

**Research Article**

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## Speech Acts in Indonesian Online Newspaper: A Case Study of Tribunnews

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the types of speech acts and their pragmatic functions found in news headlines published by *Tribunnews* during March 2025. The research focuses on how language is strategically used in mass media not only to deliver information but also to influence the readers' attitudes, emotions, and behavior. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using documentation techniques for data collection. A total of 500 news headlines were analyzed based on the speech act theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1979), which categorize speech acts into three main types: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. The data analysis followed the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. These results indicate that although online news mainly serves as a factual information medium, headlines are also used to express emotions, guide public behavior, and convey institutional intentions or decisions. This research highlights that speech acts in online media are not merely descriptive but actively shape public perception and opinion, affirming the significance of discourse strategies in digital journalism.

**Keywords:** speech acts, pragmatics, *Tribunnews*, discourse analysis

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### 1. Introduction

Language is an essential tool for human communication in daily life, especially in conveying thoughts, feelings, and intentions. One of the important aspects of language use is speech acts. Speech acts are considered as a form of action carried out by speakers through utterances in certain contexts. According to Austin (1962), every utterance produced by speakers contains actions, not just words, but also meaning and purpose behind them. Furthermore, Searle (1979) explained that speech acts are divided into several types, namely locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts.

In line with the development of technology and information, online news media have become one of the most accessed sources of information by the public. The language used in online news is often constructed not only to inform but also to influence readers' opinions, attitudes, and emotions. Speech acts play an important role in this process because every news article certainly contains certain intentions and goals from the writer. Therefore, the analysis of speech acts in online news becomes relevant to understand how language is used strategically in shaping public perception of an event or issue.

In the era of digital technology, the use of language in online mass media has become increasingly interesting to be studied, especially in the context of speech acts. Online news portals are not only a means of conveying information but also play a role in influencing the readers' thoughts and emotions through the selection of words and utterances used. As stated by Yule (1996), speech acts are very closely related to the context of communication, including in mass media which often uses language to achieve certain purposes.

Tribunnews is one of the most popular online news portals in Indonesia. The use of speech acts in news articles on Tribunnews, especially in the period of March 2025, provides a variety of linguistic phenomena that can be analyzed pragmatically. The language style used by the journalist or news writer is very influential in constructing reality and forming the reader's perception of the event being reported.

Several previous studies have examined speech acts in different media. Desri Wiana and Ade Irma Khairani (2020) in their research entitled "An Analysis of Speech Acts on Headlines Medan Newspaper" found that locutionary acts were the most dominant type in the headlines of Waspada Newspaper from May to July 2020, with representative functions mostly used to convey facts. Julisah Izar et al. (2021) in their study "Expressive Speech Act in Comic Bintang Emon's Speech in Social Media About Social Distancing" found that Bintang Emon used literal and non-literal direct speech acts to express anger. Another study by Akhmad Sofyan et al. (2022) entitled "Types and Functions of Illocutionary Speech Acts on Inter Character Dialogue in Tilik Short Films" identified five types of illocutionary speech acts and four speech act functions in character dialogues. Based on the explanation above, this study aims to analyze the types and functions of speech acts found in Tribunnews online newspaper articles published between March 2025. The focus of this research is to identify the types of speech acts used and analyze their functions.

### *1.1. Speech Act Theory*

This study applies Searle's speech act theory (1979). This theory examines how speech is related to the actions or attitudes of the interlocutor in communication. This theory is based on the idea that language is used to carry out action; hence, speech act refers to action that is carried out in a speech manner. This is the best writing or speaking they can do in their communication. Because of this, this study aims to analyze the headlines from the Nipashe newspaper by providing a taxonomy by focusing on the taxonomy of illocutionary acts. According to Searle, a speech act is an attempt to carry out certain tasks using language that requires convention and social organizations. There are many specific speech acts related to religion, and in the given situation, speech acts related to religion might be carried out in a different way. Based on this fact, the speech act that is presented in the Swahili newspaper may differ from the English newspaper due to the culture-specific nature. Given the reality of this cross-cultural nature, the purpose of this study is to describe the occurrence of this type of speech act by classifying the types of speech act that are carried out in the Nipashe Swahili newspaper. It was created by the script editor using their own headline. According to the main idea of the speech act theory, which is based on the illocutionary force, an editor of script performs the act using a headline that introduces the story that they represent.

Linguistic analysis of the way these news stories are delivered can reveal a lot about opinions and attitudes. In this way, pragmatic analysis of headlines can be an active means of seeing the character of headlines in initiating and maintaining their intended meaning. According to Chilwa (2007), pragmatic analysis plays an important role in headlines because pragmatic meaning is based on the author's intention. Since language is a means of communication and trust, it is important to know how it is used to form ideas (Beard, 2000). As it is known that the use of speech acts is part of human communication activities, identifying the types of speech acts used in newspaper headlines can help readers infer something that is not expressed by the editor of the manuscript.

### *1.2. Types of speech acts*

Searle in Damayanti divides speech acts into three types, including:

- a. Locutionary Speech Act (the act of saying something) is a speech act that states something. In a locutionary speech act, speech is done only to state something without any other tendency or purpose, by itself to influence others. Locutionary acts are relatively easy to identify in speech because identification tends to be done without including the context of speech included in the speech situation.
- b. Illocutionary Speech Act (the act of doing something) is a speech act that not only functions to inform something, but also to do something. Example: the sentence "I can't come" when spoken to a friend who has just celebrated his wedding, not only functions to state that he cannot attend the party, but also functions to do something as an apology. Illocutionary speech acts are very difficult to recognize if you do not pay attention to who the speaker and the interlocutor are, when and where the speech act occurs, and so on. Perlocutionary speech act (the act of influencing something) is doing something by saying something.
- c. Perlocutionary speech acts refer to the person being addressed and can be described with words such as encouraging the listener, learning something, convincing, deceiving, lying, interesting, disturbing, frightening, captivating, entertaining, inspiring, and confusing. The utterances uttered by someone often have an appeal (perlocutionary act) or effect on the listener. Perlocutionary acts force the interlocutor to do certain things related to the speaker's statement, which makes others angry or entertained, or makes others react psychologically.

### *1.3. Classification of speech acts*

According to Searle in Levinson (1983: 240), speech acts can be divided into five categories: representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarative.

- a. Representative:

The speaker binds himself to the truth of the proposition. The utterance begins with the speaker's observation of certain things, and is then followed by a statement of fact or opinion based on that observation. When someone says that someone "she is beautiful", the speaker can make a statement based on fact or simply give his own opinion about someone's physical appearance.

In addition, it determines whether the speaker is right about the case or not. Speakers can represent the world as they believe it through statements of fact, assertions, conclusions, and descriptions. For example, when someone says, "The Earth is flat," it indicates a statement that the speaker is making about the Earth, namely their opinion that the Earth is flat. Some speech act verbs, such as remind, inform, affirm, deny, remember, state, guess, predict, report, describe, inform, swear, assure, agree, claim, convince, and conclude, are examples of representative speech acts.

- b. Directives

Speakers use directive speech acts to ask others to do something. These acts include requesting, asking, commanding, giving orders, and suggesting. The directive function, according to Rustono, is intended to force the speech partner to act in accordance with the utterance. This pragmatic function asks the speech partner to follow what the speaker says. This type of pragmatic function includes sub-functions such as ordering, requesting, demanding, suggesting, and challenging. Directive speech acts, for example, have the pragmatic functions of ordering, requesting, demanding, suggesting, and challenging. For example, the utterance, "Please, may I lend you a pencil?" indicates that the speaker is asking the listener to lend him a pencil.

c. Commissive

Types of utterances that bind the speaker to a future action including promising, threatening, offering, refusing, and promising. For example, saying "I will be back" is a promise that the speaker will return.

d. Expressive

An utterance that describes a person's psychological state. Saying thank you, apologizing, welcoming, and congratulating are some examples of this speech act. The expressive pragmatic function is the function intended by the utterance's intention when using it to express an assessment. This pragmatic function shows that the speaker is trying to evaluate what he or she says. Praising, criticizing, complaining, blaming, congratulating, and flattering are all examples of this pragmatic function.

- 1) Praise Function: Praise is a sub-function of an utterance that forces the speaker to express the desired psychological attitude, so that the utterance is considered as an assessment of the utterance of praise. This is the practical function of praise. Your answer is very good. This utterance is an expressive speech act of praise to praise the answer given. Therefore, the utterance shows an opinion about the speech partner who is spoken to.
- 2) Purpose of giving Subfunction of giving thanks is an utterance that binds the speaker to express a psychological attitude that is intended to be interpreted as an assessment by expressing gratitude. This utterance is shown here. I would like to thank you for your kindness, Sir. The expressive speech act to express gratitude for the kindness that has been given is this utterance. Therefore, the utterance shows the opinion about the speech partner that is spoken by the speaker.
- 3) Criticism function. The sub-function of criticizing is an utterance that binds the speaker to express a psychological attitude that is intended so that the utterance is interpreted as an assessment by means of criticism. The following is an example of such an utterance. Your idea is good if it is conveyed in a language that is easy to understand. This utterance is an expressive speech act of criticizing. This happens because the utterance is in the form of subtle criticism of the interlocutor, namely the speaker intends to assess the opinion expressed so that it is easy to understand.
- 4) Complaint function The complaining subfunction is an utterance that forces the speaker to express their psychological attitude. The purpose of the complaining subfunction is to interpret the utterance as an evaluation. The complaining subfunction is revealed in this statement. I have tried hard, but the results are still bad, right, Ma'am. The utterance above is an expressive speech act that complains because the content of the utterance is a complaint. This means that the speaker complains about his bad grades even though he has tried hard to study.
- 5) Responsibility function. Speech that binds the speaker to express a psychological attitude that is intended to be considered as an evaluation is called the subfunction of blaming. This speech is shown here. Actually, he is the suspect who masterminded all of that. Because the content of the speech is blaming about things that happened as a result of someone's actions, the speech is an expressive speech act with the subfunction of blaming.
- 6) Function of greetings The sub-function of congratulations is an utterance that forces the speaker to express a psychological attitude with the aim that the utterance is considered as an assessment. This utterance is shown here. Congratulations on your victory in the election of the new village head. The response above is an expressive speech act that has

a pragmatic sub-function of congratulations. This occurs because the content of the utterance consists of.

- 7) Awesome functionality. Speech that commits the speaker to express a psychological attitude that is intended to be regarded as a judgment with flattery is known as the subfunction of flattery. This is an example of his speech. You have very satisfying leadership. The expressive speech act of the flattering subfunction is this utterance. This is due to the fact that the content of the speech is flattering, where the speaker praises leadership that is deemed to meet standards. For example, saying, "Don't be shy, my house is your house" is the speaker's way of welcoming someone.

e. Declarations

Utterances that have a direct impact on institutional circumstances and usually rely on complex extralinguistic structures. Excommunication, declaration of war, baptism, and dismissal from employment are some examples of these speech acts. "You are dead to me," for example.

## 2. Methods

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method because it aims to describe and analyze the types and functions of speech acts found in Tribunnews online newspaper articles. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is used to explore and understand phenomena in depth, especially related to language use in social contexts. The data in this research were taken from news articles published on the official website of Tribunnews <https://www.tribunnews.com/> within the period of March to 2025. The researcher specifically chose articles that contained utterances or sentences indicating the use of speech acts, especially those showing various language functions.

The data collection technique used was documentation (Sugiyono, 2017), where the researcher collected online news articles by browsing, selecting, and recording the relevant data from the Tribunnews website. The collected data were then analyzed using the speech act theory proposed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1979), which classify speech acts into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. The data analysis technique followed the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This method helped the researcher to identify the types of speech acts and their functions in conveying messages within the online news articles.

## 3. Results

Table 1. Types of Speech Acts in 500 News Headlines

Speech Acts Forms	Headline Samples	Percentage %
Locution	301	60.2
Illocution	141	28.2
Perelocution	58	11.6

*Examples:*

- **Locution:** “Harga Cabai di Medan Naik Tajam”
- **Illocution:** “Polisi Imbau Warga Tidak Mudik Lebaran”
- **Perlocution:** “Ngeri! Penemuan Mayat Gegerkan Warga”

**Table 2. Pragmatic Functions of Speech Acts in 500 News Headlines**

Pragmatic Functions of Speech Acts	Headline Samples	Percentage %
Representative	228	45.6
Directive	122	24.4
Expressive	122	24.4
Commissive	38	7.6
Isbati	25	5.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100</b>

*Examples:*

- **Representative:** “Gubernur Sumut Resmikan Jalan Baru”
- **Directive:** “Pemko Medan Minta Warga Hemat Air”
- **Expressive:** “Bangga! Atlet Sumut Raih Emas”
- **Commissive:** “DPRD Akan Bahas Kenaikan UMP”
- **Isbati:** “Presiden Tetapkan Status Darurat Nasional”

#### 4. Discussion

This section presents the findings and interpretation of the speech acts and their pragmatic functions found in 500 headlines from a Medan-based news publisher. The data are categorized into speech act types and pragmatic functions based on Searle's and Rustono's classifications.

The majority of the headlines (301 out of 500 or 60.2%) fall into the locutionary act category. These headlines present information or statements in a literal and factual way, such as “Jumlah Penumpang Kereta Api Naik 35 Persen” (“Number of Train Passengers Increased by 35 Percent”). These headlines reflect the primary journalistic function of delivering news without implying further action or emotional effect.

Illocutionary acts constitute 28.2% of the headlines (141 out of 500). This type of act involves an intention behind the utterance, such as advising, requesting, warning, or urging. For instance, “Polisi Imbau Warga Tidak Mudik” (“Police Urge Citizens Not to Travel for Eid”) shows an implicit directive from the authority to the public, attempting to shape behavior.

Perlocutionary acts represent the smallest portion at 11.6% (58 out of 500). These headlines are crafted to provoke a response or emotional effect on the reader. Examples include sensational or tragic news like “Balita Dianiaya Pacar Ibunya hingga Tewas” (“Toddler Abused by Mother’s Boyfriend Until Death”), which elicits shock or sympathy.

Representative functions dominate the pragmatic function analysis with 228 headlines (45.6%). These headlines typically report facts, events, or conditions without suggesting or demanding anything, exemplifying the role of news to represent reality, such as “RS Adam Malik Catat Kenaikan Kunjungan Pasien” (“Adam Malik Hospital Records Increase in Patients”).

Directive functions were found in 122 headlines (24.4%), demonstrating the media's role in guiding or influencing public action or perception. Headlines such as "Pemko Medan Minta Dinas Percepat Perbaikan Jalan" ("Medan Government Requests Road Repairs to be Accelerated") illustrate this type.

Expressive functions appeared in 87 headlines (17.4%). These reflect the speaker's psychological state or emotion, often found in headlines involving celebration, tragedy, or criticism. For example, "Bangga! Atlet Sumut Raih Emas" ("Proud! North Sumatran Athlete Wins Gold").

Commissive functions accounted for 38 headlines (7.6%). These often involve promises or declarations of intention, such as in "Gubsu Akan Bangun Jembatan Baru" ("North Sumatra Governor to Build a New Bridge").

Lastly, Isbati (declarative) functions were identified in 25 headlines (5%). These declare official changes or legal standing, e.g., "Pemkab Putuskan Lakukan PHK" ("Regency Government Decides on Mass Layoffs"), making something the case by the act of saying it.

The prevalence of locutionary and representative forms underlines the expected function of headlines to inform readers objectively. However, the notable proportion of illocutionary and directive forms suggests that news headlines are also used persuasively, subtly encouraging public response or compliance.

The presence of expressive and perlocutionary functions shows how headlines can be emotionally charged, adding narrative appeal and engaging readers more deeply. This dual function of news headlines—as informative and persuasive/emotive texts—reflects the dynamic nature of media language.

These findings affirm the theoretical perspectives on how language functions contextually and strategically in media, reinforcing the relevance of speech act and pragmatics frameworks in discourse analysis.

## 5. Conclusions

This research confirms that online news headlines are a type of discourse with significant pragmatic power. Based on the analysis of 500 *Tribunnews* headlines, it was found that the majority of the headlines employ locutionary acts. This reflects the media's primary function of transmitting straightforward factual information to the public. However, the substantial presence of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts reveals that headlines also function as subtle tools of persuasion—either to influence readers' behavior (through appeals or directives) or to elicit emotional reactions (through sensational, tragic, or dramatic content).

In terms of pragmatic functions, representative acts dominate, reinforcing the media's role in representing social reality. However, the nearly equal proportion of directive and expressive functions demonstrates that media also communicates values, opinions, and emotional attitudes. This indicates that headlines are not neutral linguistic units but rather purposeful constructions designed to influence how readers interpret and respond to an issue.

Additionally, the presence of commissive and declarative functions, though smaller in number, is still significant as they show the media's involvement in conveying promises or official decisions from institutions or authorities. Thus, this study supports the view that speech act and pragmatics theories are valuable approaches for analyzing media discourse. Such analysis is essential for promoting critical media literacy among the public so they can better understand the intent behind the language used in news reporting.

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