Face Constituting Theory: Theorizing Communication as Relating*. Peter Lang.
- Assidik, G. K., Vinansih, S. T., & Kustanti, E. W. (2023). Tindak tutur ekspresif pada penulisan Utas mengenai politik, ekonomi dan sosial [Expressive speech acts in thread writing on politics, economics, and social issues]. *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa, dan Sastra*, 9(1), 29–37. <https://doi.org/10.30605/onoma.v9i1.2120>
- Attardo, S. (2001). *Humor and Irony in Interaction*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, C. S. (1987). *Politeness Some Universals in Language Usage* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Cahyarani, A. S., & Kusuma, E. R. (2024). Tindak tutur ekspresif dalam film *Penyalin Cahaya* karya Wregas Bhanuteja: Kajian teori tindak tutur ilokusi Searle [Expressive speech acts in the film *Penyalin Cahaya* by Wregas Bhanuteja: A study based on Searle's illocutionary speech act theory]. *BASINDO: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra Indonesia, dan Pembelajarannya*, 8(1), 57. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um007v8i12024p56-68>
- Cao, Y., Li, H., Jiang, T., Dang, J., & Hou, Y. (2025). Laughing off cyber spoofing: the role of self-deprecating humor in enhancing celebrities' interpersonal likeability. *BMC Psychology*, 13(1), 501. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-02841-7>
- Chincilla, P., & Kim, J. (2024). VTuber for streamers: Exploring the role of social presence in the visual representation of streamers. *Communication Studies*, 75(6), 844–860. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2024.2337955>
- Cutting, J. (2002). *Pragmatics and discourse: A resource book for students*. Routledge.
- Dynel, M. (2009). Beyond a joke: Types of conversational humour. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 3(5), 1284–1299. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-818X.2009.00152.x>
- Fauziah, S., Sabilla, K. El, & Pikoli, A. Y. (2025). Scroll, tap, repeat: Habitus digital sebagai petualangan identitas dalam Dunia Virtual [Scroll, tap, repeat: Digital habitus as an identity adventure in the virtual world]. *Buletin Psikologi*, 33(1), 82. <https://doi.org/10.22146/buletinpsikologi.97608>
- Goddard, C. (2014). Interjections and emotion (with special reference to “surprise” and “disgust”). *Emotion Review*, 6(1), 53–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073913491843>
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Anchor Books.
- Hariadi, A. H., & Budiwaspada, A. E. (2023). Pengaruh self-congruity dan celebrity attachment penonton VTuber terhadap consumer engagement di Youtube [The effect of self-congruity and viewers' celebrity attachment to VTubers on consumer engagement on YouTube]. *Ekonomi dan Bisnis: Berkala Publikasi Gagasan Konseptual, Hasil Penelitian, Kajian, dan Terapan Teori*, 27(2), 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.24123/jeb.v27i2.5817>
- Hermawan, H., Subarkah, P., Utomo, A. T., Ilham, F., & Saputra, D. I. S. (2024). VTuber personas in digital wayang: A review of innovative cultural promotion for Indonesian heritage. *PILAR Nusa Mandiri: Journal of Computing and Information System*, 20(2), 165–175.
- Holmes, J. (1984). Modifying illocutionary force. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 8(3), 345–365. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(84\)90028-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(84)90028-6)
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hyland, K. (2005). Stance and engagement: a model of interaction in academic discourse. *Discourse Studies*, 7(2), 173–192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605050365>
- Jaya, S., & Ramdhani, I. S. (2023). Analisis tindak tutur ekspresif dalam wacana stand up comedy Indonesia sesi 7 Jupri di Kompas TV [An analysis of expressive speech acts in Indonesian stand-up comedy discourse: Jupri's Session 7 on Kompas TV]. *Jurnal Pendidikan, Bahasa dan Budaya*, 2(1), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.55606/jpbb.v1i2.960>
- Leech, G. N. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman.
- Locher, M. A., & Watts, R. J. (2005). Politeness theory and relational work. *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 1(1), 9–33. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2005.1.1.9>

- Ngasini, N., Senowarsito, S., & Nugrahani, D. (2021). An analysis of expressive speech acts used in Ellen Show "Interview with Billie Eilish." *Applied Linguistics, Linguistics, and Literature (ALLURE) Journal*, 1(1), 53–62. <https://doi.org/10.26877/allure.v1i1.9213>
- Nur Fariza, R. A. (2022). Tindak tutur ekspresif dalam film *Imperfect: Karir, cinta, dan timbangan* [Expressive speech acts in the film *Imperfect: Career, Love, and Scales*]. *BASINDO: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra Indonesia, Dan Pembelajarannya*, 7(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.17977/um007v7i12023p1-12>
- Page, R. (2012). *Stories and social media: Identities and interaction*. Routledge.
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sudaryanto, M., & Akbariski, H. S. (2022). Interjeksi tuturan Joko Widodo dalam komunikasi publik pada masa pandemik COVID-19: Sebuah kajian sosiopragmatik [Interjections in Joko Widodo's speech in public communication during the COVID-19 pandemic: A sociopragmatic study]. *Sirok Bastra*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.37671/sb.v10i2.416>
- Tannen, D. (2007). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue, and imagery in conversational discourse* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- VTuberpost.com. (2025, April 18). *Mikazuki Arion*. https://VTuber-Post.Com/Database_detail.Html?Id=UCz_9zqgFPUYQBhDiZBFc00w.
- Wan, Q., & Lu, Z. (2024). Investigating VTubing as a reconstruction of streamer self-presentation: Identity, performance, and gender [Paper Presentation]. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 8(CSCW1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3637357>
- Widodo, B. P., & Jacky, M. (2025). Fenomena virtual youtuber: Representasi identitas dan perilaku dalam masyarakat virtual dalam perspektif sosiologi virtual (Studi kasus: Virtual youtuber Kobo Kanaeru) [The phenomenon of virtual YouTubers: The representation of identity and behaviour in virtual society from a virtual sociology perspective (A case study of the virtual YouTuber Kobo Kanaeru)]. *Paradigma*, 14(2), 31–40. <https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/paradigma/article/view/70840>
- Yin, M., Shen, C., & Xiao, R. (2025). Entertainers between real and virtual - Investigating viewer interaction, engagement, and relationships with avatarized Virtual Livestreamers [Paper Presentation]. *Proceedings of the 2025 ACM International Conference on Interactive Media Experiences*, 243–257. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706370.3727866>
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.