

CONSTRUCTING AUTHENTICITY IN SPONSORED TIKTOK SKINCARE CONTENT: A SPEECH ACT ANALYSIS OF INDONESIAN INFLUENCER DISCOURSE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated how Indonesian TikTok skincare influencers constructed authenticity through speech acts in sponsored skincare content. The study was conducted because influencer authenticity has become increasingly important in digital marketing, particularly in social media environments where audiences are more aware of commercial intentions. This research aimed to analyze how speech acts functioned not only as persuasive strategies but also as linguistic resources for constructing expertise, connectedness, integrity, transparency, and originality in influencer discourse. The study employed a qualitative discourse-analytic approach by combining Speech Act Theory and authenticity theory. The data consisted of 40 sponsored skincare video transcripts uploaded by Indonesian TikTok influencers between January and December 2025. The data were collected through non-participant digital observation and analyzed using thematic discourse analysis and pragmatic analysis. The findings showed that assertive speech acts were the most dominant category, followed by expressive, directive, and commissive speech acts, while declarative speech acts were absent from the dataset. Assertive speech acts primarily constructed epistemic authority and expertise through product claims, ingredient explanations, and experiential evaluations. Expressive speech acts contributed to affective authenticity through emotional reactions, praise, humour, and gratitude expressions. Directive speech acts fostered relational engagement through conversational recommendations and instructional guidance, whereas commissive speech acts supported projected authenticity by signalling consistency and future commitment. The study concluded that authenticity in TikTok skincare discourse was not an inherent personal quality but a multidimensional communicative performance continuously negotiated through language, interaction, and platform culture.

Keywords: *Authenticity Construction, Digital Communication, Skincare Discourse, Speech Acts, TikTok influencers*

INTRODUCTION

TikTok has emerged as one of the most influential platforms for skincare promotion in Indonesia, particularly among young consumers who increasingly rely on influencer recommendations before purchasing beauty products (Sari et al., 2023). Influencers rarely formalize or explicitly disclose advertisements in sponsored skincare content. Instead, they tend to package promotions through personal stories, daily skincare routines, emotional reactions, and conversational interactions that create an impression of authenticity. Studies on influencer disclosure practices have shown that sponsored content on social media is often under-disclosed or indirectly disclosed, especially on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram (Bertaglia et al., 2025; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). This communication style allows influencers to appear as trustworthy and relatable individuals even when the content is commercial. Consequently, authenticity has become a crucial factor in the success of influencer marketing and audience engagement on TikTok (Ebben & Bull 2024, Borchers, 2023). In the skincare industry, authenticity is further strengthened through interactive communication, educational explanations, and emotionally engaging narratives that blur the boundary between recommendation and advertisement (Dewi & Sari, 2025). Hence, influencers' communicative strategies through language, emotion, and interaction play an important role in shaping audience perceptions toward sponsored skincare products.

Previous studies on speech acts in advertising and influencer discourse mainly focused on persuasive functions, particularly on how language strategies convince audiences to purchase products or engage with promotional content (Hajar et al., 2024; Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2018). The studies often analyzed directive, assertive, and expressive acts as persuasive devices in marketing communication (Hajar et al., 2023). However, these approaches generally conceptualized influencer discourse as transactional persuasion and pay little attention to how influencers linguistically negotiate authenticity in sponsored content, especially in social media environments where audiences are increasingly aware of commercial intentions (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Conversely, research on influencer authenticity has concentrated primarily on credibility, parasocial interaction, self-presentation, and audience trust from marketing and media perspectives (Abidin, 2020; Audrezet et al., 2020), with limited attention to the micro-linguistic mechanisms of authenticity construction in actual discourse (Dynel, 2021).

This study addressed that gap by shifting the analytical focus from persuasion to the construction of authenticity. It investigated how speech acts are strategically used to construct authenticity in sponsored skincare discourse, rather than serving only as tools of consumer persuasion. In this context, speech acts

serve as markers of authenticity and persuasive devices, allowing influencers to present themselves as trustworthy and relatable, even in a commercial setting. The interaction between speech act functions and the performance of authenticity thus emerges as a key explanation for how audiences perceive sponsored skincare content as credible, authentic, and socially intimate. By examining Indonesian TikTok skincare discourse through the lens of speech act and authenticity theory, this study contributed to ongoing discussions on digital authenticity, influencer communication, and the linguistic construction of trust in contemporary social media context.

LITERATUR REVIEW

Influencer authenticity is constructed through multiple interconnected communicative dimensions (Audrezet et al., 2020; Lou & Yuan, 2019). From an assemblage perspective, DeLanda (2006) argued that authenticity emerges through the interaction of expertise, connectedness, originality, transparency, and integrity. Expertise is reflected in influencers' ability to demonstrate knowledge about skincare ingredients, skin conditions, and product usage based on personal experience or familiarity with beauty trends (Kim & Kim, 2021). Informal communication styles also create a sense of interpersonal closeness between influencers and followers, thereby strengthening connectedness (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Originality is often constructed through storytelling practices and the sharing of personal experiences that distinguish one influencer from another (Mardon et al., 2020). Meanwhile, transparency and integrity become visible when influencers openly disclose sponsorships, provide balanced opinions, and share recommendations that appear genuine rather than purely commercially motivated (Evans et al., 2017; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020).

The construction of authenticity is closely related to how influencers perform communicative actions through language (Dynel, 2021; Yuan & Lou, 2020). According to Searle's (1979) Speech Act Theory, utterances not only convey information but also perform social functions. In TikTok skincare content, influencers frequently employ assertive speech acts to describe product effects, share skincare experiences, and claim perceived benefits after product use (Hajar et al., 2023). Directive speech acts are used when influencers encourage audiences to try products, follow skincare routines, or consider purchasing certain items (Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2018). Commissive speech acts appear when influencers promise honest reviews, future updates, or continued product testing (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Expressive speech acts are particularly important in conveying emotions such as excitement, disappointment, gratitude, or satisfaction regarding skincare results (Dynel, 2021). Through these various speech acts, influencers construct impressions of credibility, emotional sincerity, and personal

involvement that contribute to perceptions of authenticity among audiences (Tagg & Seargeant, 2017).

The interactive nature of TikTok further strengthens the relationship between speech acts and authenticity construction (Abidin, 2020; Zeng et al., 2021). Influencers often combine assertive and expressive utterances to make product evaluations appear both factual and emotionally genuine (Yuan & Lou, 2020; Dynel, 2021). Directive speech acts are typically delivered in casual and friendly ways so that recommendations feel conversational rather than forceful advertisements (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Hudders et al., 2021). In addition, sponsorship disclosures and explanations about product limitations may function as strategies to strengthen transparency and integrity (Evans et al., 2017; De Veirman & Hudders, 2020). TikTok's short-video format also supports the performance of authenticity through facial expressions, tone of voice, captions, and audience interaction in comment sections (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022; Omar & Dequan, 2020). Consequently, authenticity in sponsored content is not simply an inherent personal quality, but a discursive performance that is continuously negotiated through communication practices (Cotter, 2021; Bishop, 2023).

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative discourse-analytic approach to investigate how Indonesian TikTok skincare influencers construct authenticity through speech acts in sponsored content. The study combined Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1979) with authenticity theory and assemblage perspectives (DeLanda, 2006; Audrezet et al., 2020) to examine how linguistic actions function not only as persuasive strategies but also as performative resources for constructing expertise, connectedness, integrity, transparency, and originality in influencer discourse. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on the interpretation of meaning, interactional functions, and contextual language use within naturally occurring digital communication.

The data consisted of sponsored skincare videos uploaded on TikTok by Indonesian beauty influencers between January and December 2025. The corpus focused specifically on Indonesian-language skincare promotion videos that explicitly or implicitly involved commercial collaboration, product endorsement, affiliate marketing, paid partnership, live-shopping promotion, or sponsored recommendation.

Purposive sampling was employed to select influencers and videos that met the following criteria:

1. The content promoted skincare products available in the Indonesian market.
2. The videos contained verbal interaction or spoken discourse rather than

text-only promotion.

3. The influencers demonstrated active audience engagement through direct address, explanation, recommendation, or interactional commentary.
4. The videos achieved high visibility and engagement, including substantial numbers of views, comments, shares, or likes.
5. The content reflected conversational and authentic communication styles commonly associated with TikTok influencer culture.

The final corpus consisted of 40 TikTok video transcripts produced by Indonesian skincare influencers with follower counts ranging from micro-influencers to macro-influencers. Duplicate uploads and repeated promotional segments were excluded to avoid redundancy in linguistic analysis.

The data were collected through non-participant digital observation of publicly accessible TikTok videos. Videos were manually downloaded and transcribed orthographically to preserve the original linguistic features of influencer discourse, including informal expressions, code-switching, repetition, discourse markers, emotional interjections, slang, and interactional particles commonly used in Indonesian social media communication.

In addition to spoken utterances, contextual elements such as captions, hash tags, affiliate prompts, and audience-directed expressions were documented when they contributed to the interpretation of speech acts and authenticity performance. The transcription process followed a discourse-oriented transcription principle that prioritised pragmatic meaning and interactional function rather than phonetic detail.

The study employed qualitative thematic discourse analysis combined with pragmatic analysis. Thematic discourse analysis was used to identify recurring linguistic patterns associated with authenticity construction, while pragmatic analysis focused on the illocutionary force and communicative intentions underlying influencer utterances.

The analytical process involved:

1. Transcribing TikTok videos
 2. Segmenting utterances
 3. Classifying speech acts
 4. Identifying authenticity-related functions
 5. Interpreting discursive patterns with speech act and authenticity theory
- Frequency distribution was additionally used to support qualitative interpretation by

showing the relative dominance of particular speech act categories and sub-functions across the dataset. However, the numerical distribution served only as supportive evidence rather than statistical generalisation.

FINDING

Distribution of Speech Acts in Sponsored Skincare Discourse

The distribution of speech acts in the corpus showed a clear structure in how Indonesian TikTok influencers created their authentic selves while promoting sponsored skincare products. The study's results indicated that each type of speech act played a distinct role in building authenticity through specific language functions and influencer attributes as shown in following table:

Table 1. Overall Distribution of Speech Act

No	Speech Act Type	Frequency	Percentage
1	Assertive	520	45
2	Expressive	408	35
3	Directive	175	15
4	Commissive	60	5
5	Declarative	-	-

Table 1 shows the distribution of speech act types based on their percentage in the dataset. Assertive speech acts make up the largest share at 45%, meaning that almost half of the utterances belong to this category. Next are expressive speech acts at 35%, which is a significant portion of the data. Directive speech acts account for 15%, showing a moderate presence. In contrast, commissive speech acts occur less often at just 5%. Declarative speech acts do not appear in the dataset, resulting in 0% representation.

Assertive Speech Acts and the Construction of Epistemic Authority

The distribution of assertive speech acts shown a differentiated pattern across several sub-functions that contribute to the construction of influencer authenticity. Six sub-functions were determined in Table 2, with each then linked to properties of authenticity embedded in the assemblage.

Table 2. Distribution of Assertive Speech Act

No	Sub-Function	Authenticity Property	Frequency	Percentage
1	Product Claim	Expertise	168	32.3
2	Ingredient Explanation	Expertise	134	25.8
3	Personal Experience	Integrity	97	18.7
4	Result Assertion	Integrity	69	13.3
5	Comparative Evaluation	Expertise	30	5.8
6	Safety Claim	Expertise	22	4.2

Product claims (32.3%) and ingredient explanations (25.8%), which mainly related to the expertise dimension of authenticity, represented the most frequent sub-functions of assertive speech acts as shown in Table 2. The influencer mentioned the product claims that were carried out on utterances such as “produk FiFa itu gue akui memang bagus banget untuk mencerahkan”; this made the influencer look like a confident evaluation of product

performance. Likewise, ingredient descriptions such as “mengandung niacinamide, glutathione, arbutin” and “niacinamide 10% plus glutathione” leveraged semi-technical knowledge to position the influencer as an informed and expert source. From an assemblage point of view, these language patterns let people become experts, where authority wasn't supplied by an institution but was shown by knowledge presentation.

Personal experience (18.7%) and result assertion (13.3%) were strongly correlated with the integrity component of authenticity. The expressions "di gue cocok banget" and "aku pakai ini dua minggu" showed that the suggestions were based on firsthand knowledge rather than simply promoting a product. Similarly, expressions such as "cepat banget progresnya" and "kulit jadi glowing" presented outcomes as real experiences. These powerful speech patterns made the influencer appear more relatable to the audience, increasing perceived authenticity and making the advice seem more genuine.

Comparative evaluation (5.8%) and safety claims (4.2%) were less common, but they contributed to the expertise dimension by positioning products within evaluative hierarchies ("lebih bagus," "lebih tahan lama") and safety or regulatory frameworks ("aman untuk bumil," "BPOM"). These sub-functions broadened the scope of information by incorporating judgement and assurance, thereby enhancing perceptions of reliability and supporting informed decision-making.

Assertive speech acts promoted the perception of influencer authenticity as a combination of knowledge and honesty, where authority based on knowledge was reinforced by personal experience and functioned as epistemic authority. The interaction among these sub-functions exemplified Manuel DeLanda's assemblage theory of authenticity (2006), which held that authenticity emerged from the interplay of diverse qualities rather than a single property. In this context, assertive speech acts demonstrated competence through factual, technical claims and integrity through experiential grounding. This alignment showed that authenticity was constructed through a combination of different types of discourse, with personal validation strengthening knowledge-based authority. Assertive speech acts were a key means of establishing influencer authenticity by enabling the simultaneous display of expertise and integrity. This process asserted and enacted authenticity discursively as epistemic authority described in lived experience.

Expressive Speech Acts and the Construction of Affective Authenticity

Unlike assertive speech acts, which primarily established epistemic authority, expressive speech acts built affective authenticity – the perception that the influencer was emotionally genuine, relatable, and engaged with social issues. According to John Searle's classification, expressive speech acts

conveyed the speaker's psychological state (e.g., liking, gratitude, excitement). In influencer discourse, this served as a key resource for fostering connectedness and reinforcing integrity within the assemblage framework.

Table 3. Distribution of Expressive Speech Act Sub-Functions

No	Sub-Function	Authenticity Property	Frequency	Percentage
1	Product Praise	Integrity	142	34.8
2	Emotional Reaction	Connectedness	108	26.5
3	Gratitude Expression	Connectedness	72	17.6
4	Personal Evaluation	Integrity	56	13.7
5	Humor / Self-Expression	Originality	30	7.4

The data showed that praise of product (34.8%) formed the majority of the expressive sub-function. For instance, utterances of “bagus banget,” “parah, bagus banget lagi” and “ini produk bener-bener ampuh, best banget” were classified as exhibiting strong positive affect toward the product. These statements were not just factual unlike aggressive product claims; they conveyed emotional endorsement, and therefore made a stronger signal to the integrity dimension. In the context of assemblage (DeLanda; 2006), this intensified affect served as a self-referential discourse-level indicator that the influencer’s appraisal was grounded in an personal rather than monetary basis.

The second most frequent category was emotional reaction (26.5%) comprising spontaneous utterances of – for example – “ya Allah, gila, sumpah”. Such utterances mimicked immediacy and an unfiltered reaction, which allowed the influencer to appear in emotional transparency. This was in line with the connectedness property. People naturally felt less distant from an influencer who displayed emotional spontaneity. Instead of coming off as a scripted dialog, the conversations read like everyday talk in an effort to reinforce parasocial closeness that was typical of TikTok communication culture.

Likewise, the expressions of gratitude (17.6%) occurred when a sentence explicitly addressed or commemorated an audience or brand, such as “terima kasih banyak” or “thanks for watching”. These were interactional, rather than informational, and served to preserve relational ties. Describing such expressions in digital discourse not as trivial polite noises, but as deliberate markers of audience recognition, thus deepened connectedness. They defined the influencer not only as a product reviewer, but also as a socially driven participant in a community.

Meanwhile, personal evaluation (13.7%), represented by phrases such as “menurut aku ini penting banget” and “aku suka banget produk ini”, was situated in studies of cognition and affect. While evaluative, these expressions highlighted subjectivity: the judgement came from the speaker choosing one option over another. This framed the recommendation as personal rather than

universal, thereby strengthening its integrity.

Finally, humour and self-expression (7.4%) also contributed to the originality dimension of authenticity, for example, “ha ha, centil, cantik gitu aja”. These utterances introduced stylistic uniqueness and persona performance differentials that distinguished influencers amid a sea of content. Although understandably less frequent, they remained significant in creating an identifiable and relatable figure behind the social media handle, and aligned with the idea that authenticity emerged through non-conformist self-presentation.

At a more theoretical level, expressive speech acts demonstrated that authenticity was not only a cognitive (knowledge-based) phenomenon but also an affective (emotion-based) one. Assertives built trust through intellectual standing, while expressives provided an emotional insight into the influencer's life. This duality reinforced the assemblage perspective on authenticity as emergent within fields – generated through the interplay of multiple properties rather than through a unidimensional trait.

Expressive speech acts functioned as a crucial mechanism in constructing affective authenticity, primarily through integrity, connectedness, and originality. By encoding emotions such as excitement, satisfaction, and gratitude, influencers transformed product promotion into personalised, emotionally resonant communication. In this way, authenticity was demonstrated not only through what influencers knew, but also through how they felt and expressed those feelings, making the discourse appear both credible and genuinely human.

Directive Speech Acts and the Construction of Relational Engagement

The distribution of directive speech acts shows a strategic pattern across five sub-functions that contribute to constructing influencer authenticity, particularly regarding audience engagement and persuasive alignment. As shown in Table X, each sub-function is linked to specific authenticity properties within the assemblage framework.

Table 4. Distribution of Directive Speech Act

No	Sub-Function	Authenticity Property	Frequency	Percentage
1	Call to Action	Connectedness	61	34.8
2	Suggestion	Expertise	48	27.4
3	Instruction	Expertise	36	20.6
4	Invitation	Connectedness	18	10.3
5	Soft Persuasion	Integrity	12	6.9

Table 4 showed that the call to action (34.8%) is the most important directive sub-function. This is directly related to the connectivity dimension of authenticity. The phrases "check out sekarang," "buruan cek keranjang kuning," and "join live aku sekarang" make the audience feel part of the interaction rather than mere observers. They create a sense of urgency, encourage immediate

engagement with the influencer in real time, and reduce the perceived social distance between the influencer and audience. These directive acts foster a sense of connection from the assemblage perspective by emulating conversational language and making communication more inclusive and participatory.

The second and third most common sub-functions, suggestion (27.4%) and instruction(20.6%), mainly relate to the competence aspect of authenticity. Influencers appear as knowledgeable, friendly consultants who offer advice without being overly forceful such as "kalian bisa pakai ini," "coba deh pakai skincare dari DNY," and "pakai tone up ini aja. Directive speech acts such as "pakai toner dulu," "lanjut pakai serum," and "jangan lupa pakai sunscreen" illustrate how to perform everyday skincare routines. These directive speech acts help individuals learn by providing clear instructions. They also allow influencers to show their expertise in the accessible and relatable way.

Meanwhile, invitation (10.3%), which also related to the connection dimension, showed how interactive influencer discourse is. When someone said "temenin aku skincare routine" or "kalian mau aku review yang mana dulu," they are clearly inviting the audience to participate and giving them an opportunity to respond. This dialogic approach not only increases engagement but also fosters a sense of familiarity and community between the audience and the influencer. As a result, the authenticity was enhanced when the audience contributed to meaning-making, making them active participants in the narrative.

On the other hand, soft persuasion (6.9%) was very similar to the integrity dimension. It made suggestions using both direct and indirect language. People used phrases such as "Menurut aku," "coba aja kalau cocok," and "ini sih bagus banget di aku" to express their opinions without making demands. This approach reduces the sense of commercial pressure and makes the influencer appear honest and trustworthy, which increases intrinsic motivation. These phrases help maintain the credibility of the content and make people less resistant to advertisements by making them less forceful.

The interaction among these directive sub-functions reflects the assemblage nature of authenticity. The multiple dimensions – connectedness, expertise, and integrity – are constructed simultaneously through complementary linguistic strategies. Directive speech acts do not operate in isolation; rather, they work together to create a balanced discourse that engages the audience, provides useful guidance, and maintains sincerity. This interplay shows that authenticity is not a fixed attribute but an emergent effect of coordinated communicative practices. Overall, directive speech acts function as a central mechanism in constructing influencer authenticity by integrating relational engagement, knowledge display, and personal credibility into a cohesive and persuasive discourse.

Commissive Speech Acts and Projected Authenticity

The dataset shows that commissive forms are less common than assertive and expressive forms; however, their importance persists, particularly in how influencers build trust over time. John Searle defined a commissive speech act as an utterance in which the speaker commits to perform an action in the future. Promises are seldom in formal or explicit content. Instead, they typically occur as casual conversations that appear spontaneous and natural. To illustrate this pattern, the commissive speech acts can be grouped into a set of functional types:

Table 5. Commissive Speech Act Distribution

No	Sub-Function	Authenticity Property	Frequency	Percentage
1	Promise to share/review	Connectedness	18	30.0
2	Commitment to future use	Integrity	15	25.0
3	Invitation to future interaction	Connectedness	14	23.3
4	Repurchase intention	Integrity	8	13.3
5	Conditional future suggestion	Transparency	5	8.4

The table showed that the most common type is the promise to share or review content (30.0%). This usually comes across as very casual and often sounds like a response to the audience. For example, the influencer said, "Lihat kalian mau aku review yang mana dulu guys." It seems like a simple question at first, but on closer inspection. It actually means that the creator was indicating that more content would follow and the audience can influence what is featured. This kind of statement gives the impression that the audience is involved in the decision-making process.

The second pattern, commitment to future use (25.0%), works differently. The influencers' expression, such as "aku bakalan repurchase ini," show that they plan to keep using the product. This isn't just a claim. It's also a suggestion that the influencer is consistent. They don't just talk about a product once. They show how it fits into their daily life over time. This makes the recommendation feel more real and less like a business deal.

A similar effect is evident in invitations to future interaction (23.3%), such as "request di kolom komentar sekarang." These expressions may seem like simple engagement strategies, but they also imply that the influencer will respond or follow up. In other words, there is an unspoken promise of continued communication. This helps maintain a sense of closeness between the influencer and the audience, which is a key element in building connectedness on platforms such as TikTok.

The category of repurchase intention (13.3%) further supports this idea

of consistency. When influencers say they will "stock" or buy the product again, they show that they are regular users, not just promoters. This small change is important because it brings the influencer and audience closer together. The message is less about selling and more about shared experience.

Finally, conditional future suggestions (8.4%) introduce a slightly different tone. Phrases such as "nantu kamu lihat hasilnya" do not guarantee anything outright. Instead, they leave room for possibility. Interestingly, this kind of phrasing can feel more believable precisely because it avoids sounding too certain. By not overpromising, the influencer appears more careful and, in many cases, more trustworthy.

Overall, what stands out is that commissive speech acts add a forward-looking dimension to authenticity. They are not primarily used to persuade in the moment, but to shape how the audience perceives the influencer over time. These small signals, promising to review, planning to repurchase, inviting interaction, gradually build an image of someone who is consistent, engaged, and reliable.

DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrated that authenticity in Indonesian TikTok skincare discourse was constructed through the interaction of multiple speech acts that simultaneously performed informational, emotional, and relational functions. The dominance of assertive speech acts indicated that influencer authenticity was strongly associated with epistemic authority, where influencers positioned themselves as knowledgeable individuals capable of evaluating skincare products and explaining ingredients. This finding supported previous studies arguing that expertise functions as a central dimension of influencer authenticity (Audrezet et al., 2020; Kim & Kim, 2021). However, unlike traditional advertising discourse, expertise in TikTok skincare content was not institutional or scientific in nature. Instead, it was conversationally constructed through semi-technical vocabulary, experiential narratives, and personalised evaluations that made knowledge appear accessible and relatable. Consequently, authenticity emerged not from formal professional authority but from the performance of everyday expertise embedded within social media interaction. In addition, assertive speech acts helped influencers negotiate credibility within commercial environments where audiences were increasingly sceptical of sponsored content. Product claims, ingredient explanations, and comparative evaluations allowed influencers to construct discursive credibility by combining informational claims with personal experience, thereby reducing the appearance of commercial persuasion and strengthening perceptions of sincerity (Yuan & Lou, 2020). Therefore, expertise and integrity operated

together within the assemblage of authenticity and demonstrated that authenticity was linguistically enacted through pragmatic functions rather than merely through visual branding or self-presentation strategies.

The findings further revealed that expressive speech acts played a significant role in constructing affective authenticity. Emotional reactions, praise, humour, and gratitude expressions contributed to perceptions that influencers were emotionally genuine and personally involved in the products they promoted. This supported Dynel's (2021) argument that digital discourse increasingly relied on affective communication to create social intimacy in online interaction. Expressions such as "gila," "ya Allah," or "bagus banget" functioned not only as emotional reactions but also as forms of emotional transparency that reduced the distance between influencer and audience. As a result, expressive speech acts strengthened parasocial closeness and reinforced the perception that influencers were relatable individuals rather than scripted advertisers. The coexistence of assertive and expressive speech acts demonstrated that authenticity was constructed through both cognitive and affective dimensions simultaneously. Influencers rarely relied on purely informational or purely emotional discourse; instead, they combined ingredient explanations with emotional evaluations, technical claims with excitement, and recommendations with humour or gratitude. This hybridisation reflected the communicative culture of TikTok, where informational value and entertainment value were expected to coexist. The findings therefore supported DeLanda's (2006) assemblage perspective, which conceptualised authenticity as emerging through the interaction of multiple interconnected elements rather than through a singular characteristic.

Directive speech acts also revealed important insights into how influencers maintained authenticity while simultaneously engaging audiences. Although directives traditionally functioned as persuasive acts, TikTok influencers often softened them through conversational language and indirect recommendations such as "coba deh," "kalian bisa pakai ini," or "jangan lupa sunscreen." These utterances framed persuasion as friendly advice rather than authoritative instruction, thereby creating impressions of connectedness and interpersonal closeness (Bou-Franch & Blitvich, 2018). This communication pattern suggested that influencers positioned themselves as peers sharing skincare experiences rather than marketers attempting to sell products. At the same time, instructional directives involving skincare routines, application steps, and product combinations allowed influencers to perform practical authority in everyday contexts. Unlike traditional beauty advertisements that depended on celebrity prestige or institutional endorsement, TikTok skincare influencers established authority through participatory communication and instructional

interaction. As a result, directive speech acts functioned simultaneously as mechanisms of persuasion, guidance, and relational intimacy. The findings therefore reinforced the idea that authenticity in digital discourse was closely connected to accessibility and relatability rather than to distance or idealisation.

Although commissive speech acts appeared less frequently, they played an important role in sustaining long-term perceptions of authenticity. Statements related to future reviews, repurchase intentions, and continued product use contributed to what might be described as projected authenticity. Unlike assertive speech acts that established present credibility, commissive speech acts extended authenticity into the future by presenting influencers as consistent and reliable individuals. This finding suggested that audiences evaluated authenticity not only through immediate speech performance but also through expectations of future continuity and consistency. Thus, even casual statements such as “aku bakalan repurchase ini” or “nanti aku review lagi” became significant relational signals that strengthened audience trust over time. The interaction among assertive, expressive, directive, and commissive speech acts demonstrated that authenticity in TikTok skincare discourse was fundamentally multidimensional. Assertive acts established expertise, expressive acts created emotional sincerity, directives fostered engagement, and commissives maintained long-term credibility. These interconnected functions strongly supported assemblage theory, which viewed authenticity as the product of dynamic interaction among multiple communicative components rather than as a fixed personal quality.

One significant finding in this study was the complete absence of declarative speech acts within the dataset. According to Searle (1979), declarative speech acts directly changed institutional or social reality through the act of speaking itself and required institutional authority to function effectively. In TikTok skincare discourse, influencers did not possess the institutional legitimacy necessary to perform such acts because their communicative role was based primarily on interpersonal influence, experiential sharing, and relational interaction. Therefore, the absence of declaratives reflected the fundamentally informal and non-institutional nature of influencer communication on social media platforms. This finding also reinforced the argument that authenticity in influencer discourse was constructed relationally rather than institutionally. Unlike dermatologists or official representatives who relied on formal authority, TikTok influencers negotiated trust through emotional closeness, conversational expertise, and perceived sincerity. Consequently, persuasive power on TikTok emerged more strongly from relatability and interactional engagement than from institutional legitimacy. From a broader perspective, the study contributed to digital discourse studies by demonstrating that speech acts in influencer communication performed not only

persuasive functions but also identity work, relational labour, and authenticity construction. The findings additionally extended Speech Act Theory by illustrating how speech acts operated multifunctionally within highly mediated digital environments, where platform culture, audience perception, and commercial communication intersected simultaneously.

Finally, the study demonstrated that authenticity on TikTok was not necessarily opposed to commercialisation. Although the analysed content was sponsored and commercially motivated, influencers were still able to construct strong perceptions of sincerity and trustworthiness through linguistic strategies. This finding challenged the assumption that sponsorship automatically undermined authenticity. Instead, authenticity depended less on the absence of commercial intention and more on how influencers negotiated commercial motives through conversational language, emotional openness, experiential grounding, and interactional closeness. In this context, authenticity became a negotiated communicative effect rather than an inherent personal quality. Therefore, the study highlighted the important role of language in shaping how commercial discourse was interpreted within contemporary influencer culture.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated that authenticity in Indonesian TikTok skincare discourse was constructed through the strategic use of speech acts that simultaneously performed informational, emotional, and relational functions. Assertive speech acts emerged as the dominant category in establishing epistemic authority and expertise, while expressive, directive, and commissive speech acts contributed to affective authenticity, audience engagement, and long-term credibility. The findings further revealed that authenticity in sponsored skincare content was not an inherent personal attribute, but a multidimensional communicative performance negotiated through conversational language, emotional expression, experiential narratives, and interactive engagement. Therefore, the study highlights the important role of linguistic strategies in shaping perceptions of sincerity and trustworthiness within contemporary influencer marketing and digital communication context.

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