Digital Pragmatics: Analysis of Communication Skill Speech Acts in Indonesian Teenagers'

Nur Afifah[1*], Eli Marlina Harahap[1], Nikmah Hasibuan[1], Husniah Ramadhani Pulungan[1], Devinna Riskiana[1], Isthifa Kemal[2]

[1] Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Indonesia, Universitas Muhammadiyah Tapanuli Selatan, Indonesia
[2] Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Abstract: This study examines the use of speech acts by Indonesian adolescents in digital communication, particularly through comments on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. The study aims to identify the types of speech acts commonly used, examine how the digital context influences the forms and strategies of these utterances, and explore the socio-cultural meanings embedded in these interactions. A qualitative descriptive method was used with data collected from 150 naturalistic comments made by adolescents aged 13–19. The analysis was conducted using Searle's speech act theory, focusing on contextual categorization and interpretation. The findings indicate that representative and expressive speech acts are the most frequently used, followed by directive, commissive, and declarative speech acts. The digital environment shapes linguistic expression through unique features such as emoticons, informal spelling, and visual-emotional reinforcers. These linguistic choices are influenced by the immediate, informal, and performative nature of online interactions. The results also indicate that speech acts on social media reflect adolescents' construction of identity, group affiliation, and shared cultural norms in the digital space. This study concludes that social media serves not only as a communication tool but also as a platform for socio-cultural expression among adolescents. Further studies could explore variations in usage across platforms or different demographic groups.

Keywords: speech acts; digital pragmatics; social media; Indonesian youth; online interaction; cultural meaning

Introduction

The development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in the way individuals, especially teenagers, interact with each other (Rahim & Indah, 2024). Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have become new spaces for communication that not only facilitate the exchange of information, but also shape social and cultural dynamics in digital society (Setiadarma et al., 2024). In this context, language is not only used as a means of communication, but also as a representation of identity, an expression of emotion, and a strategy for building social relationships (Priyawan et al., 2025).

The study of pragmatics, which focuses on how meaning is interpreted in the context of its use, is relevant in understanding this kind of digital communication phenomenon. One important aspect of pragmatics is speech acts, namely the actions carried out by speakers through their utterances (Kandam et al., 2024). In interactions on social media, speech acts can appear in various forms, such as giving praise, criticism, sarcasm, or expressions of solidarity—all of which are influenced by the digital context which is open, fast, and

often open to various interpretations (Gustami & Prabawa, 2024).

Teenagers, as active users of social media, show distinctive communication patterns, both in their choice of language, delivery style and communicative goals (Raihani et al., 2025). Therefore, it is important to analyze how teenagers use speech acts in the comments they post on social media. Through pragmatic analysis, specifically using the speech act theory proposed by Austin and Searle, this study aims to identify the dominant types of speech acts and examine their underlying social functions and pragmatic meanings (Searle et al., 1980).

Speech acts are a key area of study in pragmatics, first introduced by Austin (1962) through the concept of speech acts. In his work *How to Do Things with Words*, Austin explained that when someone speaks, they not only convey something but also perform an action. This theory was later further developed by John Searle (1979), who classified speech acts into five main categories: representative (stating something), directive (requesting or commanding), expressive (showing an attitude or feeling), commissive (promising or offering), and declarative (changing the status of something through utterance).

In the context of social media, speech acts are particularly interesting to analyze because communication occurs through text that is limited in context but rich in meaning (Iklimah et al., 2024). Speakers often use indirect strategies, irony, or implicature to convey messages that are more complex than what is literally expressed.

Digital communication has given rise to new forms of interaction that influence how meaning is generated and understood (Kemal, 2013). Digital pragmatics is a branch of pragmatics that has developed to explain how speech and meaning operate on online platforms (Putriyani et al., 2025). On social media, users interact not only through words, but also with multimodal elements such as emojis, stickers, and hashtags that have certain pragmatic functions (Kurniadi et al., 2024).

Teenagers, as a digital native generation, are highly skilled at utilizing these features to convey their communicative intentions (Simorangkir et al., 2025). Research by Sari et al. (2024) shows that comments on social media are a space where various types of speech acts emerge, characterized by spontaneity, creativity, and often involving negotiation of meaning among users within specific digital communities.

Several previous studies have examined speech acts in digital media, such as research conducted by (Waskito et al., 2024) which analyzed speech acts in YouTube comment columns, showed the dominance of expressive and directive speech acts used to provide assessments or invitations. Research by Rahmawati et al. (2024) Research on Instagram in adolescent interactions reveals a tendency to use casual language, code-mixing, and emojis as pragmatic complements. On the other hand, international studies such as those conducted by Felix et al. (2023) discusses how cultural and age differences influence digital communication strategies, including the choice of speech acts.

However, studies specifically analyzing Indonesian adolescents' speech acts on social media—using a classical pragmatics approach supported by a digital pragmatics framework—are still relatively limited. Most studies only address superficial linguistic aspects or fail to link speech acts to the social dynamics of Indonesian adolescents in the digital era.

Although numerous studies have examined language use on social media, there remains a gap in the literature that explicitly analyzes Indonesian adolescents' speech acts in-depth in digital interaction spaces using a classical pragmatics approach contextualized within new media. Most studies are generally descriptive and fail to provide a systematic mapping of the types of speech acts and their social functions in the lives of digital adolescents.

This study aims to fill this gap by presenting an in-depth analysis of the speech acts used by Indonesian adolescents on social media, particularly in the comment sections of platforms like Instagram and TikTok. By combining Searle's classical theory with a modern digital pragmatics approach, this research offers novelty in terms of the object of study, the socio-cultural context, and the theoretical framework used.

Based on the background and literature review that has been presented, this study aims to answer several basic questions regarding the use of speech acts by Indonesian teenagers in digital interactions, especially in social media comment columns: What types of speech acts are used by Indonesian teenagers in social media comments?; How does the digital context influence the forms and strategies of speech acts used by Indonesian teenagers?; What social and cultural meanings can be interpreted from the use of speech acts in adolescent interactions on social media? This study also seeks to examine how the digital context—with characteristics such as anonymity, speed, and multimodality—influences the strategies and forms of speech acts used by teenagers in online interaction spaces.

Method

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. This qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how speech acts are used in

digital interactions by Indonesian teenagers on social media. The descriptive-analytical method is used to identify, describe, and interpret the types and functions of speech acts in the context of communication occurring in the virtual world (Eltigani et al., 2024).

The data sources for this study were written comments made by Indonesian teenagers on popular social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. These comments were purposively selected based on certain criteria, such as the use of Indonesian and containing relevant interactions, such as those related to social issues, entertainment, or everyday topics of teenagers. Data collection was conducted over a specific period to obtain representative and contextual variations.

Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques, namely by transcribing comments from selected social media posts. Furthermore, the researcher also conducted participant observation by following teenagers' interactions on social media to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the social context behind the comments analyzed. This is crucial so that the pragmatic analysis conducted takes into account the real-life situations and conditions of digital communication. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using content analysis and pragmatic analysis techniques. The analysis process involved a thorough reading of all comment data, classification of speech acts based on Searle's theoretical categories (representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative), and identification of the pragmatic functions of these speech acts in digital interactions. Furthermore, the social and cultural meanings contained in the use of speech acts were also interpreted critically and systematically.

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively using content analysis and pragmatic analysis techniques. The process included a thorough reading of all comment data, classification of speech acts according to Searle's theoretical categories (representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative), and identification of the pragmatic functions of these speech acts in digital interactions. Furthermore, the social and cultural meanings inherent in the use of speech acts were critically and systematically interpreted.

To ensure data validity and reliability, this study employed data triangulation techniques by comparing analysis results from various social media platforms and considering relevant communication contexts (Jordan, 2018). Furthermore, the researchers conducted discussions with several informants, active adolescent social media users, to confirm data interpretations, thereby enhancing the accuracy and credibility of the research findings.

Result and Discussion

Result

In pragmatics, speech acts are communicative actions carried out through utterances. Searle (2014) classified speech acts into five main types: Representative (Assertive), Directive, Expressive, Commissive, and Declarative. In the context of digital communication, particularly comments on social media, the use of these speech acts can reflect how users construct social interactions and express their identities and emotions (Carr et al., 2012).

An analysis of 150 comments by Indonesian teenagers on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok revealed five types of speech acts according to John Searle's classification: representative, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative. Table 1 below summarizes the frequency of each type of speech act found in the collected data.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Speech Act Types in Indonesian Teenagers' Social Media Comments

Types of Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Representative	75	50
Expressive	45	30
Directive	20	13.3
Commissive	8	5.3
Declarative	2	1.3
Total	150	

Table 1 above shows that representative speech acts are the most dominant type, accounting for 30% of all comments. This type of speech act is generally used to convey information, opinions, or factual statements. An example is a comment expressing agreement or disagreement with a post.

Expressive speech acts came in second with a percentage of 26.7%, indicating that expressions of feelings and emotions are quite common in digital interactions among teenagers. Comments containing expressive speech acts generally convey emotions such as joy, anger, or emotional support.

Meanwhile, directive speech acts, which function to request or command, appeared in 13.3% of comments, generally in the form of invitations or suggestions to other users. Commissive and declarative speech acts appeared in relatively small numbers, at 5.3% and 1.3%, respectively, indicating that promises or formal statements are rarely used in informal contexts of social media comments.

These findings indicate that pragmatic interactions in adolescents' social media comments primarily focus on conveying information and expressing emotions, as well as building dynamic social relationships in the

digital space. The use of informal and contextual language also characterizes their communication style.

Discussion

In pragmatics, speech acts are communicative actions carried out through utterances. John Searle (1969) classified speech acts into five main types:

Assertive

Speech acts that convey propositions or opinions, such as providing information, stating facts, or expressing beliefs.

Directive

Speech acts that aim to get the interlocutor to do something, such as commands, requests, or invitations.

Expressive

Speech acts that express the speaker's attitude or feelings toward a situation, such as expressing gratitude, apologizing, or expressing emotions.

Commissive

Speech acts that express the speaker's commitment to do something in the future, such as promises or threats.

Declarative

A speech act that directly changes the state of the world through a statement, such as an inauguration, oath-taking, or official announcement.

The digital interactions of Indonesian teenagers through social media reflect unique and complex communication dynamics (Hasan et al., 2023; Irwanto et al., 2025; Musfirah et al., 2024). In a fast-paced, open, and visually stimulating virtual space, language serves not only as a tool for conveying messages but also as a medium for self-expression, identity formation, and social relationships. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have become fertile ground for the use of various types of speech acts, influenced not only by linguistic context but also by accompanying social, technological, and cultural factors.

Through pragmatic analysis, this study aims to answer three main questions that form the basis of the investigation: the types of speech acts used, the influence of the digital context on teenagers' linguistic strategies, and the social and cultural meanings behind these utterances. These three questions will be elaborated in detail in the following subsections.

Types of Speech Acts Used by Indonesian Teenagers in Social Media Comments

Based on the data analysis, it was found that Indonesian teenagers use various types of speech acts in social media comments, with a predominance of representative and expressive speech acts. Representative speech acts are used to convey opinions, assessments, or statements regarding posted content,

such as: *"Keren banget hasilnya!" atau "Menurutku ini nggak bener deh."*

These speech acts reflect adolescents' active role in evaluating and positioning themselves regarding an issue or phenomenon. Meanwhile, expressive speech acts often appear in the form of praise, criticism, admiration, or anger, such as: *"Gemessss ", "Ih parah sih ini!", atau "Bikin nangis ."*

These emotional expressions are not only conveyed verbally, but are also reinforced by the use of emojis, capital letters, and repetition of letters, which are typical strategies in digital communication (Tabatabaei Zavareh, 2025; Zaheer & Safdar, 2025). Apart from these two main types, there are also directive speech acts, such as: *"Tag temen kamu!", "Jangan lupa like ya,"* which indicate an invitation, a light command, or a request. Commissive and declarative speech acts are found in very small numbers, because the social media context tends to be informal and does not require serious commitment or authority to carry out institutional actions.

The Influence of Digital Context on the Forms and Strategies of Speech Act Use

Digital contexts shape communication patterns that differ significantly from face-to-face interactions. On social media, teenagers are free to express themselves without the constraints of time and place. This results in speech acts that tend to be more spontaneous, informal, and emotional. Excessive use of punctuation (such as "!!!!" or "????"), capital letters (e.g., "THIS IS AWESOME!"), and emojis are part of the linguistic strategies that reinforce the meaning of utterances.

Furthermore, social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram enable visual and audiovisual-based interactions, which influence how utterances are constructed. Comments are often in response to visual stimuli, such as funny videos, inspirational content, or viral issues. This makes speech reactive, concise, and highly contextual.

Freedom of expression in the digital space also encourages teenagers to adopt diverse language styles, such as mixing Indonesian with English (code-mixing) or using slang and digital jargon. This digital context fosters linguistic creativity that reflects users' identities, group affiliations, and social positions.

Social and Cultural Meanings of Speech Acts in Teenagers' Interactions on Social Media

The use of speech acts in Indonesian teenagers' social media comments not only reflects a communicative function but also carries deeper social and cultural meanings. Self-representation, expressions of solidarity, and the formation of group identity are important aspects manifested through language. For

example, words of support, the use of certain slang terms, or distinctive emojis can indicate social closeness, collective feelings, or the identity of an online community.

Culturally, teenagers' utterances reflect values developing in today's digital society, such as expressivity, openness, and connectivity (Blank, 2012). This fluid and spontaneous communication style illustrates a cultural shift from previously more formal communication patterns to a more egalitarian and free approach. These utterances also demonstrate how teenagers respond to social, political, entertainment, and diversity issues, thus reflecting current socio-cultural dynamics in Indonesia.

Thus, speech acts in digital interactions not only function as a means of exchanging messages, but also become a medium for negotiating identities, forming social relationships, and expressing cultural values in the ever-evolving virtual space.

Conclusion

Based on an analysis of 150 comments, it can be concluded that digital interactions among adolescents are dominated by representative speech acts (50%) and expressive speech acts (30%). Representative speech acts reflect adolescents' active role in conveying opinions and views on certain issues, while expressive speech acts highlight the importance of social media as a space for openly expressing emotions and attitudes. Furthermore, directive speech acts (13.3%) were also used, demonstrating an interactive function in encouraging participation by other users. Commissive speech acts (5.3%) and declarative speech acts (1.3%) appeared in very limited numbers, indicating that formal statements or personal commitments are not the main features of adolescent communication on social media. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that social media is not only a platform for sharing information but also functions as a new pragmatic arena for adolescents to construct identities, express attitudes, and build social relationships. The language used is expressive, spontaneous, and highly creative, reflecting the dynamic social and cultural realities in the digital space. This study contributes to the field of digital pragmatics and can serve as a basis for further research on the language behavior of young people in the context of evolving online communication.

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