



Posts per annum: Illocutionary patterns of Filipino year-end essays on Facebook

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Abstract

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This study analyzed the illocutionary patterns of year-end essays, a unique genre of writing on Facebook. It describes the occurrence of illocutionary acts and their pragmatic functions using qualitative and quantitative research methods. Each utterance was coded and analyzed using the classifications of illocutionary speech acts by Searle (1976) and Yule (1996), respectively. Both direct and indirect illocutionary acts were analyzed. The study corpus consisted of 30 year-end essays posted by Filipino Facebook users from 2018 until 2024. The results show that the most dominant illocutionary acts are *representatives* (456 or 77.42%), followed by *expressives* (82 or 13.92%), *commissives* (26 or 4.41%), and *directives* (25 or 4.24%). There is no occurrence of *declaratives* in any of the year-end essays analyzed. *Representatives* were found to be a consistent social media discourse identifier in the year-end essays, while their pragmatic functions act as cultural markers reflecting Filipino traits and communication style. The other pragmatic functions serve as discourse-structuring speech acts, as they help reveal the discourse organization and intentions of the year-end essays and connect discourse information together. Other pragmatic strategies found in the study corpus include the use of hashtags and local color. This study suggests exploring year-end essays further, as they offer a unique window into the discursive practices and intentions of Filipinos in specific online contexts, like Facebook.

Keywords: Facebook; Filipinos; illocutionary acts; pragmatic functions; year-end essays

1 Introduction

The Philippines, previously dubbed the social media capital of the world (Pablo, 2018), continues to exhibit high social media engagement, with Facebook emerging as the

dominant platform. As of the first half of 2025, Facebook remains the most used social media platform among Filipinos, with 116.6% of adults, aged 18 and above, actively using the platform (Kemp, 2025). This pervasive adoption has led Ressa (2019) to essentially assert that Facebook is, in effect, synonymous with the Internet in the Philippines.

Social media has changed how people communicate online, which benefits Digital Humanities because it provides new data for researchers to study communication patterns, cultural trends, and public opinion. At present, Internet pragmatics is becoming an increasingly influential area of research for digital communication. This area analyzes Internet discourses in context to describe the gap between speakers' literal meaning and their intended interpretations to fulfill their communicative goals (Yus, 2023). In the Philippines, a country with a pronounced social media presence, Facebook has fostered unique writing genres that reflect the nation's discursive practices. However, throughout the years, linguistic studies on Filipinos' Facebook posts have been delimited to exploring the pragmatic functions of individual discourse elements, such as graphicons (Dolot & Opina, 2021) and discourse particles (Palacio & Gustilo, 2016).

Only a handful of studies have used genre theory to explore how Facebook cultures and digital language help shape the rhetorical elements and social actions represented in digitally mediated texts (Bazerman, 2003; Belcher, 2023). More importantly, acknowledging the potential of illocutionary acts as shapers of rhetorical traditions on social media is a research territory that warrants linguistic investigations. This can be accomplished by looking at the illocutionary patterns of a uniquely emerging genre of writing among Filipinos, which they call *year-end essays*.

1.1 On Filipinos' Year-End Essays on Facebook

Filipinos are also recognized for their playful and creative expressions on Facebook, which complements their high social media engagement. As a matter of fact, Meta, in 2022, launched the campaign, "Apps from Meta, Magic from You," to celebrate the unique ways Filipinos create networks, find communities, and grow business on social media (Adobo Magazine, 2022). Apparently, one underrated Facebook activity in the Philippines is the "annual" posting of year-end essays. It has been a tradition for many Filipinos to post their sentiments and essay-long narratives on what the passing year has given them and what they are looking forward to as another one unfolds. The Filipino year-end essay is a unique form of writing, with the Facebook year-in-review being its closest analogue, featuring a curated selection of life events, highlighted posts, and popular stories (Lang, 2020). These online essays are like regular school essays, longer than a usual Facebook post, and have an introduction, a body, and concluding statements. Other year-end essays tend to be shorter but still contain one or the other parts. Essentially, Facebook posts like year-end essays reflect how users utilize their writing skills to fulfill certain social functions of language, such as to express one's feelings, knowledge, and ideas (Altunkaya & Topuzkanamis, 2018).

Year-end essays also communicate the changes that Filipinos would like to see in themselves, from other people, their career, their families, and the government. In doing so,

they are often sentimental and expressive of their feelings while maintaining a light-hearted demeanor (Scroope, 2017). Scroope further describes Filipinos' status updates on Facebook as a way to make "hugot" (to pull out), a term which means that someone is drawing out deep memories and experiences. Basilisco and Cha (2015) revealed that convenience-seeking was a primary motivator for Filipinos' Facebook use. They viewed Facebook not just as a tool for communication, but also as a space to freely promote themselves which is why posting year-end essays is a widespread activity in the Facebook culture of the Philippines. The social nature of Facebook matches Filipinos' willingness to share their personal stories of the past, such as those that are usually highlighted in their year-end posts.

1.2 The Place of Illocutionary Acts in Characterizing Filipino Year-End Essays

Illocutionary acts are examples of speech acts. Per Austin (1962), an illocutionary act allows the speaker to perform certain actions, such as *informing*, *guessing*, *threatening*, *asking*, and *claiming*. Communicating one's thoughts and ideas involves pragmatic realizations. It further concerns the choices speakers make, the constraints they deal with when language is used in social interactions, and the effects of language use on other participants (Yule, 1996). For Searle (1979), the illocutionary act is the basic unit of language. He describes it as the production of a token within the context of a speech act.

The advent of digital technologies has truly shaped the way people interact and cultivate engagement online. Digital innovations also introduce creative ways to connect with other people and present themselves in digital platforms like Facebook. The distinct facets of the self (Manago et al., 2008) and the ways by which we construct our identity (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011) greatly correlate with social media use. In academia, the study of language has been further advanced by the impact of social media. Digital corpora from Facebook, for example, provide interesting ways to understand language and gain crucial insights into modern social dynamics and patterns of communication (Zappavigna, 2016).

When examining social media language, applying the Speech Act Theory is highly relevant. First introduced by Austin (1962) and later improved by Searle (1969), this theory underscores language's performative function where utterances are seen as actions that accomplish tasks rather than merely conveying information (Jegede, 2024). The study also sees the use of the Speech Act Theory to expand the traditional scope of speech act categories (Yus, 2019) to explore newer forms related to social media discourse. Further, highlighting how Filipinos present themselves in their year-end essays on Facebook informs the relationship between culture and speech acts to achieve certain social functions in various contexts (García-Santillán, 2021). The study also sheds light on the compelling need to document how Internet pragmatics develops and how emerging technologies transform speech act performance in digital spaces where language and performance could intersect in dynamic ways (Jegede, 2024).

This study shows that the Speech Act Theory, despite its origins, remains a relevant framework for analyzing pragmatic functions of language in the digital age. Scholars agree

that the collective contributions of Austin and Searle “remain central to modern pragmatics,” (Babazade, 2025, p. 222) and offer crucial insights into how speakers can navigate the complexities of today’s communicative contexts (Bruner, 1974; Sadock, 2006). Thus, using the Speech Act Theory for online discourses, such as Filipino year-end essays, still holds water in uncovering how utterances reshape social realities in Philippine Facebook culture. The following related studies on Facebook discourses further justify the applicability of the Speech Act Theory in the study of pragmatics and the language of the Internet.

Sadek (2023) used the Speech Act Theory to investigate how Facebook users in Egypt employ various speech acts to influence, express emotions, make commitments, and declare intentions. The researcher rationalized the importance of linguistic forms and functions in exploring the language of communication in cyberpragmatics, effectively incorporating Searle’s (1969) speech acts framework and other eclectic approaches. Searle’s (1979) categorization of speech acts also contributed to understanding the complexities of social media communication.

Other emerging genres of writing on Facebook like online selling advertisements, enhance research studies on Internet pragmatics, such as Landicho’s (2022) study on the speech act patterns of Filipino and American online selling advertisements on Facebook Marketplace. The study revealed that Filipino online sellers follow the Western format when advertising on the platform. Expressive patterns of rapport and relationships also frequently occur in the Filipino corpus. This research proves that by analyzing speech act patterns in relation to the language of marketing strategies on Facebook, how emotions and culture are meshed with the meanings intended by the advertisement can be determined.

Other studies also underscore the importance of expanding the foundational concepts of the Speech Act Theory to include more encompassing classifications of performative speech acts (Yus, 2019). Jegede’s (2024) study on the interactional dynamics of digital communication on Facebook, Twitter (now X), and Instagram, provides a model that combines Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory and the Speech Act Theory by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The study dwells on the influence of platform contexts (social media platform used) and form of interaction (private or public messages) on the frequencies and types of speech acts produced. This relates to the present study and its goal of analyzing how year-end essays could be understood by examining the Filipino Facebook culture and the context in which they are posted, particularly during the new year countdown.

Lumabi’s (2020) study on the use of Optimality Theory (OT) highlights backward speeches, such as the use of “lodi” (idol) and “werpa” (power) among millennials. This is a compelling study that looks at how language use reveals social practices in digital communities. Like year-end essays, a group’s culture enables Facebook users from the Philippines to represent their thoughts and feelings in distinctive ways. These include the use of words and expressions that are only familiar to a particular social group. It also informs how the Philippine English variety pervades in the digital sphere, be it in the ways Filipinos rhetorically organize their year-end essays or through the linguistic forms they use to embellish their posts with cultural undertones.

Since there is no existing research that pragmatically characterizes the year-end essays of Filipinos on Facebook, the related literature banks on the continuing relevance of the Speech Act Theory. The review also highlights other genres of writing on Facebook, such as online selling advertisements and private and public messages. Finally, social representation inspires worthy discussions about novel and unique patterns of rhetorical and language use that help illustrate the kind of speech and cultural communities Filipinos develop on Facebook.

This study was therefore aimed at identifying the pragmatic functions of illocutionary acts in the year-end essays of Filipino Facebook users. Other pragmatic strategies of language use are hoped to support the idea that posting year-end essays on Facebook could be a characteristic form of digital discourse among Filipinos. The following research questions break down the general goal of the study:

1. What illocutionary acts can be found in the year-end essays written by Filipinos on Facebook?
2. What pragmatic functions do the illocutionary acts fulfill in the year-end essays?
3. What other pragmatic strategies emerge from the year-end essays of Filipinos on Facebook?

1.3 Analytical Framework

The categorization of illocutionary acts developed by Searle (1976) was chosen for this study. Searle improved the earlier classification of speech acts proposed by Austin (1962). Searle's proposed classification scheme was adopted because it presents a more consistent and practical system of categorizing illocutionary acts. The focus is on illocutionary points instead of illocutionary verbs. The classification also avoids ambiguity when it comes to the descriptions of the illocutionary functions. Searle's list clearly distinguishes the functions of each illocutionary act, thereby ensuring that there would be no overlap once utterances are classified. For instance, "describing" in Austin's classification can be both *verdictive* and *expositive* illocutionary acts, while Searle only categorizes it under *representative* speech act. Table 1 shows the five types of illocutionary acts in Searle's taxonomy:

Table 1
Searle’s (1976) Revised Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts

Illocutionary Act	Illocutionary Point
Representatives	<p>The point or purpose of <i>representatives</i> is to commit the speaker (in varying degrees) to something’s being the case, to the truth of the expressed proposition.</p> <p>Examples: <i>stating, asserting, reporting, instructing, concluding</i></p>
Directives	<p>The illocutionary point of <i>directives</i> consists in the fact that they are attempts (of varying degrees, and hence, more precisely, they are determinates of the determinable which includes attempting) by the speaker to get the hearer to do something.</p> <p>Examples: <i>commanding, requesting, inviting, forbidding, suggesting</i></p>
Commissives	<p><i>Commissives</i> are those illocutionary acts whose point is to commit the speaker (again in varying degrees) to some future course of action.</p> <p>Examples: <i>promising, intending, vowing</i></p>
Expressives	<p>The illocutionary point of <i>expressives</i> is used to express the psychological state specified in the sincerity condition about a state of affairs specified in the propositional content.</p> <p>Examples: <i>thanking, celebrating, hoping, wishing, greeting</i></p>
Declaratives	<p><i>Declaratives</i> bring about some alternation in the status or condition of the referred-to object or objects solely in virtue of the fact that the declaration has been successfully performed.</p> <p>Examples: <i>declaring, pronouncing</i></p>

To include other types of speech acts in the analysis, Yule’s (1996) concept of direct and indirect speech acts was also considered. Direct speech acts express the intended meaning of an utterance overtly, such that there is a direct connection between the linguistic structure of the utterance and its meaning. An example is when one uses a declarative sentence to state that he or she is going to school on that day: “I am going to school today.” On the other hand, indirect speech acts occur when there is an indirect relationship between the structure and meaning of the utterance (Yule, 1996). For instance, a sentence is interrogative in form but could have a different meaning. One can say, “Can you pass the salt?” to mean that he or she is requesting someone to pass the salt.

2 Method

2.1 Research Design

The study used quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the research questions . For the quantitative analysis, the occurrence of illocutionary acts was manually counted and statistically computed using Microsoft Excel. For the qualitative part, descriptive analysis was employed to determine the illocutionary acts and their pragmatic functions in the year-end essays. Each utterance was coded and analyzed using the frameworks espoused by Searle (1976) and Yule (1996), respectively. These utterances consisted of direct and indirect illocutionary acts, focusing on both structure and function.

2.2 Study Corpus

The entire corpus consisted of 30 year-end essays posted by Filipino Facebook users from 2018 to 2024. Year-end essays are Facebook posts that are commonly publicized before a new year unfolds. This emerging genre of social media composition is not as rigid as the regular academic essay written by students in their formal English classes. Year-end essays allow Facebook users to share on the social media platform a review of what the passing year has given and talk about the things that they anticipate and wish for the new year. Musings about the passing year and expectations about the new year are the usual topics of year-end essays. Posting year-end essays is verypopular in the Philippine Facebook culture due to Filipinos’ active social media connectivity, not to mention their being expressive online. Aside from active online engagement, Castillo (2021) claims that Facebook is a primary platform where Filipinos stay in touch and access, disseminate, and react to news and information. In terms of the essays’ length, the study corpus has a total of 9,209 words. The shortest year-end essay consists of 42 words, while the longest one has 827 words. Table 2shows the year-end essays, their titles, and word length:

Table 2
Descriptions of the Year-End Essays

Year-End Essay Number	Title	Total No. of Words	Year-End Essay Number	Title	Total No. of Words
1	No title	240	16	No title	253
2	2022 is a year of breakthroughs	785	17	No title	292
3	No title	61	18	No title	212
4	#yearendessay	288	19	No title	176

Table 1 continued...

Year-End Essay Number	Title	Total No. of Words	Year-End Essay Number	Title	Total No. of Words
5	HAPPY NEW YEAR, FOLKS!	752	20	No title	188
6	2021: The Year of Significant Changes and New Beginnings	165	21	No Title	287
7	No title	256	22	I Choose to Fight On: 2024 Year-End Reflection	268
8	2021 is a difficult year.	87	23	No title	350
9	No title	42	24	No title	232
10	No title	661	25	Essay time! As it should be (year-end version)	383
11	No title	301	26	No title	73
12	Essay Writing Contest Entry no. 1_FinalCopy	661	27	2024 in nine pictures	357
13	2018 AT WORK: Turning Challenges into Opportunities and Small Victories	827	28	Finally posting my entry to the 2023 year end essay writing contest!	343
14	#yearendessay	218	29	Year-end essay entry is up!	331
15	2022 was a whirlwind year.	67	30	No title	53

The essays were collected via Facebook’s search function, which allows users to explore posts based on specific search terms or keywords. The researcher used *#yearendessay* and *#YearEndEssay* to identify the texts. The use of hashtags is common on Facebook as they help people find posts about topics that are interesting to them.

The search yielded over a hundred year-end essays. However, since the study was delimited to those essays posted within the last seven years, only those that were posted from 2018 to 2024 were considered. Moreover, year-end essays that were written in Filipino, Kapampangan, Cebuano, and other Philippine languages were not included, since the frameworks used were based on speech acts spoken or written in English. This means that the

final corpus of year-end essays was written either in Philippine English or American English, with some very few words from other Philippine languages.

2.3 Data Analysis

The researcher extracted utterances from the year-end essays, comprising various sentence types (declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory) that range from single words to lengthy phrases. These utterances were then classified based on the illocutionary acts yielding a total of 589 illocutionary acts (both direct and indirect) from the study corpus

After classifying all the utterances based on their illocutionary meanings, the researcher sought assistance from two qualified intercoders to validate the classification. They were chosen because their educational background relates to English Language Studies (ELS) and Applied Linguistics. They have also conducted studies and presented research papers related to speech acts. The intercoders were given copies of the year-end essays and the frameworks used to classify the utterances. After a week, the researcher scheduled an online meeting with the intercoders via Microsoft Teams to talk about data classification. After some meaningful discussions and negotiations, the researcher and the two intercoders finally agreed on the final classification of the illocutionary acts.

The quantitative analysis involved descriptive statistics, with frequency and percentage counts calculated using Microsoft Excel. The function of each utterance in the year-end essays became the basis of the qualitative analysis of data. The researcher also referenced other relevant theories and studies on Speech Act Theory to strengthen the interpretation and discussion of results.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

The use of social media data for research purposes entails necessary ethical considerations. However, since the year-end essays were publicly posted on Facebook, there was no need for consent from the individual users. The Human Research Protections Program at the University of Pennsylvania (2025) asserts that if the social media information does not involve the users' photographs, videos, and other image-based content, obtaining permission is not needed. The study corpus comprised of text-based data that do not reveal the identities of the posters or users. In presenting the results, the names of the users on Facebook and other personal information were not disclosed to protect their privacy and maintain the anonymity of the data.

3 Results and Discussion

The results comprise the meanings represented by each of the illocutionary acts identified in the year-end essays. Extracts from the actual corpus are also presented to further describe how the pragmatic functions of illocutionary acts shape the discursive features of the year-

end essays. The results further reflect the pragmatic sense of Filipino year-end essays on Facebook when analyzed based on the lens of illocutionary acts which represent the intended meanings or the communicative forces of utterances. Based on the three research questions formulated, the following critical insights present the potential of Filipino year-end essays on Facebook in enriching research themes related to Internet pragmatics and speech acts.

3.1 Illocutionary Acts in the Year-End Essays of Filipino Facebook Users

According to Searle (1976), the five types of illocutionary acts are *representatives*, *expressives*, *directives*, *commissives*, and *declaratives*. Yule (1996), on the one hand, describes these illocutionary acts based on what a speaker is trying to convey. The speech act of *representatives* communicates the speaker's position on a particular subject. *Expressives* show the speaker's feelings, such as pain, dislike, and joy. *Commissives* allow the speaker to commit himself to doing something in the future. *Directives* express what the speaker wants, be it through a request or a command, while *declaratives* tend to change the world via the speakers' words.

Table 3 shows the types of illocutionary acts identified in the year-end essays. Both frequency and percentage data were included to account for the types that are more and less frequently occurring in the corpus.

Table 3
Illocutionary Acts in Filipino Year-End Essays

Type of Illocutionary Act	f	P
Representatives	456	77.42
Expressives	82	13.92
Commissives	26	4.41
Directives	25	4.24
Declaratives	0	0.00
TOTAL	589	100.00

The illocutionary act that is frequently occurring in the year-end essays is *representatives* (456 or 77.42%). This is followed by *expressives* (82 or 13.92%), *commissives* (26 or 4.41%), and *directives* (25 or 4.24%). There is no occurrence of *declaratives* in any of the essays analyzed.

The preponderance of *representatives* in the year-end essays underscores that Filipinos use illocutions to present their experiences as truthful and legitimate. Schneider (2022) asserts that *representatives* satisfy a reporting or a presentational function. Thus, in the year-end essays, most of the utterances reveal the different ways Filipinos present themselves

on Facebook, such as reflecting on what the passing year has brought them. Aside from the list of achievements or accomplishments shared, Filipino Facebook users also describe what the passing year means to them. Moreover, they communicate their assertiveness in anticipating what the new year may bring.

Although the illocutionary acts of *expressives*, *commissives*, and *directives* are quite evident in the study corpus, *representatives* still emerged as the most dominant illocutionary acts in Filipino year-end essays. The result relates to the concept of self-presentation on Facebook as a social networking platform. Yang and Brown (2016) define self-presentation as the process by which people communicate a positive image of themselves—one that is crucial in the construction of self-identity and reputation within a social context. For Filipinos, maintaining a positive self-image in the society is a face-saving act. Such a social view compels them to preserve their dignity and avoid embarrassment. Scroope (2017) describes it as a way to evade “hiya,” or the notion of shame, which is negatively perceived in the Filipino culture. Finally, no trace of *declaratives* was found in the year-end essays because in its pragmatic sense, a *declarative* is best enacted when the speaker is in a special institutional role, such as when he or she is a priest or a lawyer. These illocutionary acts are more noticeable in movie dialogues, where actors portray different characters (Pulungan & Ambalegin, 2022; Sakiti, 2022; Wicaksono, 2018).

The dominance of *representatives* in the year-end essays reveal the tendency of Filipino Facebook users to *state* their accomplishments and *assert* their feelings. Through illocutionary acts, posting year-end essays could be a means for Filipinos to present themselves as dignified and pleasing as possible to avoid public shame. This result backs up Gustilo’s (2006) conclusion that self-presentation in CMCs (computer-mediated communications) among Filipinos features linguistic patterns and linguistic choices that uncover their identities and upbringing. Furthermore, the illocutionary act of *stating* reveals how Filipinos use *representatives* to *share* their personal musings or reflections and to drive the attention of their audience towards the relevance of their messages. Since their reflections are “stated,” Filipino Facebook users want to make it known that they have indeed gone through those experiences. Their year-end essays also contain life lessons that they would like to *share* with other people online. The result also confirms Arielli’s (2018) view of the speech act of “sharing” (another representative speech act) as creating the “shareworthiness” and the attention-orienting effect of a social media post. Sianipar (2022) found that *asserting* is a commonly used illocutionary act on Twitter (now X) and Instagram, which confirms that a social media platform like Facebook could be used to express one’s opinions, express thoughts, express wishes, and in the case of the present study, represent one’s year-end reflections.

3.2 Pragmatic Functions of Illocutionary Acts in Filipino Year-End Essays

Utterance production reflects language’s functional dimension (Bayat, 2012). Analyzing illocutionary acts in Filipino year-end essays reveals how the users enact their utterances contextually. The most frequent and unique functions of each act are compared and discussed.

Table 4
Pragmatic Functions of Illocutionary Acts in Filipino Year-End Essays

Type of Speech Act	Function	f	P
Representatives	Stating	295	50.08
	Asserting	48	8.15
	Describing	41	6.96
	Narrating	19	3.23
	Quoting	10	1.70
	Insisting	8	1.36
	Informing	7	1.19
	Claiming	6	1.02
	Admitting	6	1.02
	Acknowledging	6	1.02
	Questioning	5	0.85
	Complaining	1	0.17
	Assuming	1	0.17
	Confirming	1	0.17
	Assuring	1	0.17
	Warning	1	0.17
TOTAL		456	77.42
Expressives	Thanking	36	6.11
	Hoping	17	2.89
	Celebrating	12	2.04
	Greeting	7	1.19
	Wishing	6	1.02
	Praising	2	0.34
	Welcoming	1	0.17
	Congratulating	1	0.17
TOTAL		82	13.92

Table 4 continued...

Type of Speech Act	Function	f	P
Commissives	Promising	14	2.38
	Intending	11	1.87
	Vowing	1	0.17
	TOTAL	26	4.41
Directives	Commanding	17	2.89
	Advising	3	0.51
	Requesting	2	0.34
	Daring	1	0.17
	Recommending	1	0.17
	Asking	1	0.17
	TOTAL	25	4.24
GRAND TOTAL		589	100.00

3.2.1 Pragmatic Functions of Representatives

Given *representatives*’ prevalence in year-end essays, it is expected that they would exhibit pragmatic functions. A total of 16 functions were eventually identified, and the pragmatic functions of *representatives* are also the most varied. The top three most frequently occurring functions include, *stating* (295 or 50.08%), *asserting* (48 or 8.15%), and *describing* (41 or 6.96%). Most of the utterances on *stating* reveal the Facebook users’ achievements and hardships during the passing year. Relevant to *stating* is *asserting* as a pragmatic function. Although the users are stating the difficulties brought by the passing year, they directly assert how they survived different challenges by being steadfast and keeping their faith in God. Lastly, Filipino Facebook users have the tendency to compare their experiences from the previous years. Most of the descriptions talk about how the passing year had tested their character and resilience. The following extracts show the realizations of the aforesaid pragmatic functions:

- **Representative (Stating)**
[Essay No. 5] – *I became a part of the historical approval of the Special Program in Journalism in our division.*
[Essay No. 7] – *A reverse card was dropped this year; people we thought will stay forever became a painful memory.*
- **Representative (Asserting)**
[Essay No. 12] – *I must say, I am successful, and I succeeded this year.*

- **Representative (Describing)**

[Essay No. 14] – 2019 you've been so tough, full of obstacles.

As regards uniquely emerging functions from the corpus, it is interesting to note that Filipino Facebook users are fond of *quoting* statements to strengthen the validity of their utterances. Salazar (2022) views it as a tendency for Filipino speech and writing to emulate the conventions they are exposed to in formal, academic English. The users quoted statements from popular songs, the Holy Bible, philosophers, scientists, and even words and phrases from their friends and workmates.

- **Representative (Quoting)**

[Essay No. 2] – As Taylor Swift once said in her song “Great War”, “And we will never go back, to that bloodshed, crimson clover, Uh-huh, the worst was over.”

[Essay No. 17] – Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

3.2.2 Pragmatic Functions of Expressives

Although *expressives* are less frequently occurring and varied compared to *representatives*, a total of eight pragmatic functions were still documented. The most common is *thanking*, which may also be considered a distinct illocutionary act for this genre of social media writing. Rhetorically, the users end their essays with a statement of gratitude to their families, to God, their friends, the passing year, and even to non-human entities. In an article about Filipino values, Menguin (2023) associates Filipinos' propensity to be thankful to their sense of gratitude and generosity, which is translated in the culture as “utang na loob” (debt of gratitude or debt from within). This valued cultural trait is dominant in the Philippine culture and is even taught to Filipinos at a young age.

- **Expressive (Thanking)**

[Essay No. 3] – Thank you, Lord, for sustaining us throughout the year.

[Essay No. 5] – Thank you, universe for conspiring the incremental tenets I needed to scaffold myself towards the end of the year.

Another insight drawn from the results is the representation of illocutionary acts as cultural markers of a discourse community. For instance, the functions of *expressives* in the corpus show how Filipino Facebook users put importance on statements that express gratitude and appreciation to the people and events that made their year memorable. Gratitude is considered a Filipino character strength (Rungtun et al., 2016). This is an example of a Filipino good behavior, usually expressed when good things have been done to them, such as

an answered prayer from God (Gorospe, 1966). Emmons and Shelton (2002) link gratitude with the Filipino trait of reciprocity or “utang na loob” (sometimes translated as debt of gratitude), which helps Filipinos express their faithfulness and obligation. However, this is not to say that *thanking* as an illocutionary act is used negatively in the year-end essays. Unlike how Maglalang et al. (2025) describe debt of gratitude as a surface-level Filipino trait that may create pressure to pay one’s parents or caregivers back, the intended meaning of *thanking* in the year-end essays relates to Filipinos’ genuine appreciation of the blessings they received within the passing year.

Some Facebook users express their optimism towards the coming year through the illocutionary act of *hoping*. Moreover, there are utterances from the essays that make use of *celebrating* as a pragmatic variant of *expressives*. This forms part of the strategy to include illocutionary acts that have pleasant or desirable meanings, such as the ones shown in the following extracts:

- **Expressive (Hoping)**
[Essay No. 25] – Hey, 2025, may you bring back balance in my life, and with it, love and prosperity too.
- **Expressive (Celebrating)**
[Essay No. 6] – Cheers to making 2022 more INTERESTING, not only for ourselves and loved ones but for the COUNTRY and PLANET.

3.2.3 Pragmatic Functions of Commissives

Commissives are the second least frequent and least diverse type of illocutionary acts in the Filipino year-end essays. The highest frequency belongs to *promising*. Owing to the likeness of year-end essays to a new year’s resolution, it may be easy to assume that these texts would contain a great number of “promising” as a *commissive* illocutionary act. However, in the case of Filipino year-end essays, *promising* may not be considered typical, as justified by the low frequencies from the study corpus. Interestingly, the promises revealed in the essays do not highlight the idea of changing negative attitudes into positive ones. Instead, utterances are more related to strengthening positive beliefs and dispositions, doing the same old things for the next year, and promising to change themselves, so that other people would not prey on their vulnerabilities. Moreover, there seems to be this idea of aiming to change due to people’s negative intentions, which is a form of blaming people. In fact, there are only few utterances from the year-end essays that connect to the idea of changing for the better. The contextual meanings of *promising* can be rationalized based on the likelihood that Filipinos would always construct a positive image of themselves. Admittance of weaknesses and negative attitudes, especially in a public online space like Facebook, runs counter to the goal of avoiding “hiya.” As such, Constante (2022) justifies that Filipinos would always focus on representing themselves and their families in the most honorable way.

- **Commissive (Promising)**

[Essay No. 8] – So this 2022, I promise to treat myself better in order to radiate positivity (NOT Covid) to the people surrounding me...

[Essay No. 1] – I'll continue cutting ties with negative people that affects my mental health regardless of being relatives, or closest friends.

Per other functions of *commissives*, *intending* is realized when Filipino Facebook users convey their readiness to face the coming year, such as the meaning illustrated in the following extract:

- **Commissive (Intending)**

[Essay No. 14] – 2020... I am very ready to conquer you...

3.2.4 Pragmatic Functions of Directives

The number of pragmatic meanings for *directives* could mean that this may not be a common illocutionary act in Filipino year-end essays. A total of six pragmatic functions were determined, with *commanding* as the most frequently occurring. Being straightforward and commanding in the Philippine context is considered face-threatening. Santos (2022) describes Filipino communication as indirect, whether at home or at work. This trait is carried over to their year-end essays. Although a total of 17 instances of “commanding” was recorded, many of them made use of plural pronouns instead of the expected pronoun, “you.” According to Comrie (1975), in many languages, such as Filipino, the use of plurals indicates politeness. However, there are few utterances from the corpus that express forceful or straightforward intentions. In an anthropological context, Peña et al. (2006) concluded that among Filipinos, minimizing imposition of directness in communication is always the goal. For instance, it is normal to use the prefix, “paki,” (please), which is always attached to a command or a request.

- **Directive (Commanding)**

[Essay No. 10] – Therefore, as I see it is only appropriate that we should start our year 2020 with a VISION - what we want to see for our future.

[Essay No. 1] – Speak up!

Deviations from the sociolinguistic norm of politeness and indirectness may also be changing among Filipinos, most especially on social media. Thus, the use of upfront and forceful messaging is slowly being adopted by younger generations of Facebook users. An example would be the use of *daring* as a pragmatic function of directives:

- **Directive (Daring)**

[Essay No. 1] – *Rock on and bring it on!*

Another cultural marker in the year-end essays are the illocutionary acts of *commanding* and *advising*. The relatively low number of *directives* (compared to *representatives* and *expressives*) could reveal the propensity of Filipinos to avoid being upfront or straightforward about their feelings and opinions. According to Ramos (2022), Filipinos tend to take a more indirect approach to communication to save face or maintain positive face. This is evident in the limited number of illocutionary acts where Filipinos are advising, recommending, or daring other people. Sayogie (2022) also found traces of indirectness on Facebook using bald off-record. Bald off-record is used to avoid being held accountable for the performance of a face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which sometimes leads to providing indications, clues, and confusing statements that obscure the intended meaning of the utterance.

Direct communication style is becoming less pervasive among younger Filipino Facebook users. In the present study, the 17 instances of *commanding* come from the year-end essays of millennials/Generation Y (1986-1996) and zoomers/Generation Z (1907-2012). To support this result, Hacutina et al. (2025) concluded that the communication styles of Generation Z Filipinos lean more towards exhibiting confidence in their self-expression and discussion initiation, which is a mark of a direct approach to communication. In the same study, Generation Y Filipinos (millennials) tend to value clear and concise communication, which can also mark their preference for a more direct style of communication. The results of the featured study are not conclusive and can only apply to a certain group of Filipino interlocutors. To further support the assertions on the wavering directness in communication style of younger Filipino Facebook users, there is a need to analyze the influence of age on how meanings are communicated on digital platforms.

3.3 Other Pragmatic Strategies in Filipino Year-End Essays

This part of the paper presents and examines other uniquely occurring pragmatic strategies used by Filipinos in their year-end essays on Facebook. These emerging language patterns uncover pragmatic features that are instrumental in describing the communicative sense of year-end essays within the context of Philippine Facebook culture.

3.3.1 Illocutionary Acts vis-à-vis Rhetorical Organization of Filipino Year-End Essays

Illocutionary acts are instrumental in characterizing the discourse structure of Filipino year-end essays. The occurrences of *representatives* and *expressives* help shape the essay's discourse organization. The act of *describing*, a *representative* illocutionary act, frames the beginning of the essay, where the passing year is described as either satisfying or challenging. Moving forward, the illocutionary acts of *stating*, *asserting*, and other examples

of *representatives*, provide support to the descriptions mentioned about the passing year. For instance, if the essay describes the year as satisfying, Facebook users would be “stating” their accomplishments, achievements, and milestones. If the year has been challenging, the users will assert themselves and underscore their actions to emerge victorious amidst hardships and mishaps. The last part of the essay is all about *expressives*. Facebook users thank all the people who have helped them achieve numerous milestones for that year. They also give gratitude to those who were with them while navigating a difficult year. Among the year-end essays analyzed, the users commonly express their gratitude to God and their families.

The result also shows that illocutionary acts are markers of rhetorical relations. Discourse-structuring speech acts are those that structure and manage discourse interactions (Clapp, 2009). These speech acts have illocutionary forces that connect information in a discourse together. Although the corpus used by other researchers to describe discourse-structuring speech acts were non-digital texts, the results of the current study may prove that these illocutionary acts can also function as discourse markers in digital writing. The dominant illocutionary acts identified may also reveal Filipinos’ discourse strategies in organizing their year-end essays on Facebook. Thus, the interplay among the pragmatic functions of *describing*, *stating*, *asserting*, and *thanking* constitutes illocutions as discourse-structuring markers. The illocutionary acts shape the beginning of the year-end essays by *describing* the passing year, *stating* experiences, and *asserting* oneself for self-presentation purposes. The essays conclude with *thanking*, or Filipinos’ way of expressing gratitude to the ones who made their year favorable and meaningful.

3.3.2 The Use of #YearEndEssay or #yearendessay

#YearEndEssay and #yearendessay are Facebook identifiers. All the essays contain these hashtags, which are placed either before the actual post or at the end. As technologically discursive tools, hashtags are described by Zappavigna (2022) as fulfilling both searchability and community-building linguistic activity. The featured hashtags allow Facebook posts to become more ‘findable.’ Putting the said hashtags in year-end essays could also mean that the users are freely joining the bandwagon of posting their reflections before the current year concludes. Lastly, along with hashtags, Filipino year-end essays use essay titles that are similar to those written by students for their school projects, making them look like offline writing outputs in an English class.

3.3.3 The Use of Local Color to Represent Filipino Identity

Local color focuses on the characters, dialects, and features that are particular to a specific region (Campbell, 2017). The multilingual nature of the Philippines enables Filipinos to integrate regional words and expressions, not only in informal conversations but also in academic writing. One common trend in Philippine social media discourse is the use of the Cebuano (a Philippine language) word, “Puhon,” which means *God-willing* or *hopefully*. In the year-end essays, Filipino Facebook users incorporate this local word into their posts

to turn to God when claiming for the fulfillment of a wish or a desire. Hence, local color words may count as a peculiar mark in Filipino year-end essays, which could infer a desire to construct either a religious image (Abad, 1995) or a cultural identity (Camba, 2021).

Finally, the emergence of other pragmatic strategies in the year-end essays, like hashtags and local color words, underlines the connection between discourse organization and social practices among Filipino Facebook users. As exemplified by Genuino (2002), rhetorical patterns in writing, such as cohesion, tend to reveal cultural practices among Singaporeans, Filipinos, and Americans. Examining year-end essays and their rhetorical qualities would also strengthen the aforesaid assertion.

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study puts forward a descriptive analysis of illocutionary acts in Filipino year-end essays on Facebook, grounded on the Speech Act Theory. It revealed empirical results that would help supplement the existing research efforts on digital communication and other emerging forms of digital writing, such as those published on social media platforms. This study strongly supports the idea of using illocutionary acts to understand the rhetorical purpose of a uniquely emerging genre of writing on Facebook like year-end essays. Since there are no other existing studies on this form of writing, illocutionary acts could serve as foundational concepts towards analyzing the meanings expressed by Filipinos in their year-end reflections. *Representatives*, in this sense, could therefore be looked at as examples of illocutionary acts that mark the discourse of year-end essays of Filipinos on Facebook. Since *representatives* involve *stating*, *asserting*, and *describing* as their pragmatic functions, year-end essays reveal Filipinos' discursive intentions. These intentions include stating their positive and negative experiences within the passing year, asserting their resilience in facing the year's challenges, and describing how the featured year went for them.

The use of *expressives*, such as *thanking* and *celebrating*, shows Filipinos' intentions of giving gratitude to people and other entities, not to mention celebrating their milestones and achievements within the given year. The limited number of illocutionary acts, such as those that relate to *directives*, *commissives*, and *declaratives*, would mean that Filipino Facebook users do not consistently intend to direct other people to do something and to commit them to a certain type of action. The non-existence of declaratives in the year-end essays reveals that changing the state of affairs or transforming other people and the world is not a marker of discursive intention among Filipinos.

By looking at illocutionary acts as cultural markers in Filipino year-end essays it can be deduced that culturally oriented discursive practices also materialize when Filipinos engage in digital writing. Filipinos' communicative styles could be better understood when we look at how illocutions shape the discourse of year-end essays. Expressing gratitude could therefore be a cultural marker that sets Filipino year-end essays apart from other genres of writing on Facebook. Filipinos have the tendency to thank their families, friends, other people, and other non-human entities as they communicate their intentions in their public

posts. The indirectness of the Filipinos in terms of their communicative style is shown in the infrequency of utterances that would command or invite their intended audience to do something. This study reveals that dominant illocutionary acts in the year-end essays are culturally practiced in a given discourse community, while those that are least frequent could be uncommon in a particular culture.

The discourse-structuring characteristic of illocutionary acts also signals their rhetorical importance in studying Filipino year-end essays. They tend to dictate the organizational structure of digital texts, connect information together, and synergize the intentions of Filipino posters of year-end essays on Facebook. This means that illocutionary acts can also mirror social realities through context-specific digital writing structures. The representative-expressive pattern that is prevalent in the study corpus could help intended audience build their discourse knowledge about year-end essays. Discourse-structuring illocutionary acts, such as *describing*, *stating*, *asserting*, and *thanking*, render the Filipino year-end essay as a genre of writing that has a consistent discourse pattern. This makes it easier to describe and frame the content and intended meanings of the year-end essays based on frequently occurring illocutionary acts. Further, it would be useful to study discourse-structuring illocutionary acts to successfully frame any year-end essays based on their expected discourse content and pragmatic functions.

The use of other pragmatic strategies in the year-end essays, such as hashtags and local color, further qualify this type of writing as representing a rhetorical context that could be distinctive to a specific rhetorical context. The use of #YearEndEssay or #yearendessay shows how Filipino Facebook users identify their posts as conforming to a specialized type of writing that becomes more relevant every time a new year comes. Incorporating local color words also celebrate the Filipino culture in social media discourse, grounding the year-end essay in the authentic identity of Filipinos, be it religious or ethnolinguistic.

Finally, the limited number of year-end essays analyzed in this study may not be sufficient to account conclusively for the results. Using a larger corpus of Filipino year-end essays on Facebook is therefore recommended. A contrastive analysis of illocutionary acts between Filipino year-end essays and similar social media texts from different speech communities, such as those from India, United States, Indonesia, and Brazil (top four countries with the highest number of Facebook users), may be done to further validate the assertion that Filipino year-end essays are uniquely emerging texts on Facebook. Since digitally mediated texts are multimodal, another research prospect is to study the illocutionary acts embedded in short-format videos on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. This will further stretch Internet pragmatics to the study of multimodal ecologies and provide useful frameworks to describe non-verbal modalities, such as images, emoticons, music, camera shots, songs, and other related media.

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